

THE HIDDEN CATHEDRAL

How does one build a cathedral? Where does one find a people to fill it? As Paul Klee writes, "We lack a people" and apparently we seem also to lack everything necessary to make a cathedral possible today: faith, myth and place – a city to receive it in its midst. However, it might only take a simple change in the way things are seen for everything to be overturned: to bring the transcendence of heaven down to the planet's surface; to envision departures toward new voyages and not exiles in the subterranean concentration of urban masses; to discover an unifying idea, an idea which already unites these anonymous and dispersed people in the simple humanity that makes them stand upright.

To find this place, Françoise Schein ventured underground. In the atomized crowd of the metro she found a people. In the right to rights that is the foundation of human rights she found the idea. The cathedral has become possible again. A hidden cathedral, like the rights which each passenger carries in his own body without knowing it. There in the center of obscurity these rights arise as if to awaken in each one of us the desire for infinity. For the vault of the metro Parque opens from the earth toward infinity. This space is thus overdetermined; it is a space where everybody meets through the unconscious of gazes and bodies and not, as in Baudelaire, in a state of shock. This is the unconscious of a brute almost savage recognition: between the passenger and the other there is no longer any possibility of contact except for a sort of final instinct of the species, the sense of a single humanity. For in this subterranean space, unlike in any other coded space, a sign no longer exists to distinguish one social status from another, one nationality from another. First and foremost, the passenger is anybody. Françoise Schein transforms these passengers clad in their shabby clothes, tired, absent and distracted, into potential members of a living community, into awakened



subjects aligned on the multiple vanishing lines of thought: Thales, Aristotle, Pessoa, Deleuze.

A collective meeting space of the unconscious: a proliferating interior space; a subterranean vault rejoining the cosmos; with each passing of a train, the infinite opened through the walls in each person's mind. The inside of the bodies that is the outside of thought and memory.

Everything converges and diverges at the same time. If this metro station is simultaneously horizontal and vertical, hidden and cosmic, interior and exterior, it is because its very movement is so particular and unique. Françoise Schein's understanding of this movement is spectacular.

The cathedral is there, buried and always expanding. Its steps carry a traveler toward increasingly deeper levels. But, from the start, in the very first moments marking the descent, everything begins to move. Thoughts arise; sentences speak from the walls and beyond. Here, right then, a train of thought commences its movement and the expansion of space begins. Then below, on the platform, movements overlap and explode in all directions.

The infinite traces, like the writings of philosophers and poets, are recited in the sky; they mingle with the maritime routes of portugese discoverers; they merge with the mental space provoked by the hazardous and improbable reading of human rights inscribed on the ceiling; they pave the way for the train that arrives and will depart on these traces.

The platform of the metro is a place of waiting. But this is not just any wait. In reality, one waits for nothing, for no substance, no being, message or emotion. One waits the end of the wait. One waits for the pure movement of a machine changing one's own movement. This is a space that distributes or engages movement. Nothing is definite – especially one's destination. As long as it keeps moving, one is nowhere; one is everywhere where desire leads. The machine surges from a hole to then engulfed by another black hole. Between the two, there is time for any form of becoming.

The Parque station engages and combines one thousand dynamics. This is because movement is always at play, a movement modulating space on three different levels – the movement of thoughts, of history, of trains. Without doubt, these movements uncover unsuspected paths in the body's unconscious – the bodies of those who are deciphering the pieces of human rights encounter images from the past, they coexist with other bodies and wait. Like a machine of pure speed, the train arrives and carries everything away. And everyone carries in one's self both the train and the whole. The reversible container-contained is redoubled infinitely.

Nonetheless, this movement is neither simple nor linear. Thought, history, voyages are multiplied successively in other movements. In these maritime discoveries courage and knowledge are celebrated as well as the first articulation of human rights but a *contrario* – that is, through their anticipated collapse/crushing so that Tordesilhas traces a horizontal fracture between the North and the South as if its original verticality announced the future division of the world into rich and poor nations. The navigators' saga will thus bring forth colonialism and slavery: history twists geography, before being announced, human rights have already drawn the blueprint of a map there – a new map of the heavens echoing maritime maps that spread endlessly on the lateral walls.

The secret of this astounding station can be found in Françoise Schein's remarkable transformation of space. She does not decorate a preexisting space so to fill it; rather, she truly constructs a new architectural space. She does not adapt the space to her needs neither does she conceive this space within the immanence of a strange movement allowing possibilities to surface everywhere. In truth, a strange movement of love animates this station, calling people to experience their bare, simple humanity as they follow unlimited voyages of thought. Everything here is expressed through a moving, non-euclidean, plastic and dynamic scale just as it would be in a cathedral that extends infinitely onto the surface of the earth.

An immanent cathedral.

