

‘O Chão é a Grande Pergunta’: Non-Human Temporalities in Nuno Ramos

GABRIEL GIORGI
New York University

Abstract: This essay argues that Nuno Ramos’s installations and writings represent a decisive intervention in current aesthetic debates on temporality and the non-human. Working on the unstable terrain between the living and the dead, the organic and the inorganic, the fossilized and the spectral, Ramos’s work sheds light on scales and frames that challenge the anthropocentric sensorium of our critical habits. By focusing on writings included in *Cujo* (1993) and *Essaio Geral* (2007), the essay analyzes how the configuration of such critical perspective in Ramos’s work interrogates and reformulates the ways in which memory and the political interface there where the very notion of life—the *bios* that articulates the biopolitical—is at stake.

Keywords: Capitalocene; temporality; non-human; aesthetics; Brazilian art

“O chão começa a chamar / as formas estruturadas / faz tanto tempo.
Convoca-as / a serem terra outra vez” (Andrade 79).

“O chão é a grande pergunta” (Ramos, *Junco* 53).

One of the points of departure for discussing the anthropocene/capitalocene is to indicate that human beings (or in any case, in their historical configuration under capitalism) have revealed themselves to be *geological agents*—that is, agents or factors whose trace and impact on the planet will endure on a geological scale, even beyond their extinction as a species.¹ The fundamental consequence of this premise is that it makes planetary transformation a key

¹ See, among others, Haraway; Moore; and Viveiros de Castro and Danowski.

dimension of human history, bringing to human historicity—that of nations, technology, the economy, civilizing projects—the terrain of the “natural,” the planetary, and the cosmic. The frameworks, scales, and the very configuration of that which we understand to be “history” are radically transformed: the “geological agent” mirrors a historicity that is no longer only that of “human enterprise,” but rather is one that absorbs—in ways we are only beginning to think through—non-human processes that become central to the very terrain of the political and to our own historical existence.² The figure of the “geological agent,” then, is a *trigger of temporalities* that do not fit in the inherited distribution between “History” (social, civilizational, human) and “Nature” (or “natural history”): that distribution—which reproduces the “great divide” between nature and culture—can no longer accommodate the historical temporalities that would be proper to “geological man.”

At the same time, the moment in which human beings are thought of as geological agents does not only speak to the impact of human activity on the planet; it also implies a profound and systematic decentering of the human, to the extent that the times, scales, and forces of this altered cosmos—which during at least two centuries were contained in the modern notion of “Nature”—emerge in the “interior” of what is properly human: in the domain of the body, of its relations with other bodies, of the materiality that constitutes us as *living beings*. Thinking of ourselves as geological agents implies seeing ourselves reflected in temporalities that are mineral, material, and biological and that do not fit into—or let themselves be absorbed by—the chronologies, calendars, or modulations of the narration that made of the human subject its unshakeable supposition and the primary framework for intelligibility—that is, the humanism that for centuries defined the very form of time.

² Indeed, one of the fundamental consequences of the debate over the anthropocene is the critical dismantling of a distinction that functioned as an assumption in the discipline of historiography: the distinction between human history and natural history (Chakrabarty). That distinction becomes unsustainable in the moment of climate change. We can no longer think of the scale and dimension of what we call “nature” or “planet” as external to human history. “Nature” does not reabsorb in a time “proper” to it the impact of human action; it does not return to its “rhythm” or its “cycles;” rather, it is transformed into another temporality, inseparable from the action of humans and capital. This temporality (or temporalities) disturbs all distributions of the “natural,” “cultural,” and social; it cannot be captured in the dualism between Nature and Culture, which loses its previous capacity for order and intelligibility.

Non-human temporalities strike and detonate constructions of the human, the subjective, and the social, and of *bios* understood as privileging the human and the intersubjective. They are temporalities that articulate other frameworks of perception and knowing, and that allow the emergence of other modes of inscribing bodies and that which passes among them. What are the forms, the frames, the repertoires mobilized by those temporalities that no longer recognize the Human face or the countenance of Nature? How do they become an experiential horizon? How are productions of subjectivity articulated around them? Through what figures, narratives, and voices do they shape images of the collective and the common? These are the questions that constitute the critical task of the present: thinking through methods and frameworks that make subjective and collective experience intelligible, there where *the ground beneath our feet* shakes and alters our idea of History and time.

