

BIRDS, A LOT OF BIRDS

Address of the Academician elect **ÁNGEL MARCOS HERNÁNDEZ**
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IN THE BEGINNING

In the nineteen-sixties and seventies, life was very tranquil in these parts. The villages, the homes, the schools, the trade unions, cinema, art ... everything was very tranquil. In Medina del Campo, the town where I was born, that tranquillity enveloped in the winter mist was at times adorned by the arrival of dodgem cars in one of the squares. Ignoring the order and the cold, they offered us music and coloured lights. Closer to summer, the shooting range of Señora Nati and sometimes the tombola for a ham permitted us to gaze at the spectacle for an infinite time. It hardly needs to be said what an overload of stimulants was provided by the festivities of San Antolín: running of cows, competitions for shop windows, fireworks, gallopers, chair-o-planes, crushed coloured ice, balloons, street parties... an abundance to reaffirm that once the festivities were over, the penury experienced by some of us took possession of us once again for the remainder of the year. Obviously, as we were small, it did not greatly matter to us. The entertainment of frying small birds to eat came with the snow. We dug a hole in the snow, placed a sieve there at an angle supported by a stick, to which we attached a string. Then we hid some way away and pulled the string when a number of birds seeking food were under the sieve. In this way, an artificial vault with small holes in it fell over them. The truth is that we were lively and ingenious: plenty of games on the threshing floor, plenty of football – though the game lasted only until the son of the local plutocrat went home with the ball – many bonfires and plenty of fear. The boys of my district were sometimes uneasy: between the imposed fear and the hidden transgression, we certainly were uneasy.

It is a well-known fact that sleep is a restorative and that to dream introduces ambiguity into life, giving it oxygen. It was written in the stars that the magic of the dark would appear in my life, and so it was. The points accumulated by buying (I think) bars of chocolate were exchanged by my mother for a Nerasport camera using 127 black-and-white roll film with a symbol to take photos on a cloudy day, another for sunny days, and nothing more. However, it was enough to make me want to take photographs from then onwards, though the price for developing and printing the film was a drawback that frustrated many intentions. I was fascinated by the enormous flashlights of the wedding photographers in the town, “Foto Montes” and “Foto Esperanza”. What was the reason for the second of these names [esperanza means hope in Spanish]? What a name for a studio! It seemed more suitable for a funeral parlour or a kiosk selling lottery tickets; or, perhaps it was an aspiration, or rather an invocation of good luck to improve the physique of the photographer. The owner of “Foto Esperanza” was hump-backed. Without wishing to be perverse, it could be that passing the identity-card photos that he took with almost mystic secrecy over his physical alteration might bring luck to the person portrayed. If this was so, luck was delivered with the photo.

It also could be that the creator of the studio shared with Susan Sontag the idea that, “To take a photograph is to participate in mortality, vulnerability, mutability of another person or thing. Precisely because they cut off a moment and freeze it, all photographs testify to the merciless passage of time”¹. If this were so, the name “Foto Esperanza” might have meaning from a more funereal standpoint.

In Medina del Campo I do not remember any more permanent photographers with studios than those already mentioned, “Foto Esperanza” and “Foto Montes”, and a lady on the main square, but others took photographs in the streets of the town and around the Castle of La Mota. They all had the appearance of being people who were very sure of themselves and their faces revealed something of a sneer of complacent certainty, as though they knew that the history of the place, our history, was being written by them. I recall them as important people, respected by me, and they never permitted me to pass beyond the first curtains of their studios. Never, even when I became a photographer, did they allow me to see their laboratories, the room of magic, of tricks, of red-tinged darkness, a strong room that I knew existed due to its smell of fixer. They were really good. They were full of popular wisdom, of clumsy reasoning that was conclusive for them. How could they battle with the luck of Niepce, the poses of Daguerre or the stage machinery of a tightrope walker? They retouched eyebrows and eyelashes writing on the negative with strokes more resembling those of a reiterative automat than of an artistic draftsman. On leaving their studios after being photographed, we may not have felt handsome but we certainly did feel important.

