

Christmas in the Kalahari

Gean Moreno & Ernesto Oroza

1.

There is a seed lodged in a camel's digestive system. The animal is asleep in a stable in the dark hull of a ship that aims to break day at the port of San Cristóbal de la Habana. At first light, the boatswain orders that the labor of unloading the ship begin. The crew steps out of its lethargic state. The men start to poke and scream at the beasts. The camel rises clumsily. Its viscera unknots hours of immobility. The seed slides around; it sticks to one wall of the digestive track and then another. Lacking any ability to move on its own, it is tossed by the camel's untwisting intestines, as the animal propels, with its first and weak steps, the sanguinary irrigation of the body.

A few hours later, cramping after such a long wait, the camel awakens to the screaming of the sailors and stevedores announcing a final descent. As the beast is shoved by the other camels out of the hull, its intestines fill up with activity again. They echo the tunnels that lead out of the ship. As the animal is pulled by the steep slope of the ramp, the first lashing of the Caribbean sun fills it with fatigue. The fiery sting traverses the camel, from eyes to stomach. Its intestinal muscles, loosened by exhaustion, explode on the ramp. The planks are almost instantly covered with feces.

The seed, expelled into the open by a spasm, receives its own solar greeting. The unexpected events that follow will separate it equidistantly from all its possible futures. The pip rests on the manure, which in turn rests on the ramp. Only a few eternal seconds transpire. The dark hoof of a second, equally-fatigued camel nervously seeks support. It plants a leg to keep its half-slumbering body from falling. The shakiness of the ramp and the slipperiness of the shit provide no help.

The seed takes flight again. This time it is momentarily stuck to a spongy hoof, before it is flung, with the camel's next step, into the void. The bay's murky water awaits it below, but the seed is stuck to a tiny piece of excrement in one of the ramp's crevices.

The herd of camels continues moving, until it grows lost in the old city.

A sequence of orders announces that the company administering the unloading is picking up its ropes, ramps and hoists. As the ramp's planks are raised, the seed is dislodged by a current of warm air and falls in an interminable dance toward the sea. It touches the water only to disappear into the mouth of a voracious white margate, which is in the habit of feeding during the port's punctual morning upheaval.

This could have been the way in which the relationship between the marabou plant and Cuba was established, but no story that has to do with this island is short or straightforward. The simple tale more often than not has to yield to fractured narrative and unshackled speculation. These latter at least offer a way to approximate the complexity—at times seemingly self-generated in exercises of sophisticated story-telling by the marabou itself—of the plant's arrival, its proliferation, its modulation of future possibilities, and its “motivations.”

A few miles inland—near the Calzada de Jesus del Monte—weak and overtaken by a dizziness produced by finally moving on solid ground, on the verge of collapse, the camel can no longer control its abdominal muscles and its intestine empties out completely. This leaves over the first cobblestones of the Calzada a load of life, an immense dung pie, freckled with seeds, that will change the biological trajectory of the island forever. And needless to say, to change the biological trajectory of an island implies a detouring of all its possible trajectories.

2.

The marabou seems to erase the trajectories of its arrival. Like an outlaw who ties a palm frond to the horse's tail in order to sweep clean the route of his escape, the marabou destroys the historical clues that explain its movements with any semblance of trustworthy precision. Its genealogy inside Cuba is tangled; overrun by guilty parties.

Press clippings stigmatize Monserrate Canalejo de Betancourt, a French resident of the providence of Camagüey, for importing the marabou as a decorative plant 150 years ago. The shrub, after overcoming its initial timid growth, probably unleashed its radicles across the garden and all the way to the edge of the road that led to the abode. Historians, however, try clear the underbrush: they only blame Monserrate for bringing plants that were already present on the island, such as the *Aroma Francesa* and the *Weyler*, both very similar to the marabou.

Another seed escaped from the Botanical Garden that the botanist José Blaine maintained at the Finca El Retiro (a large hacienda in the providence of Piná del Río). Dragged from Africa, this seed crossed the Atlantic to incorporate itself to what seems an inevitable contamination.

