

Molecular Monuments of Migration Gerald Raunig

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Let us recall documenta 11, a monument bearing a French philosopher's name in its title and focusing on a migrant workers' district as context and desired source of participation. Migration and monument, a difficult connection. Migration and monument, and the audience of the largest art show in the world seemed quite enthusiastic about the large-scale open-air spectacle with all kinds of attractions - the shrill aesthetics of autonomism confronted with the bare buildings of the estate, the sausage stand and the participatory TV studio, the migrant youth employed and exhibited by the artist and the international art connoisseurs...

Migration and monument, this still remains somewhat contradictory. Here the ambivalently moving multitude of migrant flows, there the monolithic object, constant and rigid...

Molarity

The monument is molar. Not only because it is static, immobile and immutable - altered at most by the long breath of corrosion and the abrupt hand of revolution. The monument is molar even in the revolutionary moment of demolition: a strange analogy is found in building and demolishing, in constructing and destructing, in erecting and toppling a monument. And it is by no means the case that those who erect a monument follow a completely different logic from those who topple one.

The solemn dedication of a monument as a state-supporting spectacle, often in the form of an unveiling, seems to contrast the tumultuous toppling of it. Yet particularly the anarchic-spontanistic notion of the latter is frequently based on an illusion. The various forms of the demolishing, overturning, breaking up, dissecting, carrying off, burying and hiding of the many Stalins and Marxes around 1989 and thereafter come to mind, for instance. The toppling of a monument is rarely an event, a sudden rupture of homogeneous history. This overthrow is often preceded by a long phase of construction preparation, and technical issues also have to be carefully considered. A substantial logistical effort is required to topple especially large objects.

And it seems that both construction and destruction of the monument are rarely carried out without a mass celebration of the same. The mass becomes part of a state apparatus, not simply as an accessory, as a decorative embellishment, as an incidental ornament, a secondary element of the formation. The mass is a constitutive and active part of the state apparatus, and its desire is reterritorialized equally in the processes of opening and of closing. When the monument appears here as an object that subjectivizes the community, then that is only a part of the truth: the mass does not precede the monument, nor does the monument precede the mass. The molar function of the monument constitutes the molar community and vice versa.

In the con-/destruction of the monument, the mass assumes form. It is formed in this in a specific way. Its interior is striated, but it is closed off to the outside. The community emerging in the monument, even as a nation affirmed or negated in it, functions at the same time as inclusion and exclusion. The constitution of the community, the affirmation of the nation materializes in the con-/destruction of the monument, regardless of whether it is thus affirmed or negated.

Migrants initially seem to appear only on the side of exclusion, as being much too fragile, too much in motion and moved to become part of the molarity of mass and monument. The Other of the national community, they seem to move entirely beyond the realm of molarity. Yet in the second half of the twentieth century, we have experienced an astonishing process of inclusion in parts of Europe. As the

"guest workers" gradually lost their status as "guests," often unnoticed even by the subjects themselves, the process of the symbolic appropriation of politics of remembrance, the formation of myths, and finally even the question of suitable monuments for the "guest workers" began.

From the Fordist "Guest Workers" to Legally, Socially, Economically Precarious Migration

If both possibilities, the construction of new monuments and the destruction of old ones, are on the side of the molar, then the problem arises of whether and how a way of dealing with the monument can be imagined that subverts, thwarts and transgresses these two poles of molarity. Hans van Houwelingen's practice suggests that this kind of non-molar mode beyond the erection of new monuments and the destruction of old ones implies manipulating, shifting or simply only conserving existing monuments. The insight that this kind of conservation does not necessarily have to be conservative, that it can even be highly contested and controversial, is evident in the reactions to, the discussions about, and especially the ultimate hindrance of the National Monument to the Guest Worker.

And yet the question of the outside of monumental molarity raises a complex set of problems that cannot simply leave every outside to an undifferentiated affirmation, especially not if we relate it to the changing conditions of migration. To contextualize the relation of monument and migration in its economic and political framework, in the following I will, first of all, sketch out an outline of the transformations of migration in the last sixty years. This brief sketch must necessarily significantly reduce the complexity of the issue, but will focus attention on specific aspects that are relevant to our topic.

The fordist economy of the post-war era was accompanied by relatively ordered forms of migration within Europe. "Guest workers" were recruited in the Mediterranean South on the basis of bi-national agreements to contribute to the economic boom in Central and Northern Europe in the 1950s and 60s. This was a more juridically secured variation of migration that resulted in two ideologies and forms of practice of de- and reterritorialization: on the one hand the temporary displacement of the center of work and life to the North, in order to return - for instance in the case of the partially positive development of the economies in Spain and Italy in the 1970s, which went hand in hand with the end of structured recruitment policies of the North - to the country of origin after some time; on the other hand continuous "integration" in the destination society.