That *shaking ground* is, perhaps, one of the coordinates that maps the work of Brazilian artist Nuno Ramos. Ramos's work is articulated around what he himself calls "o chamado do chão," the call of the ground: it articulates an aesthetic investigation from a perspective constructed on the sediments, remains, and materials that accumulate and "fall." His aesthetic investigations make up a productive space for thinking about and perceiving this new gravitation of non-human temporalities in the sensibility of the present: a kind of toolbox of knowledges and perceptions for thinking about our existence as *geological creatures*. In Ramos, the ground is the opposite of a foundation: it is a permanent bottoming-out, a multiplication and a heterogeneity, an always divided origin. This ground-level gaze elaborates, above all, a reflection on time—on death and its afterward—through which it becomes possible to reimagine worlds and horizons of experience. It sees the ground as gravitation, as a *threshold* from which to think and make worlds, as a line that magnetizes sensibilities, and as a vector of composition and simultaneous deterritorialization for thinking through configurations of the contemporary.

The Ground as Temporal Multiplicity

Ramos's work, which shuttles between writing and installation, is structurally constructed around that "chamado do chão" in which everything that falls—bodies, tree-trunks, remains—becomes an indicator of heterogeneous

temporalities, of interruptions of every present, in a sort of geology or stratumography of the living, right in that place where it appears as a fossil and at the limit of the non-living. From the installation *III*, which responds to the 1992 Carandiru massacre, to *Morte das casas* (2004), based on a poem by Carlos Drummond de Andrade where rainfall invades the interior of a house and announces its collapse, to the recent book of poems and photographs *Junco* (2013), where the poems are deployed in conjunction with photographs of dead dogs and toppled trunks: the question of the ground, its pull, and its sediments operates as a sort of mold in Ramos's aesthetic imagination.³

This "call of the ground" goes beyond a thematization of death. It unfolds around the possibility of a language—and of the world that harbors it—made up of "os restos da antiga, calcinada," in which men "ao invés de tornarem-se ventríloquos das coisas tivessem transformado as próprias cinzas, a terra deserta, o mau cheiro de tantos bichos mortos, expostos ao céu e à risada das hienas, se tivessem transformado as próprias hienas em sujeito e predicado de seu mundo moribundo. Se tivessem a coragem de escrever e falar com pedaços e destroços" (*O* 30-31).

A language in which words become continuous not exactly with things, but with *remains*, a language in which the task of words is not so much to represent the world as it is to give testimony of what dies and at the same time survives, of what becomes the sediment of matter and bodies, of that passage between death and survival: a language made up of signs and remains as the threshold that marks and connects those times that crop up there where the dead appears—that is, where the ground is calling, as a kind of birth toward other world and other time. There, non-human memory is at stake, one that, says Ramos, would lend our steps "o tremor do terremoto" and our laughter "a potência do vento lá fora" (*O* 31). That language—made up of the continuity between words and remains turned points of light over times that are not those of the subject but rather those of the materials that surround it and constitute it—is, therefore, an infinite repertoire of knowledge, not about death, but instead about *survival*. That which remains, that which falls, that which lasts: that which survives. Language here is fundamentally the instantiation of that

³ Eduardo Jorge de Oliveira (*Invenção* and "Inventar") makes explicit the connection between the figure of the "chamado do chão" and *Morte das casas*.

survival, the capturing of times, that survival whose time is not that of the subject, nor even that of the human, but rather that of those processes—“este caos, esta correnteza de lava e morte” (Ramos, *O* 31)—that inscribe other temporal scales that without coinciding with the human constantly resituate it in a sensory universe that no longer reflects it. Such is the task, I would like to suggest, of the aesthetic in the present, a task which finds exemplary incarnation in Ramos’s project: it unfolds—creates declensions of—the temporal layers in relation to which the very space of subjectivity is undone and remade through a body laced with heterogeneous temporalities. Decentering time through the mineral, the ashes, through biology, to reconfigure the ways in which we make subjectivities and worlds through a relationship—one marked by a violent, chaotic rhythm—with the matter that constitutes and surrounds us.