The latest studies—there are no botanical registries prior to the 19th Century that mention the marabou—confirm the arrival in systematic fashion of thousands of seeds on slave ships. These seeds were consumed on the African coast by bovines brought along to feed the slaves during the voyage. According to this new theory, the cleaning of the waste from the vessels, in the littorals and ports of the island, released immense quantity of seeds that floated onto land or arrived on it through the defecation of the coastal birds that flocked around the docked slave ships.

If slavery lasted almost four centuries in Cuba—with specific moments of great intensity, as history shows—the island must have received, during that same amount of centuries and in proportion to those moments of intensity, the silent but massive punishment of the arrival of the ‘damned seed,’ which is the name Arabs have reserved for the marabou.

3.

It seems as if the plant, a supreme opportunist, sends itself to new environments. Without trying to anthropomorphize or caricature it, we can say that the marabou seed is guided by a kind of intelligence that articulates itself in relation to the established tendencies and emergent opportunities it finds in the places it crosses. This intelligence is a “faculty” that allows the species to place itself at just the right situation, to map potential lines of transportation, and to avoid zones of high resistance and refusal. It's an “attribute” that moves it to feel for deficiencies and weaknesses in order to sniff out potential hosts that will aid it in its proliferation.

It's an intelligence not of—or in—the individual plant, or even in underbrush it can establish in a particular location. It's the intelligence of the species as a totality, embedded at its molecular level. This is why to think of this intelligence, which is to say, to think about the marabou, one has to begin by giving little priority to the individual specimen. One even has to start by thinking the collective itself as more than just an aggregation of bodies, with all the emergent qualities that their coming together entails; one has to understand this “intelligence” as a unified force of propagation, a control system that determines speeds of proliferation and intensities of attack. It's something that manifests itself in the positive relief of the plant's numbers—in the amount of shrubs, in the acres overtaken—as much as in the virtual calculation of all it has invaded and modified, meaning not only measurable spaces but more “insubstantial” things, such as the overtaking of virgin territories, the change in local flora, the emergence of new economic opportunities. In other words, it is as much a positive presence, a hard thing in the world, as it is a wave of mutations unfurled transversally across all the strata—material and so-called immaterial—of the terrains it decants itself in.

4.

While the marabou allows itself to be dragged by “the inertia of tendencies,” it inserts itself in new environments as an element from the Remote, without ever reconciling, as it invades, its condition as an inassimilable power, as a foreign presence slowly rooting itself beyond any possible eradication; a blooming “cloud” of vegetation, whose “acid rain” noticeably rearranges certain features of the entire social field, as much as of the actual land, it drifts across; a “negative” infrastructure that, instead of facilitating the movement of a particular resource, alters massive geographical expansions in a way that is similar to the first power grids and telegraph lines.

The proliferation of metaphors—power, presence, vegetable cloud, negative infrastructure—is looking to net a figure that constantly eludes it. The slipperiness of this thing that multiplying tropes can't quite hold on to may reside in the fact that the marabou is the Intruder par excellence—a force more than an entity that violates with absolute impunity all the local lines of demarcation and limit. But more than this: it is an Intruder because it always remains alien, even after it has burrowed its way deep inside, because the elements, behaviors and attractors that maintain order within the invaded ecosystem can do nothing to reduce its effects or alter the ways in which it behaves. The marabou's ways and range of abilities don't line up with the behaviors and abilities—and limitations—through which the ecosystem has organized itself. That is to say: what we have is two models that don't match. Their grain doesn't align. The processes of genetic optimization and the feedback loops that contribute to and maintain a general balance, usually flexible enough to accommodate reasonable modifications, have no answer to the radical change that the marabou's intrusion represents and unleashes.

The Intruder brings the Remote near. It drags it into the invaded territory in at least two ways: as a foreign presence (an anomaly within the repertoire of recurring morphologies which alters the criteria of competence within the ecosystem); and as an index of other patterns of capture and consumption of energy, which the invaded ecosystem can't afford the luxury to emulate.