This second mode of reterritorialization, which aimed at eliminating the "guest" in the designation "guest worker", in turn resulted in two different forms. One form of this "integration" consisted in assimilation over the course of several generations, to the point of becoming indistinguishable, to "becoming white," to the loss of the migrant marker; in another form, the migrants took their place in the patchwork of minorities, constituted ethnic communities and invented their own social positionings, spaces and lobbies.

The consequence of these specific social dissolutions and formations is that intellectual or artistic attention to the "guest worker" is poorly received, not only by the usual suspects, the right-wing and racist political parties and their adherents. For both versions of migrant reterritorialization in new surroundings, the idea of a "Monument to the Guest Worker" is not uniformly welcome: for the assimilated migrants, because they do not necessarily want to point out their past outside the nation or have it pointed out; for the ethnically constituted, because the "guest worker" is paradoxically a too universal figure that cannot be simply categorized according to a single ethnic attribution. Both aspects, the outside of the nation and the universalizing function of the "guest worker," indicate the contradictoriness inherent to the title of a National Monument to the Guest Worker.

Whereas fordist logic provided relatively clear legal foundations for migration up until the 1970s, in addition to clear social and economic assignments for the "guest workers," the neoliberal, postfordist economy and "security policies" become a paradigm of insecurity, deprivation of rights, and precarization, primarily and to a large extent for migrants. Here the gaze turns beyond Europe and back to Europe at the same time. On the one hand it is no longer mainly a matter of internal migration with the continent and the expanding European Union, but rather of a complex dispositive of the closing off and the permeability of the borders of Europe. On the other hand, there are a global

warping and radical intensification of the international distribution of labor, extreme inequalities and the production of poverty, also to be understood as postcolonial effects, in the genealogy of the occidental, especially European colonialism of modernity.

The continual construction of the Fortress Europe coincides with ever new lines of flight of migration, opening up ever new ingresses and egresses of the European territory. Towards the end of the twentieth century the paradigmatic figures of this new situation are migrants with unordered or subordinated residency status, *sans papiers*, who nevertheless assume economic and symbolic functions as constants of population policies: economic to the extent that the markets recognize the exploitability of this new sub-proletariat and instrumentalize them as extremely flexible workers in seasonal agricultural production, in textile industries, but also in affective labor ranging from care work to sex work; symbolic to the extent that they serve right-wing and far right populisms as welcome and constitutive targets for their racist propaganda. And here there is a further complication: the ex-fordist subjects of "guest work" understood as "integrated" can indeed become active parts of this racist propaganda, as far as national demarcation does not stop with the "autochtone" population, and this form of racism always works with constant gradations and differentiations of hierarchies and positions of dominance.

The juridical precarity of migrants and the multiple gradations of inclusion and exclusion are surely accompanied by an economical and social precarization, an extremely precarious form of temporary inclusion under the condition of forced flexibility.

Aestheticization of Difference and Neoliberal Molecularity

Many molecules coexist alongside one another as a patchwork of permanently maintained "guest work" and as precarious migrants with a limited residence status or none at all, perhaps also competing with one another and in gradated dominance relations above or below one another. They are part of a new paradigm that no longer considers differences as solely antagonistic, but rather as a multitude. The paradigm of molecularity forms a plane of immanence, and differences coexist on this plane of immanence as moving molecules.

Aestheticizing difference is part of this postfordist setting of molecularity. The aesthetic of difference, which only appears to hold a horizontal differentiation, constitutes a problem completely different from that resulting from the molarity of fordist territorializations and the modernist monument. The tide is tending to turn in the direction of deterritorialization, and artistic works are accordingly also becoming increasingly ephemeral, processual, transitory.

And this takes us back to the starting point, to the paradigm of Thomas Hirschhorn's Bataille Monument at documenta 11. No matter whether Thomas Hirschhorn was regarded in 2002 as an audacious renewer of the sculptural as a transient art, as eulogist for participatory art practice, or as a cynical anti-integrator of the migrant youths who worked in his monument and were exhibited: all these interpretations indicate the significance of aesthetic difference. It is evident in the punk aesthetic of the Hirschhorn environment, beginning with the gaudily styled art taxi taking art enthusiasts in small groups out of art and into the poor life of the migrant-subproletarian neighborhood, all the way to the temporary shacks of the Bataille exhibition, library and TV studio. The same art lovers who react to political actions and the ways autonomous groups live "outside" with disdain, aggression or a call for police, could thus cautiously approach the otherwise threatening aesthetic and appropriate it. The difference-capital principle applies here the same as everywhere else: the Other is separated, in order to be able to better and more completely digest it.