Many of Ramos’s works revolve around what we could call landscapes of survival (Giorgi). Landscapes of abandonment, of neglect, of ruin, where bodies fall and remain—landscapes that point to an “afterwards” of the living body, of its plenitude, and yet that “afterwards” is not terminal but instead inscribes its own temporality, a “beginning.” *Landscapes of survival* as a formal unit, a way of articulating a mode of the sensible: a grammar for distributing matter through that “crossing” of time that is the threshold between death and survival. They are landscapes that say, “Death has been through here;” or rather, they originate in that recurring point of departure, according to Eduardo Jorge, who says that in Ramos’s work “no início era a morte”: in the beginning, death—death as beginning (“Inventar” 25). At the same time, these landscapes speak of a universe where the idea of an originary Nature—exterior to human action, capable of regenerating itself in cycles—fades and ceases to function as a framework of intelligibility, as though that frame were decomposing or falling into pieces whose time is not at all organic or cyclical but rather gravitates toward the inert and inorganic. Landscapes of survival seem to dismantle inherited notions of life and *bios* as well as their correlate in “Nature,” forging a new mold through matter, its latencies, and its vibration.

Many of the texts and fragments gathered in *Cujo*, Ramos’s 1993 book, register this dismantling. They are texts that, in a number of cases, revolve around the question of temporality and the tension between “o tempo humano” and “o todo sem tempo” but “em expansão.” *Cujo* is a book made up of fragmentary texts that in no way mean to configure an organic or cohesive

trajectory: these are instead sketches, notes, disjointed fictions. The book functions, in this sense, as a sort of fragmentary poetics: an archive of aesthetic problems and questions in which the question of time, coupled with the passage between death and survival, appear as a recurring vector.

In one of the book's texts (none of them have titles), Ramos tests out a *poetics of temporality* that inheres in that composed dimension of matter and bodies—reflecting the fact that bodies are never a given organic unity but rather made up of parts in conjunction or disjunction—that resolves into “*duração*.” “Esta beleza do todo receberá, todavia, a aparência fracionada de suas partes, adquirindo uma *duração*” (63). That beauty of duration that magnetizes parts and fractions, segments and sequences—a sort of gravitational force—is opposed to pure chaos, called “*vida cretina*,” in which there is no possible reconciliation. The beauty of duration, against the “*vida cretina*”: “Esta duração é o tempo humano, corpóreo, fraco e decaído, mas que catapulta o olhar para o todo sem tempo, vermelho, dourado, em expansão sem cansaço” (63).

That “*olhar*” toward the time without time, that timelessness “em expansão:” that is what Ramos stakes his aesthetic project on. In that expanding dimension with those singular rhythms and mute latencies is where he drafts the place of something like a subjectivity, that is primarily a sensorial subjectivity, a *sensorium* in which, as we will see, an *exposed* subjectivity unfolds. A body in tension with a subject that never coincides with it nor with its relations: many of his works are cartographies of that non-coincidence; that is where he situates the inquiry into subjectivity.

Other texts in *Cujo* explicitly test out that uncertain place of an open subjectivity, one exposed to the matter that pulls it out of itself. I am interested in these texts because they stage the creation of a subjective voice, in first person, that is dragged out, disfigured by the pressure of a pressing materiality that acts on it and brings with it times that are foreign to that subjectivity.

In one of these fragments, there appears a voice belonging to a body that—without further narrative explanation—sinks into quicksand, and it registers the inexorable slowness of that ground that does not sustain it: “A lama daquele lugar já chegara à minha cintura (nunca pensei que afundar fosse tão lento)” (Ramos, *Cujo* 53). Ramos adds: “Eu estava próximo dos destroços dos cipós (que eram os cipós nascendo), às folhas derretidas (que eram outras folhas nascendo), às rochas se desfazendo em pedregulhos e aos pedregulhos se

desfazendo em grãos de areia (que eram outros pedregulhos e outras rochas se formando)” (*Cujo* 53).