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In the mid-nineteen sixties three of us, good friends, proposed drawing the world by means of photography. Taking photographs became an obsession: we spent sleepless nights developing, the windows covered with black cardboard so that no light could enter; the alchemy of photography was revealed before our eyes, fascinating us and marking our limitations. Everything had to be learnt on your own, or at the most with two friends as obsessive as you were yourself. We used to read publicity leaflets of all kinds, we struggled to clean the negatives, to iron out the copies... What fascination! At last, enveloped by the pale redness of the room the birth of a photograph appeared before us, little by little, grey to grey; first the dark areas, then the medium tones, and finally the detail of the lights. We surely did not know too much, but the obsession, the interest, the ritual was such that those first photographs possessed an occult power. How was it possible that even a cupboard under the stairs measuring no more than one and a half square yards could serve as an improvised laboratory, and we could spend hours there, smelling of hyposulphite and developer? I do not remember how we managed to buy the Microdol X or D 76 developers, or smooth photographic papers that gave little contrast, or normal paper, or hard paper to attain deep black tones: the wrinkles of the portraits printed on those hard papers resembled scars produced on the skin by blows of the developer. Why this compulsion, this obsession to take photographs? I am convinced that it was only the desire to break the excessive imposed tranquillity, to brush away the layer of uneasiness, that motivated it all. For, in the words of Julio Cortázar, “among the many ways of combating nothingness, one of the best is to take photographs”.

¹ Susan SONTAG: *Sobre la fotografía*. Barcelona, Edhasa, 1992, p. 25.

We used to see some of the photographs in pictorialist style by Ortiz-Echagüe, we would imitate painting when we photographed. That idea of photography as an autonomous technique of representation was not contemplated by us. Later on we became interested in photographs practising what became known as *documentary realism*: Miserachs, Culladó, Ramón Masats, Catalá Roca, Ontañón, Sanz Lobato ...

For all of this, the interest in other photographic tendencies that for a long time marked the creative direction I finally followed was awoken by the *Nueva Lente* magazine. In its pages were published the work of a group of playful, critical Spanish photographers with a marked artistic intention. This magazine was created in the summer of 1971, when the panorama of Spanish magazines specialising in photography was desolate. *Arte Fotográfico* was the only one with a regular calendar of publications and it perfectly pleased the run-of-the-mill amateur photographers. The magazine published the prizes of competitions classifying photography into categories: landscape, portrait, architecture. And it was the faithful ally of the photography clubs, militants of reporting and pictorialist photography. *Nueva Lente* with its war cry, “*Vale todo*” (anything goes), defended the plurality of technology and of people when acting artistically. Bonifacio Varea, Pablo Pérez-Mínguez and Carlos Serrano were the artistic directors responsible for navigating a boat without economic oars and with serious obstacles imposed by the censorship then in force. Joan Fontcuberta, Pere Formiguera, Jorge Rueda and Salvador Obiols, among others, formed part of this project on the pages of which photographs of a different kind were published, thinking of photography as a means, as a language. Choked economically, the magazine finally closed down in 1983: so much provocation was unwelcome in the world of publicity of those days.

The contents of *Nueva Lente*, the portfolios they used to publish, stimulated in me an enthusiasm for a different manner of photography, abandoning the archetype of the usual photography of the time which was concentrating on refining the technique while ignoring the language. *Nueva Lente* showed colour and scenography in photography, for those of us who, avid to create, enjoyed the good fortune to have a number of the magazine in our hands.

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In due course, the photographs I started to take corresponded to actions many of which were born in pain and many from affection; also, with an automatism of thought that was not aligned to any current at all. It was as though the solitude of the action served me as an exercise to become a sniper. I used scenography and constructed images, not using photomontage. The adoration I felt for the Dadaists and Surrealists remained as a species of admiration for their actions and thought.