If the refinement of the ecosystem into prolonged equilibrium can be considered a kind of intelligence, then the Intruder can be understood as an instance of an alien intelligence, a foreign astuteness in relation to the territory in which it has nested itself.

This intelligence refuses any kind of association with its new vicinity, except as it relates to an understanding of this territory as a source of nutrition, as a field from which energy can be extracted. Soon after it arrives, the species unleashes its latent tendency to disorganize, despite the obsessive impulse of the island's ecosystem to maintain its evolutionary experimentation in a contained space of possibilities.

5.

Paths and continuities...these are the marabou's first formations on the island. Its first sprouts diagram or, better yet, sketch the flight routes of the local birds, the course that cattle follow from the ports and anchorages to the ranches, and their wandering in the pastures, and the journeys between the areas of work and the stables.

The seed depends for its migration on the metabolism of other creatures, on the voracity and digestive systems of certain animals. Animal hunger is one of the forces that move it. The genetic impetus of this vegetable species drags it through branches of the animal kingdom: branches that are themselves found in the concrete form of throats, stomachs, intestines, and rectums.

Cows, horses, goats, birds—they are all tunnels: shortcuts through which the plant species survives and expands. The distance it travels from one end of the animal to another is amplified by the distance the animal itself travels. And in the time that elapses in these voyages, the seed is absent from its universe, disengaged from the logics of the vegetable world: it excludes itself from the landscape.

It is no longer just a matter of overcoming the Atlantic, that lethal oceanic barrier. The marabou traverses natural orders; it skips over the eras of specialization in the biological world. It employs species and protocols apparently more evolved and complex than it is.

The animal—a black hole with a tongue that extracts the seed from its vegetable context. It separates it from the island's surface to expel it again through its rectum in the fields. In a hundred years of gastrointestinal streams and torrents the spaces between droppings are filled with swell-shrubby.

Endowed with polyembryony, the seed guarantees and multiplies its germination. The marabou draws over fields, with profuse fidelity, the laborious and continuous use that the peasant makes of the terrain, but it also leaves engraved the idleness of cattle out to pasture, and the morbid roads that lead to the slaughterhouse.

Birds and bats also provide erratic drawings. The plant's inflorescence—from April to November—attracts chiropters that pollinate it. The marabou takes advantage of insects that tempt the bat's sonar. And the bat, in turn, spreads the marabou's pollen—what wise Arabs would probably have called the Pollen of the Devil.

Both inscriptions—the sketches of labor and the arbitrary drawings of leisure and voracity—overlap and overwrite one another. Spirals, perfect and broken circles, scribbles, crossed and tangential lines—these are the interlocking forms taken by the consolidation of a terrifying invasion of the island. It's of such magnitude, this invasion, that the only thing one can do is turn to a historical precedent for illuminating comparison: the Spanish conquest. With this difference: this new colonization seems to come from the future. Or at least it seems to anticipate it.

The marabou produces an enzyme of what-is-to-come. It presages the organizing codes of the future. It forces us to speak—and to project into a past in which such words had no purchase—in a vocabulary of vectors, continuities and continuums, multiplicities, networks and infinities. To visualize its expansion, one has to assume schematic points of view and import languages of synthesis into one's observations, such as cinema, architectures of infrastructure and networks, the massive production of generic objects, and cybernetic spatio-temporal weavings. One could even find something useful in particular works of art that operate around large territorial masses and bodies of water, while also cutting transversally across strata of media so as to compensate for the limitations of each. Works such as Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970).

Maybe Smithson's spiral...and the essay that goes with it...and the film that was made of it, but somehow rendered to have its own autonomous existence... Maybe this logic of *and...and...and...and...* that emerges before the need to develop multiple points of view, modes of thinking, and opportunities for synthesis offers an adequate method of conceptualization in order to understand or approximate an understanding of the invasion of the marabou. Instead of Smithson's salt crystals, we'd have to deal with thorns and seeds of proven entropic power. Instead of masses of land and water, we'd have to deal with masses of foliage and radicles in perpetual expansion. And instead of hydrogeological cycles (of which the *Spiral Jetty* is hostage), we'd have to deal with the unfolding of a predatory vegetable mass with carves out its own future, in sweeps of time—whether the lightning-fast invasion of a field or the centuries-long colonization of an entire island—that seems absolutely indifferent to the concerns that organize anthropological time. The marabou seems to develop its own temporality, neither human nor cosmic nor quite cyclically vegetable. It does this through a logic hidden in its expansion and without any other referent, in the proliferation of its individual shrubs but illegible in any one of them.