The threshold of death as beginning, that which falls and becomes undone, destroyed, and yet represents a birth: that process in which the agents are not human, one that registers the time of matter and other living things, frames the voice that says “eu.” And a vegetable, animal, a mineral world that “swallows” that body:

Não sei se vi ou imaginei a ascensão confusa de tudo o que é daqui, de tudo o que é dos pés, até lá. Havia pouco tempo para mim, por tempo para as coisas e por isto tudo parecia tão intenso e cheio de sentido? Porque eu estava morrendo (eu era uma escultura morrendo, um peso, um contorno sendo tragado por outro corpo de menor densidade: meus pulmões é que não se acostuariam com isto) as folhas gritavam e as estrelas desciam? (Ramos, *Cujo* 53)

This scene—a sinking body, attentive to the multiplied microscopy of all that surrounds it—is elaborated around a duration made up of heterogeneous times: the subject’s own body that attends to the multiplicity of processes with which it never completely coincides despite their proximity, and that push the body to its own materiality. A voice that breaks away from the demarcated, defined body, from the contours of the body proper—a body that loses definition when confronting these multiple processes of death and birth that surround it and swallow it up. The voice, like an incorporeal agent, registers that heterogeneous multiplicity, those layers and series of events (death, birth) that increasingly take over the space of “the proper.” The “eu” that dissolves into its component forces and parts: an “I” that no longer coincides—or that coincides less and less—with an individualized body, instead becoming a point from which to view processes that criss-cross it and through which it travels: a point of view on *between-bodies* made up of diverse times that cannot be synthesized. That point of view is that of the ground, never aerial, solar, or incorporeal; it is chthonic, among sediments, layers, and folds of earth and terrain: its place is on that infinitely dividing threshold between the surface and subterranean lines; it is that which oscillates and moves at earth-level.

If this is the voice of a body that sinks and dies to attend the event of multiple births—where the dead seems to negate death since other times emerge from the inert and cadaverous—in another untitled text, another voice and another “eu” ties together death and the beginning as the very time of enunciation: speaking fastens together those two times not through unfolding or continuity but as pure intensity. A voice capable of situating and communicating a virtual time:

Eu quis ver, mas não o vi. Eu quis ter, mas não o tive. Eu quis.
Eu quis o deus, mas não o tive. Eu quis o homem, o filho, o
primeiro bicho, mas não os pude ver. Estava deitado, desperto.
Estava desde o início. [...] Estava debruçado, morto desde o
início. A grama alta quase não me deixava ver. Estava morto
desde o comecinho. (Ramos, *Cujo* 27)⁴

It is a voice that indicates an origin that never happened, a world that did not take place, a world that could have been but never was, as though it captured that vacillating moment of the real, where it combines with the potential of that which could have occurred and now remains latent. The voice *is* that latency, the consciousness of that dormant life, like a parallel dream and its unfolding condensed in that dead birth or that death that nevertheless is born:

Quis o homem, mas não este aqui. Quis um deus, mas não este aqui. Ouvi os mil ruídos sem saber do quê. Estava debruçado sobre a grama. Quis virar o corpo e olhar o céu mas não este aqui. Quis olhar a carne desde o comecinho, por trás da pele mas não demasiado profundo. Quis olhar a carne e a raiz da primeira planta (esta só tinha caule). [...] Era um fóssil da primeira planta mas não esta planta aí. (Ramos, *Cujo* 28-29)

“Não este aqui”: as though that “aqui” were always already divided by, laced with, distributed by that which could have appeared or been and that

⁴ This text forms part of *III*, one of Ramos’s best-known installations, which revolves around the Carandirú massacre.