To construct, to create scenes... Around me was the entire cosmos, the dusty plain where the clods of earth dissolved from shear dryness, the crests flew and built up along the roadsides when the atmosphere was disturbed in summer, the sheep strove to find food in the rough stubble. The whole world that made up the imagery that mattered to me was all around me. Herrera from the bar, Maureles the beggar, Tardes the drunkard, madam Juana la Loca ... here in this universal scenography, the atrezzo was already set up. It only had to be photographed, but once prepared, illuminated, framed.

“To know is, above all, to recognise. Recognition is the modality of knowledge that now is identified with art.” This reflexion of Susan Sontag perfectly explains why the photography I have come to produce has constantly demanded decor, stage machinery, scenography. The great lie of photography is also its great truth: in it objects are recognised and so, taking advantage of this fact, I used objects to construct “truth”, I assumed that everything was prepared and proposed another type of photography, another great lie / truth. There was no allegory, no supplanting, I did not want to contribute to numbing people’s awareness, I was interested in knowledge free of any presumption, a knowledge that would allow one to enter into relationships. It is no coincidence that entering into a relationship must be an act of courtesy, the same courtesy that has to be observed in the commitment of the creator towards the creation. I learned that there are good photographs, very good ones, which though magnificent may not be works of art. Art is something else, and that something else to which I refer has nothing to do with the *punctum* or with the *stadium*, the two qualities that Roland Barthes considered essential in a photograph. Even when perceiving images that shouted at one and hurt, I wanted to incorporate the work I did into the territory of art and that has always been my intention. There have been long periods of time when all of this did not preoccupy me, when I did not want to conjecture or express an opinion on the “what” of art, but the rarity of complex thoughts existing generally in discursive approaches, the intention by the established power to standardise everything and everyone, and the lack of gentility professed in part of the photographic universe towards knowledge, has led me to take up these reflexions once again, while being conscious of the damage that one might inflict, or rather, of the annoyance that might be caused to many makers of photographs as interested as ever in apparatus and so uninterested in solitudes.

Paisaje n° 11, 1997

ÁNGEL MARCOS, *Paisaje n° 11*, 1997, 140 x 206 cm. Cibachrome, wood, iron, foam and glass.

GEORGIC?

On the calcification of seeds, together with the abandoned ropes, in the disappearance of thought,

invisible hands weave the grass. Ah how I fear its purity! I see

a bloody moon and, in the food besieged by ants, mortal grass, black cannulas and, further away, under immobile branches, shadows and flowers and condoms.

But, is it I who look with my eyes?

Bones polished by vertigo go a long way, the fermentation of the dew goes a long way, and a deep blue air comes over everything. Its perfection comes from the sacrifice of the birds.

Is there any substance or mercy in me? Only boundaries? I see marks of light, high gallows, and serpents and industrial oils under the lobules of the poppies.

Am I in myself and do I weigh upon the earth? It is strange.

However, I admit, I am afraid and the insects live in my heart.

Antonio Gamoneda

N.B. Poetic or not, the above text has to do with some photographs of Ángel Marcos being before my eyes².

This diptych that exemplifies the sinister, required a complex and, of course, intentional, creative process. Observing this *Paisaje n° 11* (Landscape N° 11) that I created in 1997, several analytical possibilities open up. In the first place it is a diptych, a plastic solution commonly used in art, and not only in ancient art but also in contemporary art. Sometimes this format is used due to structural limitations; on other occasions it is because of narrative necessities. In Antiquity diptychs were shallow boxes with two sunken covers full of wax on the interior, where there was writing; in early Christian writing, in the diptych the living were placed on one side and the dead on the other, all considered members of the Church. The diptych has had another quality that is important to me: the privacy of its interior, since it can be closed. This interested me. Indeed, the piece I am presenting here is a wooden box, and only when it is opened do the two photographs become visible. The continuous narrative permitted by the diptych is also manifest in our Baroque altarpieces, and I would like to think that through the narrative quality of the diptych *Paisaje N° 11* I wished to construct the calvary that I am presenting to you. All the collective unconscious of barbarity, to express it in terms of Carl Gustav Jung, appeared before my eyes when, as I walked through the pinewoods close to Medina, a hanging greyhound suddenly appeared. I do not remember with any precision the deep impression that this caused in me, I do not know, I could not permit myself too much emotion.