6.

Testing another schematic point of view, the island can be seen as a reflective plane: a Rorschach test articulated by auxins and pathways. The axis of symmetry is the horizon.

The marabou's voluminous foliage repeats itself symmetrically underground: it buries a prodigious and formidable system of roots. An echo of its colonization resounds in the bowels of the island. There, the species gains strength, optimizes its resources, and metabolizes its dominion in chthonic darkness.

The allusion to the Rorschach diagrams other resonances. The Intruder is nomadic, always evading its eradication. As one imagines it planning its invisible trajectory to the next host environment, the species elaborates a second strategy of survival. Refusing to remain at a sub-symbolic level—or refusing to emerge from it as only a feared Intruder—the marabou incorporates and alters the symbolic economies of the territories it comes upon, without making an effort to incorporate itself homeopathically or to facilitate the emergence of a sustainable distribution of energy in the invaded ecosystem. It's natural presence finds its reflecting blot in cultural production, and in this case it is the threshold at which the symbolic begins that provides the horizon, the axis of symmetry.

“I know that the terrible marabou, with its forest of ferocious thorns, bares a little lilac and white and yellow lantern,” writes Samuel Feijoo in *Caonao* (1941). “Cruel barbs” that “make a thorny forest,” he writes later, in 1942. There are sprouts in the pages of *La Segunda Alcancia del Artesano* [The

Artisan's Second Piggybank (1962), of *Viaje de Siempre [Same Voyage as Always]* (1977), and of *Ser [Being]* (1983). In page after page of his *Prosas [Prose]* (1985) the underbrush intensifies and worsens by "circling the well," and the coal-makers have to start "delivering blows to its threatening arms" and its "reckless barbs."

Feijóo—Cuba's vegetable poet and one of its most eminent folklorists—allows his sensibility to be colonized by the marabou. "Attracted by the morning's festivities I go along the road of the marabou shrubs, all bristly with thorns." Or, alluding to the cows: "...they trample incessantly, and because of this, the path, while narrow, is free of barbs and of the stumps that the coal-makers leave behind. They go on cutting down the marabou that already makes a dangerous forest."

The marabou metabolizes in the poet's books and, possibly, as it does for the cows, opens narrow passages for Feijóo: it allows him to wander. The marabou is grateful for the vectors that the poet—and the cows—represents, at the same time as it flanks these vectors. Feijóo's literature is contoured by underbrush; the marabou forces him to exclude from his pages the belly palm, white jagüey, the wild avocado, and the black witch. The Intruder's genetics, evolved on continental soil, is free of competition even in *castizo* literature.

The marabou scrubland reduces Feijóo's field of vision. There are places where he doesn't mention it. But in other places it is obvious that the damned Intruder stalks the wells, hastens toward the towns, and chokes the roads. Feijóo-esque narratives decompose: endemic plants absorb, with every line, less ink than the alien vegetation which cuts through entire paragraphs with its thorns. The vegetable pulp of the paper turns out to be a fertile environment for the marabou, which ends up estranging all reading. Feijóo, maestro of the autochthonous, seems to have been deported to a strange place when he comes into contact with the plant: he seems the victim of an abduction. His prose, infected by the contact, attest to an ever more alien context. In his synthetic exactitude, he reveals a fascination for the foreign. Feijóo rests in the interior of the marabou forest and assumes a submarine vision. Small translucent leaves, stirred by the wind, inebriate him. The invasion of the marabou in the drunken words of the poet sounds—potentially—more dangerous.