nevertheless remained unrealized, unactualized. Giving voice to that latent time: the other origin, the first root, the first flesh that is never fully present. What is at stake here? This reverse, this opposing side, this flipside that accompanies the real, a time simultaneous with but different from the unfolding of continuous time; that which is contained in the real but is irreducible to reality, that which exists as latency and potential but is not actualized in bodies, linear times, or extensions of matter: the virtual that Deleuze and Simondon identified as the memory of the real, as the archive of its potential (Sauvargagnes). Intensive time, condensed time. Here, this “eu” aims to coincide with that time: memory of what never happened, that which is waiting to take place, that which, like an imperceptible plane, accompanies our worlds, our bodies, our relations. Here that duration appears once again, in the decomposition, or rather, the dismantling of the components of bodies, of reality, of matter. An “analytic” register of parts and factors, to situate them in a duration; not an “organic” time but rather the time of multiplicities—temporalities that are heterogeneous, non-synthesizing, in tension. Among the extensions and contractions of matter, among bodies’ processes of birth and death, in those fissures, breaks, and fractures of time, lies the other time: the time of all that could have happened but did not, the latency of the coming event, potential that awaits. The point of view belonging to that which passes through bodies without ever coinciding with them, existing instead in their contours, on their edges, at their outer limit.

And again, a voice at earth-level, thinking and speaking from the ground, like a vegetable—where vegetable life seems to serve as a model or mold: “Era um fóssil da primeira planta mas não esta planta aí” (Ramos, *Cujo* 29). The fossil that speaks, that from the scale of its mineralization inscribes the possibility of a birth, of a sleeping, contained life: the vibration of matter that echoes in the voice that says “eu.”

The texts in *Cujo* test out the possibility of an enunciation that is not modeled along the lines of biography or autobiography—*bios* in its human, personal, recognizable form, be it individual or collective, the “eu” or the “we”—but rather is formed by the non-human temporalities that run through it and reshape it, like a *sensorium* of that geological agent that the language of the anthropocene speaks of. It is an enunciation that operates on declensions of the place of the “proper,” of the “autos,” the turning back on itself on which our

(auto)biographical records, the rhetoric of our selves, is founded, distributing it along a net of mineral or vegetable times, the times of a ground that resolves itself as a plurality of possible worlds, and above all, a plurality of heterogeneous temporal scales that cannot be synthesized in the human, the natural, or the cosmic. That multiplied ground that accumulates layers (or “skins” as Eduardo Jorge indicates), made up of remains, of what has fallen and seems dead: there emerge those points of view, those perspectives that “world-make” from times that are neither “proper to them,” nor are they “ours.”

Vegetative, Inorganic: Hypotheses on *Bios*

In “Monólogo para um tronco podre”—a text that forms part of *Ensaio geral* (2007) and that dialogues with the more well-known “Monólogo para um cachorro morto”—the narrative voice, “como se contasse uma fábula,” relates the fate of a fallen tree-trunk that arrives at its new life following its apparent death:

Parecia morto, mas nascera [...]. A confraria dos bichos úmidos confabulava sobre o tronco deitado em que enfiava as unhas. ‘O céu morreu para ele,’ diziam as lesmas. ‘O chão que se prepara, numa lentíssima reificação, para mordê-lo.’ ‘Mas que chão será o dele?’ respondia a folhagem. ‘Chão de terra? De areia? O chão submarino?’ A tudo o tronco escutava, fingindo que dormia. E ao passo, à passara, a voz de um melro, ao ruído da roda —a tudo o tronco ouvia, fingindo que estava morto. (Ramos, *Ensaio geral* 365)

As in other texts, it is an unassigned voice, a voice without a proper body (it oscillates between the “confraria dos bichos” and the trunk itself) that is situated on the threshold between the living and the dead, and, like the previous voices, in relation to the ground this body will lie in, where the ground ever so slowly prepares itself to “morder-lo.”