Before continuing with reflexions on *Paisaje n° 11*, by way of clarifying matters, allow me to recall what Gustavo Bueno wrote in the catalogue containing the series of photographs to which this diptych belongs. Gustavo Bueno says that words pronounced on a work of art are not always to be understood “as a rhetorical addition, artificial and useless, concealing a reality capable of being present in its own right”. And shortly afterwards he adds,

To what extent are the ideological and doctrinal principles that artfully prepared the scenography and its figures to be considered extra-photographical? What is for sure is that a photograph, including a *document* photograph, would be aesthetically speechless if we were to deprive it of any type of “poetic resonator”.

There is no photography without poetry and in this sense it would be possible to extend to photography the words of Horace: “Ut pictura, poesis”. However, it is far from easy to understand in each case the internal connection that might link a given photograph to a system of ideological principles, with a poetic, which conforms strictly to it ...”³

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I spent a long time moving through the surroundings of the town where I was born, observing the traces left by man in nature, mapping with affection the twenty kilometres around Medina del Campo, which revealed to my sensibility all the memory contained in the affection, while at the same time the remembered affection generated history. I found that dead greyhound near El Campillo one 28th December; I arranged

² Cf. Antonio GAMONEDA, in Ángel Marcos: *Paisajes*. Valladolid, Diputación de Valladolid-La Fábrica. Arte contemporáneo, 1997, p.7.

³ Cf. Gustavo BUENO, in Ángel Marcos: *Paisajes*, op.cit., p.10.

the lighting and the diffusers to reduce the powerful backlight from the sky, reinforced by the mist, and I ensured that the animal would not swing round by fixing the fragile rope that held it. I had already set up the camera on its tripod and, placing the black cloth over my head so as to see the inverted image in the frosted glass of the camera, I took the photograph. I cut the greyhound down, concealing any traces of footprints that might have been left when doing so, and putting the cloth over me again I took the other photograph, the one on the left, in which the hanging dog was no longer to be seen.

At a first glance by a Western person, reading the image from left to right, it would seem in principle to have a simple interpretation. Nature running wild in that harmonised backlighting: the pine trees, the sky, the undergrowth of spurge, everything is fine like that, but man alters it and, as so often, adds to the landscape and subtracts life. It is true that this narrative reading of the image, from left to right – first the landscape, then the hanging greyhound in the same landscape and within the same frame of reference – makes sense, makes it easy to read, is understandable.

However, I should like to take our introspection towards areas of pain, of affection and of memory; this, evidently, is another reading. Indeed, the pinewood is no longer nature, it has become landscape, and because of this, as landscape, it was necessary to place the photograph of the pinewood in the first place. It is like wanting to show what had been, it is to confirm (or, rather, to accept) what Walter Benjamin thought when he commented that, in the attraction of a ruin, what lies at the basis of the attraction is the desire for completeness of what is observed.

This pinewood, a referential territory in battles and in love affairs, apart from providing fire wood, has been conquered by barbarity. Represented in the left-hand photograph by the softness of its nuanced light, it is also the scene of a crime and confirms that sinister elements creep in when the boundary between fantasy and reality becomes blurred.

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If we change the direction of our contemplation of the piece, in other words, reading it from right to left, we would firstly come face-to-face with the hanging greyhound, with the irreversible situation of an animal that had been elegant, fast, obedient, and suspended from life by a ridiculous rope, as though its stretched body wanted to surrender itself. It had been useful, a friend, a provider of prey, perhaps even of trophies, and it was hanged. Was this because it no longer ran as fast, or perhaps because it “was playing dirty”, in other words because its instinct led it to take a short cut in pursuit of its prey which, by this means, it reached sooner, as though guessing what course the hare was to take? The owner’s rough code towards it – to prevent it from using its intelligence – may possibly have led it to the gallows. How fragile is affection, how badly being useful is sometimes rewarded!