This strategy becomes most clearly evident in the way migrant youth are involved, not only in the construction of the monument, but also as part of the monument during the entire period of the exhibition. Once the migrants are marked as embodiments of the Other and exhibited, it is no longer necessary to even begin to address the dominance relations of neoliberal molecularity, let alone change them. In the classic formulation this means forming masses, which contribute nothing to their self-organization. What the masses equally constituted by unveiling and toppling are in the molar monument, the migrants are in the molecular monument. That is essentially the same structure, as Walter Benjamin already demonstrated in the famous epilogue to his Work of Art essay, a structure

consisting of "giving these masses not their right, but instead a chance to express themselves." [1] This means letting their difference gain expression, exhibiting them, presenting them, but without touching the inequalities that they urge to eliminate.

The Flipside of Molecularity

The monument is molecular. Whether it is autonomous or heteronomous, self-referential or contextual, object-centered or processual, lasting or transient, the monument today stands under the auspices of molecularity. Even modernist monuments are perceived mainly - if at all - as aspects of urban furnishings and tourism industry. Yet neither this shifted view of modernism nor the aestheticization of difference just described should tempt us to a culture-pessimistic perspective. The point is to find the other side of molecularity, reappropriate it, use the flows of deterritorialization, in order to newly invent the molecular as manifold resistance.

But how does "the guest worker" relate to the molecular monument? Certainly not through the relation of molecular monumentality and migration being depicted as a purely content-based function or presented as a participatory performance. It is not simply a matter of the question of how the "concerns of the guest workers" can be implemented monumentally, how the "theme of migration" can be dealt with in artistic practice, or how those who are excluded can be included through art. Affirming the molecules in their singularity as well as envisioning them in their recomposition is exemplified by micro-political practices of migration and transversality, such as the assemblage of Kanak Attack, founded in the 1990s and operating in Germany, the Brussels Universal Embassy of the 2000s, or the Bamako-Dakar Caravan of 2011. They all generate molecularity both aesthetically and politically.

Drawing again from Walter Benjamin with an apodictic statement that is still apt in difference capitalism: instead of an aestheticization of politics (in this case the politics of difference), a politicization of art is needed. Politicizing art means here, on the one hand, a molecularization as proposed by Hans van Houwelingen in the treatment of the Gabo sculpture. It is a matter of technical, formal and contextualizing approaches, with which migrant lines of flight can evoke molecularity. But politicizing art also means not being timid about speaking up clearly, naming racism by name rather than trivializing it with terms like populism or xenophobia, or even falling for the old psychological trick that "people's fears" have to be "taken seriously." Grasping and naming "people's fears" as racist aggression, as hegemonic attack, as a central aspect of a new class struggle from above, and founding a new "political anti-racism," as it has been theoretically conceptualized by the Viennese philosopher Ljubomir Bratić, that is also politicizing art. A provisional program for this kind of anti-racism, which is then no longer moral, but political, could start with the following components of an emancipatory turn of molecularity:

- thematizing the multiply gradated dominance relations and hierarchizations, in which the lines of flight of migration repeatedly find themselves constrained;
- recognizing the contradictoriness within migration;
- affirming the lines of flight, the incalculability and the autonomy of migration;
- supporting their concrete formations, such as migrant self-organizations, church occupations, sans papiers actions against the production of clandestinity, universal embassies, border camps, no-border campaigns, transnational caravans;
- inventing a whole landscape of transnational rights;
- exploring and testing modes of existence, which take concrete social relations as the motive for eluding the amalgamation of national juridical limitations and economic globalization everywhere, anywhere it is possible ...

Admittedly, one could object that this is far too much for actors in the cultural field. I'm afraid that is true. And yet: we cannot wait for state-organized politics to begin doing away with borders, nor for the nation to negate itself, nor that identitary communities deterritorialize themselves, that racist neo-populists abandon their campaigns by themselves, that a new transversality emerges by itself under these conditions. We must ourselves begin to invent a new molecularity, and this molecularity will not be one in which monument and migration stand on two different sides!

[1] [Ed.] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn. (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 217-51, at 241.