Prosopopoeia here as a rhetorical principle of animation—where the ground “bites,” the leaves “respond,” the slugs “speak”—traces a meticulous and multiplied geography populated by the points of view or perspectives that

narrate and construct that potential world of the fallen tree-trunk. (Which might it be? The sand, the earth, the soil?) A plurality of voices and gazes where everything—the living and the inert—acquires a point of view, and thus a place of enunciation and the capacity for world-making.⁵ This plurality takes place, once again, between life and death, in a zone of passage:

Tudo estava certo. Cresceu, firmou-se, molhou os pés como uma boa árvore deve fazer e seguiu despreocupada para cima e para sempre. Até que caiu. Caiu. Como a matéria se confunde à outra, como uma matéria marca a outra, cava a outra, o tronco caído virou madeira e secou a seta de um rio ascendente e úmido que lhe corria pelo meio, desde sempre—ainda bicho, pedra demente. (Ramos, *Ensaio geral* 364-65)

Materials that run together and mark one another, fusing and sculpting: material actants, without bodies, pure forces along lines of passage. This process occurs in that place where the branch—as with all else—“falls,” the lowered gaze of gravity and of the dense magnetism of matter: “Caiu como uma árvore cai, por dentro, por adesão ao tombo, por amor ao solo” (Ramos, *Ensaio geral* 365). As though that fall and that death swept back the curtain of a miniscule, imperceptible theater that finally gains depth and life. “Parecia morto, mas nascera. Tinha o tamanho da altura de onde viera” (Ramos, *Ensaio geral* 365).

This point of view is, once again, that of the “call of the ground:” a call that has nothing to do with the conscience, nor with the interpellation by reason or by the soul—by what would be “properly” human. It is instead the force of those materials that all fall, even the lightest among them. *Cadere, cadaver*: the call of the ground has everything to do with death and the terrain of a survival, the passage of life through that apparently dead matter that, like the tree-trunk, feigns sleep and listens to everything: “a tudo o tronco ouvia, fingindo que estava morto” (Ramos, *Ensaio geral* 365). The listening of the inert signals the

⁵ Speaking of vegetable life as a model for thinking about the living, Emanuele Coccia says that for plants “faire monde, et, à la inverse, construire (notre) monde [...] n’est qu’un synonyme de l’être” ‘to make a world and inversely, to construct (our) world [...] is but a synonym for being’ (55).

latency of life that here acquires a rare intensity and vibration: that is where the text situates this enunciation and this listening.

The brotherhood of damp critters, the sisterhood of creatures and plants, all an echo of the singular languages that vibrate between the living and the dead: what is unfolding here, in the impulse of animation—which circulates among bodies and materials, among animals and vegetables—is an expansion of the vital beyond the biological organism, beyond the living body as we conceive of it in the biological and positivist tradition. The monologue for the fallen tree-trunk is the diffuse and circulating record of an animation that traverses bodies between the living and the dead, that runs through the apparently inert and brushes aside this mere appearance to uncover a latent potential in the dead and in the fallen—in the ground.⁶ The “call of the ground,” then, in very clear ways, is shown to be a hypothesis about the living: toward the vegetative and the inorganic, against the grain of the positivity of the animal organism as a model of the vital principle. “Anti-zôo, anti-vivo,” writes Ramos in *Cujo* (47): a call to situate there the hypothesis about *bios*, about life or the living as the principle that world-makes and sets up a perspective and point of enunciation for knowledge. To reconfigure the forms and molds of that principle; to work from the inert and its latency, its survival; to dispute and contest the immunitary images—saturated by political designs—of Life and the Human; to operate on other assemblages, other parts and connections at work in the matter we are made of: in order to do this, a return to the ground, a listening to its call.