If we continue contemplating this *Paisaje n° 11*, we leave the greyhound behind and look at the clean landscape. Someone, we imagine, will think to cut it down; however, just in case, I will not go that way again. It must be recognised that our world pushes anything horrible into the background: anything ignominious must be put aside.

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Susan Sontag said that “brutal photos demand a prior brutality that has to be known. That has to be faced up to. A democratic society”, she added, “must submit itself to this type of exercise. Otherwise, in a certain sense it will convert itself into an accomplice of the brutality”. For his part, Jesús Remón wrote, referring to the work on which we are commenting:

Among the *Paisajes* of Ángel Marcos, Number 11 (1997) reminds us that we are not so different from those we repudiate as barbarians or uncivilized. In a summer woodland, between the light and shade of an empty pinewood, a pine tree appears with a greyhound hanged by we know not whom “without hearing, without sight, they ignore even tenderness”. The anguish and frustration produced by the scene reminds us that, unfortunately, everything can feed into hatred and violence, anger and hysteria, which blind people and make them deaf to any supplication to the point of annihilating all hope. Whilst love can read in the most distant star, hatred allows nothing more than planting burr in the garden of the soul.⁴

***Rastros n° 4*, 2003**

ÁNGEL MARCOS, *Rastros N° 4*, 2003. 162 x 122 cm. Siliconed photograph on methacrylate.

I should now like to pause for a moment at the work *Rastros n° 4* (Remains N° 4) of 2003, starting by recalling the words of Fernando Castro Flórez:

We know all too well that contemporary life is, to use a term defined by Marc Augé, that of a *non-place* from which different individual attitudes are established: to flee, fear, the intensity of the experience or rebellion. History transformed into a spectacle makes us forget everything “urgent”. It is as though space were trapped by time, as though there were no other history than the news of the day or of the day before, as though each individual history exhausts its motives, its words and its images in the inexhaustible *stock* of an unending history of the present. [...] Though it may sound pretentious or even ingenuous, the experience of art has to try to recover the dimension of territory, to *make place(s)* and no matter how complicated it may be, to propitiate “symbolic exchange”⁵.

I think that normally the exceptional is on the periphery; I know that power is at the centre, but that is all the same to me now. I want to talk about territory, about symbolism and absences, and it is not my wish to speak of territories of disaffection: my interest is in what has happened or what could have happened, not so much applied to the comic aspect of history as to what is adapted to the individual world. I should like to refer to the need for personal altars, but above all to the attempt at recognition of affections and of beauty, a beauty that is a jewel-case of situations, imposed at times like an optional atrezzo, which lives on in the memory to endorse the words of the Romantic poet William Wordsworth:

⁴ Cf. Jesús REMÓN: “Planificación y estrategia en un mundo global. Lectura contemporánea, a dos voces, desde la obra de Ángel Marcos”, in Ángel Marcos: *Rabo de lagartija*. Vitoria, Artium, 2001, p.79.

⁵ Fernando CASTRO FLÓREZ: “... algo huele a podrido”. La cartografía crítica de un tiempo desquiciado. (Un análisis fragmentario de una instalación fotográfica de Ángel Marcos)”, in Ángel Marcos: *Rabo de lagartija*, op.cit., pp.48-49.

What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
 Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
 We will grieve not, rather find
 Strength in what remains behind; ...

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This image that entertains nostalgia, *Rastros n° 4*, was prepared scenographically after I accidentally found wires of forgotten light bulbs hanging from some trees. I do not know what had taken place there, but it was recognisable to me; I was present at a time that had been.

A photograph always speaks to us of what has happened and never will occur again, it is the eternal past present. Basically, these lights are the photograph of what has happened, they are the light printed by the memory of the affections. This film with latent experiences is developed in the coloured lights of the light bulbs and these forgotten light bulbs are the print of a take that is not our own. When I prepared the scenography of the photograph, I was copying history and fantasy. The history narrated by a forgetting that can yet be recognised: for some they are the remains of a party, the forgetfulness after a festivity; for others they correspond to that interminable eve preceding what is to happen and so often proves a disappointment. As you know, things are just as we take them. Barthes, in *The Lucid Camera*, links it all to what Jacques Lacan calls the encounter, the occasion. It is curious how Lacan tells us to be clear that the encounter is already a lost encounter, like the decision only validated by loss.