Surely, Feijóo doesn't recognize the marabou as an Intruder. All in all, he thinks of it as just underbrush. It just happens that the swelling presence of the marabou suffocates the modernist discussion, in Latin America in particular and in Cuba even more so, around the virtues of the autochthonous. The plant refuses to be naturalized. It creates its own ecological niche, rendering the debate obsolete. The hierarchies of the autochthonous landscapes are surpassed; the palm trees indistinguishable. The marabou is the tempest. A concentrated and homogenous force that with the same absolute indifference does away with both Ariel and Caliban.

7.

The metaphor of the Rorschach encounters its limit here. Symmetry—as either congruence or antinomy—between the shrub and its system of roots, between the routes of birds or cattle and the movement of the plant, between Caliban and Ariel, between Shakespeare and Césaire, between nature and culture, begins to come undone. Dichotomy and binary logic fall apart.

The Rorschach stains begin to transform independently, and cease to reflect one another. It's as it happens or seems to happen to Rorschach, the character in *Watchmen* (1986). Sometimes the stain that mutate on his face seem to grow asymmetrical, one side no longer corresponding to the other as an identical double. Birds may continue to fly the same route until they are extinct and yet the marabou starts to move without depending on them. It seeks or opens its own paths in cultural production, in literature, in the economies of the souvenir, in the new biomass industries. One is no longer like the other. The dialectic that teaches us that we may find in what is on the surface a manifestation of structural conditions begins to yield space to proposals that seek to bind regions of thinking with what lies beyond their limits.

That is to say, the marabou's presence continues to shed light, on the one hand, on the histories of colonialism and class stratification, on the history of an incipient capitalism and a first globalization that developed through the Middle Passage. But also, undoing the symmetry of Rorschach with two dissimilar dialectical methods, it demands a new modality of thinking, a horizontality of multiplicities, where calcified territories—the established imaginary of the island, for instance, or a native economy—are forced to loosen their borders and assume a new porosity. If this doesn't happen at a biological level, it certain seem to happen at a cultural level. A frontier, now perforated, is traverse, like the camel from his eye to his empurpled anus—borrowing one of the colors of the marabou flower—by the foreign logics of the Remote.

8.

In the very same way in which it devours hectares, the marabou devours space in the media. From the first public warnings of Gonzalo Ruig in 1915 in the newspapers or Feijoo's poems and prose in the 1940s to the present, the plant has become the most ubiquitous entity in mediatic terms. Images of new rural communities, promoted in newspapers, show buildings surrounded by marabou. Stories on agriculture, appearing constantly on Cuban TV, are invaded by the plant. Also known as the Kalahari Christmas Tree, it is always peering over the shoulders of news commentators, regardless of the time of the year. Leaves and thorns are now perennial and luminous *bits* on TV screens; they are escaped data coursing through digital channels and stored in a multitude of servers in farms distributed throughout the globe; they are little moments of coarse granularity by the frame's edge in low resolution videos that exit the island along with taped family and tourist memories or as part of ridiculous "guerrilla" films by unimaginative European directors.

The mirror-based multiplicative model used to explain the concept of the *No Stop City* (1969), devised by Archizoom, or Superstudio's expansive proposal *Continuous Monument* (1969) are today rather fragile caricatures—in representational terms—of the "potentially infinite," if we compare it to the marabou that has been vectorialized through bovine bodies, national literatures, amateur and professional video, and both dictatorial and revolutionary journalism.

If the Cuban cultural-industrial project *TelArte* (1984) had been extended twenty more years, the textile mills would now be printing marabou foliage, flowers, thorns and seeds. And the plant would continue its process of expansion and multiplication, disseminating itself further afield, into other spheres of life, by taking hostage the necessary materials used in the upholstering of sofas, and the sewing curtains, and the production of garments, and various other forms of repair. The marabou would have leapt from the field to the house planter and, in the guise of cultural-industrial production, of high-to-mass cultural crossover, from the house planter to the very fabric—in the form (one can almost bet on the novelty factor) of ever more imaginative patterns and modulations—that will coat, like a seemingly living membrane, the household items that surround us and our own bodies. We'd find ourselves one morning cocooned in marabou signs. Even the bicycle set would be wrapped in the serpentine branches of the marabou.