Temporal Scales

This insistence or return of the ground in Ramos, does not speculate on a new configuration of landscape, of place, or of territory (all notions that devise a certain resolution of the spatial as a stable condition of knowledge that would take on various configurations), but instead points, paradoxically, to temporality as the “frame” that makes the living and *bios* intelligible. The ground—that “call” that echoes through so many of his works—is, in these images and writing, primarily a temporal figure, strata, lines of time and speeds. What

⁶ On the tensions between *bios* and *geo* as conceptual figures for thinking about the relation between life and non-life, see Povinelli. For a more nuanced take on the opposition between *organic* and *inorganic*, and the notion of “archivida,” see Nancy.

comes from the ground and passes through it, what “rises” from that “below” made up of infinite folds, are times that dislocate what we call “the present” and that also disorder all arrangements of social, collective, human, national, civilizing, and modern time, because they insist on inscribing non-human temporalities (that are biological, material, mineral, geological) as the stuff and driving impulse of fiction or of aesthetic form in general. At the same time, those temporalities can neither be captured or codified by the notion of “Nature,” nor as time or natural history understood either as a process of slow mutation or as a figuration of “temporal cycles” of death and regeneration. Nothing here germinates or grows as “organism;” everything pulses, vibrates, reverberates from the inert and the dead and exhibits its own historicity. Survival is not continuity or reproduction, but instead is resonance and vibration arising from that apparently infinite juxtaposition that is the ground. Thus: neither Subject nor Human Life, nor Nature; what “rises” here from the ground are temporalities that do not adapt to the categories that we have become accustomed to for thinking about the times of bodies.

That ground is not a landscape, in the classic sense of a visual composition of ordered visibility; nor is it territory, in the sense of a space intervened in and made habitable through social practices. It is a distorting force that disorders all operations of representation and figuration because it magnetizes, drawing forces, intensities, and environmental lines that cannot be represented or reduced to a stable “form” but that instead inundate the space of the form with non-human lines and strata and bring with them memories and times that do not coincide with the memories and times of a *self*, of a *we*, of “the social,” nor in the times of the natural or the organic. The ground is that fundamental temporal factor: it is what bursts forth, insists, interrupts, dislocating our habitual constructions of time. The ground, then, as movement and velocity, as that which moves (and never stopped moving) beneath our feet.⁷

The insistence on the question of the ground in Ramos is thus indicative of a more general shift that defines much of the sensibility of the contemporary. There, perspectives are articulated through non-human temporalities as protocols of non-teleological narration in which what was previously configured as “nature” (space, the limit, the alterity of the human condensed in

⁷ On the notion of “desert” as movement and flight, see Rodríguez.

“the natural”) and “life” (the *bios* that our biologizing and vitalist traditions identified with categories such as *organism* and processes such as *reproduction*) disintegrates into forces, lines, materials that are woven in new ways into subjective and collective experience and that make their pressure felt as “time,” as forces of temporality. What one might call an ambient porosity of the aesthetic register is operating here, opening to environmental forces, not as an operation that “formalizes” them but on the contrary as a surface that lets itself be acted upon by their gravitational pull.

The moment when we think of the human as a geological agent implies mutations of a temporal scale and of the ways it configures the human experience and the spaces and assemblages of relation between the human and non-human. That transformation of the temporal, those non-human temporalities, bio- or cosmopolitical, are, I believe, one of the most decisive factors exerting pressure on and shaping the contours of the *sensorium* of the contemporary. Fundamentally because they bottom out the narrative frames articulated around the times of society and the construction of simultaneous temporal imaginaries that weave the possibility of the collective in terms of a modulation of the communitarian, the national, and human sociability. That protocol bottoms out due to the pressure that these non-human temporalities exert at the moment in which the distinction between nature and culture is dismantled or ceases to have the epistemological, political, and ordering power that it has had for centuries.

Remains, discards, waste: bodies and things that fall from consumption and from collective futures and that insist and persist in specific temporalities. Situating those temporalities, giving them formal frameworks, strengthening their expressive capacities for articulation: the emergence of these new horizons shapes our aesthetic experience. What we read in those temporalities are scattered, heterochronic rhythms that pace the configuration of knowledges and conceptions through which our epoch reworks notions such as “life,” “memory,” and “cosmos” precisely in the moment when those notions are uncoupled from what had been their correlates during the last two centuries—“organism,” “subject,” and “nature.” The space of this uncoupling, the line of thought that it traces, develops around the question of temporality as a formal vector that runs through and decenters what we call the “present.”

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