Fantasy opens zip fasteners of coming and going, while fantasy is not the object of desire but its framing. Thus, the triangle formed by the red and yellow lights suspended from three pine trees overhanging the carpet of spurge appears to direct us towards somewhere. To the left, in the past, the wire of lights is open; it closes in the point on the right like flocks of birds that fly away. This coloured lance of events directs us unavoidably towards a morning that has already been: it is enough to observe these coloured light bulbs hanging from the pine trees for us to realise that they are indeed the object of desire, a desire demanded there, and the fact remains that though the light bulbs join up at the far right as though wishing to go forward, everything has already happened.

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We know that philosophy, like everything academic, needs what is known, even wanting to hang a mathematical label on the entire universe. Also, many of those who work in the “art territory” need their actions to be squared on a grid, a grid where the lines can only be drawn by what is labelled. I would like this photograph, *Rastros n° 4*, to be seen without any label imposed by reason. I want it to be validated solely by the indomitable impetus of desire and by the stimulus of personal history. It is reiterative to remember (but still I do it) that my work has taken as its constant point of reference the landscape of the plain, the setting of this tableland so close to *The Spirit of the Hive*, not only in the sense given to it by Maurice Maeterlinck when he talks of that powerful, enigmatic and magic spirit of the bees, but also in that of the film with the same title, where the projection of the film *Frankenstein* unleashes an explosion of events in the mind. This landscape where I live, full of sky and earth, in the few alterations in the

landscape contains events beyond all logic. I do not aim to make an apology of the strange, of the uncatalogued, but to stress that the palpitation fed by legends, rumours, rites and feelings of uneasiness have provided me with great potential for creation, and so, from this unexplained palpitation was born this image.

Walter Benjamin said that “the difference between the technical and magic is no more than a historical variable”. The encounter with the light bulbs forgotten in the trees, far from going unnoticed, generated a shudder in me that was anything but prudent, close to the recognition of something important, substantial, but I do not wish to make a mistake: the narration of the event is not exact, just as the cause producing it is inexact. This image of lights, pine trees and spurge is also a portico of solitude, a stomach of satisfied or frustrated desires, an allegory of the sadness of one who went to the rendezvous and did not find the person expected. But why did this person not appear?

Contemplating it as a spectator, I realise that this photograph is not pretty; the pine trees overwhelmed with black and the cold tone enveloping it all make any beauty impossible. “There is no longer anyone there”, I thought when I produced it, but looking at it today “there is still nobody”. It seems that someone could appear at any moment along the gentle twisting way formed by the trees towards the lights and that, on arriving there, he would hear: “Remember, but walk on”.

La subversión íntima, 2013

ÁNGEL MARCOS, *La subversión íntima. Non olet, 2013.*

To conclude, I wanted to present a recent work. Last year I undertook a project that I called *Intimate Subversion*. As on many other occasions, the fundamental geographical space where I carried it out was this land. The work I am now proposing to you is a photogram of the video that forms part of the project and was shown at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013.

I chose the suburbs of Tudas and La Mota in Medina del Campo, because they form part of the gallery of images from my childhood and youth: I lived close by the first of them and used to enjoy playing round the Castle of La Mota, though I have to admit that we rarely entered those districts because they formed part of what were considered “places that were not good”. Now, when I walk along their streets, they give me in return a whisper of goodness and a recognition of fondness: they are places where friendship is recognised.

I worked in these settings due to the internal dynamics they produce. Both are on the periphery of Medina del Campo. Las Tudas, created by poor people who lived in caves produced by the undulations in the terrain, has always been separated from the urban nucleus by threshing floors. For its part, La Mota was created around the castle that gives it the name, and it also was inhabited by people of humble condition. In both cases, the social class propitiated separation from the rest of the town, to which was added the frontiers imposed by the River Zapardiel and the railway tracks.