Local metrics also begin to be useful to the plant. A bottle (known as "sábado corto" or "short Saturday") filled with seeds, in the central provinces, only costs ten pesos. Sacks full of pods begin to travel throughout the island. The marabou squeezes through the tight fissures of normalization and of the economy, invading terrains that are more expediting. Spaces lubricated by more fluid logics, such as artisanal commerce, the affective and resistant economies of the souvenir, and the unstoppable forces of decoration.

Ian Mario, from the province of Cienfuegos, constructs the interior of his house with marabou branches. "I have chairs, lamps, *mediopuntos*, decorative walls, sconces, varieties of planters, macramé and hanging decorations." One imagines Alejo Carpentier, turning in his grave, looking for ways to add a new sentence—of immeasurable importance all of a sudden—to all the pages he dedicated to the *mediopuntos* of the Caribbean.

The photo that accompanies Mario's comments shows sprouts of marabou, apparently domesticated, inside a prefabricated building. His designs are reminiscent of Andrea Branzi's *Domestic Animals* (1985). For the Italian architect, the torrent of industrial production, of the prefabricated and the generic, finds a parallel in the productive torrent of nature. Between the two, a hybrid love can be established. But Ian Mario's *Domestic Animals* surpass those of Branzi. They actualize what in the Italian is just a model and a proposal. They are indifferent to the rhetorical and sym-

bolic substance--increasingly less nutritional--that fattens design's discourse and slows down its movements in the contemporary flows that mark an ineluctable tendency toward the generic.

The Siul family, artisanal furniture fabricators--in an open challenge to architecture's new obsession with generative protocols found in natural forms--tell the *Juventud Rebelde* newspaper that this year—2013—they will unveil a marabou house to satisfy the demands of the population. Beating the Siul by a few years, Remedio Pedraza Olivera describes--also to *Juventud Rebelde*--how in the walls of his house marabou buds are starting to sprout from seeds that have been trapped in the cement, as if sprouting, half-zombied and waiting for a future moment, for a half century, opening a more radical and dark dimension in the "green walls" and "vertical gardens" that are so fashionable lately, folding a more complex understandings of time and "being alive" into the silly manicured green-space.

Others attest to the impetuous sprouting of marabou that rips through highway asphalt. Seeds that have laid for decades beneath highway infrastructures, watching for rains, now threaten both the integrity of the blacktops and modernism's ubiquitous orthogonality.

9.

The marabou is a continuum. To think of it in terms of individual plants is to miss it altogether; to try to force a grid of old ways of looking onto something that squeezes through and over familiar angularities, distancing itself from them. The marabou is a structure--always multi-logical, more fungal than geometric--that moves, like a slime in slow-motion, along bifurcated paths, often forcing open unexpected new tributaries for itself, without falling back into the more basic condition of being paradoxical. On the one hand, it's unfolding relies on structures of instability, such as the island's climate. On the other, it points toward constants such as Havana's English grid street layout or the mogotes found in Viñales. It evades being pegged as the mere paradox of being stable and unstable at the same time, recurrent and newly devastating, the meshing of seeming incompatible qualities, by refusing to remain still and be read in this way. By the time hermeneutics, trotting at its natural pace, comes upon it, it is already elsewhere, inventing new kinds of damage and invasion, but also new economies and symbolic demands, structuring new poetics and architectures. And just as it refuses us to possibility of parsing it for internal difference, for its negotiation of incommensurable qualities, it callously refuses to acknowledge the difference between the systems and spaces it invades and employs—they are all just resources to exploit in the augmentation of its mobility and they are also the very vectors through which its moves. It is indiscriminate. The marabou long ago exceeded the proportions associated with an invasive plant species. It now activates its condition of imperishability as a stratum of the landscape—an active layer that turbulently stirs previously settled sediments.

But this new condition as *stratum* points to an intelligence that spills beyond the borders of the vegetable world and inserts itself in a larger field of operations. It's no longer just has to do with vegetable tactics and agency, with supra-sensible radicles seeking the weak spaces in the dark subsoil of the island. It isn't just about responding with tannins and thorns to a concentration of predators. It's not just about heliotropic fatality and evolutionary dynamics guided by the demand to optimize energy conservation. The marabou operates around major forces; it deals with national political and economic conflicts—from the concentration camps of Maximiliano Weyler and the misery it spread throughout the countryside during Cuba's War of Independence to, much later, the advantageous deployment of its seeds in light of the stubborn persistence of single crop farming and badly distributed land, and all the way to the more than fifty plus Revolutionary years without peasants still running.

We are dealing with a plant that, on the one hand, can do without water and, on the other, can sense inconsistencies in the socio-political terrain. That is, a molecular arrangement that benefits from its complexity to survive severe droughts, while at the same time manipulating and drawing benefit from major contingencies as it entwines itself with the spheres and flows that determine national and global destinies.

We are dealing with a change in hierarchies and functions in the general structure of the landscape. The marabou, which was once a syntagma (the way, say, the lawn is a syntagma in the larger syntactic order of Vedado neighborhood), has mutated, not into the general order of the sentence or the linguistic sequence, but into the more structural condition of the code. It re-renders not only the physical morphology of land, but its virtual substrate, its space of possibility. It works like a new algorithmic protocol inserted at the very base of a system, determining the conditions of its execution.

Like the languages invented by Xul Solar, the marabou leaps over the fence of established orders. It mutates into the code of a pan-lingua. It turns into nightmare—or from another perspective, finally realizes—the dream of a tricontinental continuity. At a linguistic level, inhabitants of Tijuana can communicate with those of Sao Paolo in the language of botany and devastation. On a molecular plane, the province of Camagüey is much more similar to the Kalahari than to the Focsa Urban Complex in Havana.

10.

The marabou has structured a new scenario. It has transformed the island into the Remote. It has done this, firstly, through its condition as an inadmissible agent, of alien presence that doesn't integrate (the species hasn't changed in any significant way in Cuba; it has only delayed its time of blossoming), even as it has been inscribing irrevocable traces, fixing new qualities in all that it interacts with.

Secondly, through its untempered expansion it has dragged autochthonous species to extinction, making the local landscape more uniform but also stranger, replacing an establish arabesque of flora and fauna for another one that maintains a certain flexibility as it homogenizes and settles in.

Thirdly, by taking over the geographical grammar of the island, it has tyrannized current economic dynamics, imposing itself as as an important resource (rendering a growing biomass industry dependent on in, for instance), as it exhausts the energies employed in its eradication.

Fourthly, rather than converting a hostile territory into an ideal setting for human production—as would be easy to imagine—it has transformed, through a process of inverted terraforming, a territory that had been geographically and symbolically domesticated into a savage and cruel location, into alien scrubland.

And as the landscape changes, so do the vehicles through which the marabou is represented. We begin to see how, as a strange entity, this new territory sneaks without resistance into Feijóo's writings when his tropical fields began to resemble Mars more than the Caribbean. Or when it filters into the productive space of the souvenir industry and gives us back a reflection of what is no longer the island we know, but a reflection of the things that are speeding in our direction from the future.

Instead of sparks—as when rocks or metals are vigorously rubbed together -flying from the incessant friction between the marabou and all that has calcified in the island's symbolic and economic levels, what is released are lines of alien poetry, innumerable frames of mediatic imagery, new souvenir typologies, unexpected furniture morphologies and vegetable *mediopuntos*, architectural structures that promise forms of settlement that are still to come.

It's easy to imagine, surrounded by a cascade of these new forms, some already altering our world and others throbbing at the edge of materialization, the coming of unexpected kinds of paintings, currently unimaginable fashions, and other things that are chasing a sense of congruence with this new world. And all this, all these novel forms, collectively, are establishing a new landscape—a scab of biomasses that is starting to coagulate and flows of energy that are beginning to swell—that demands things like a *General Song of the Remote*, or a new and radically different volume of *Odes*, or an *Enemy Rumor* tuned to a baroque of vectors and platforms. ■