In these two districts, precisely due to their condition of isolation from the rest of the town, the conditions exist to establish very close personal relationships: the decisions of the neighbours are easily recognised and immediately alter the order of the community. These alterations, precisely because they are recognised immediately, are not anonymous, but are felt and differentiated. This is the basis of *La subversión íntima*, “that part of our thought, of our affections and of our activities that we recognise in “the others””.

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We have lost the sense of smell, a fundamental faculty of the human being, not due to the atrophy of the organs but because things no longer smell or if they do it does not reach us, they are perfectly canned, decisions are taken by a faceless individual. What is important to us is money, but where it comes from is not important. Individualism, for its part, is present in the field of relationships, where affective and geographical rootlessness is perceived as a factor of success. In these cold, pragmatic societies, identity is constantly recycled, and if on occasion expressions of solidarity occur it is due to what Richard Rorty has called a “common egoistic hope”: the primary instinct to group together in order to overcome situations of extreme difficulty.

The West is watching with astonishment the dismantling of the “welfare state”, the financial system has set itself up as an absolute power and imposed its conditions on labour, relegating human capital to a zero balance. Installed as we are in the management of the crisis, there is scarcely time to reflect on the changes necessary in the world of finance, in institutions and in values. The North-South gap is widening and Europe resigns itself to dismantling welfare in the midst of a panorama in which even bodies are merchandise.

The project I have called *La subversión íntima* (Intimate Subversion) is based on the consciousness of seeing a world in constant change and a reality that observes this change from the manner in which we establish relationships between each other, with nature or with the cosmos, what Ervin Laszlo has called a “quantum turning point”: a reality in constant evolution that presents us with the dilemma between the need for change or tossing a coin into the air in the more or less efficient management of the catastrophe, while not forgetting on the horizon the possibility of total collapse.

I want to stress that the parallelism between *La subversión íntima* and the new scientific paradigm on which the “quantum turning point” is based, for the first time is not of a technological nature, which does leave some room for hope because, as Albert Einstein said, one cannot solve a problem with the same mode of thought that caused it. Possibly, the actions we can take to introduce a sustainable civilisation must be linked to our most intimate thoughts and sentiments, these territories of creative and affective thought charged with energy and difficult to destroy. We know what are the results of the territories close to belongings: the supplanting of states of feeling by consumption. Let us try an affective approach because, furthermore, there is no alternative.

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When I look at this photograph I feel happy to be the son of photography and to go against the opinion of Charles Baudelaire expressed as follows in 1859:

If photography is permitted to replace art in any of its functions, soon it will have supplanted or corrupted it entirely, due to the natural alliance it will find in the stupidity of the multitude. Thus, it must return to its true obligation, which is to be the servant of the sciences and the arts.⁶

The photograph of *La subversión íntima* that we are now considering was taken in the suburb of Las Tudas. It is the house of Pandingui, a good man who in fine weather sits at the door. He no longer lives there. Inside, living there are hundreds of birds belonging to his son, as Pandingui says showing his satisfaction for what his son does which, at least in this respect, has come from him. The place is pleasant in the daytime and from there one can see the little suburb; by night it is like an apotheosis of a set impossible to achieve with synthetic images. One has to live the experience in order to be able to recreate a place that resembles it.

Observing this photograph I am invaded by a shiver of uncertainty, only balanced by the severity of the framing: oblique lines that direct us towards the place that conceals, the pathway that stops where the unknown begins, the curtain that guards. In the middle of the picture, slightly displaced towards the upper part, a white stain draws a small home, the chimney and the aerial pointing at the sky. By that chimney it is safe to say that Father Christmas will not be able to enter at Christmas, but at least there is a window where shoes can be left.

But what is inside? **Birds, a lot of birds.**

⁶ Quoted by Walter BENJAMIN in *Sobre la fotografía. Pequeña historia de la fotografía*. Valencia, Pre-Textos, 2007, p.52.