

*The ruins of the memory and the fortification of the subject
(some ideas related to Rosell Mesequer)*

Fernando Castro Flórez

Traducción: Claudia de la Peña McTigue y Rosell Mesequer

Cain's house in the Enoch' steppes is the beginning of the "blockhouse", built according to protection scales and the needs of the new life, imaginary ruins that hardly sketch some design. Its ground plan is an alegory of the tomb, where sometimes stretches out as a labyrinth and a shelter for life. If chance decides it that way¹.

Zizek has pointed out that between the antagonisms that represent our time, the antagonism between abstraction which is more and more determinant in our lives, and the storm of pseudoconcrete images could have a key place. If we can understand the abstraction as a progressive self-discovery of the basis of art language, in a process of a particular *de-pictorialization*, we would also have to understand that in this process we find the core of the *modern times*. In a chaotic world one of the "exits" can be to get into the crypt or to camouflage oneself, avoid being naked in the open. In the camouflage or, to complicate it more, in what Callois called "legendary psicastenia", that sort of insect psychosis PSICOSIS INSECTOIDE, related to the stage of the mirrow, it produces a virtual DESUSTANCIACIÓN of the ego². FRENTE AL of the maintenance of the difference and the autopossession, the mimicry represents, in this way, a lost of the autonomy, of the different, of the limit: the

¹ Antonio Fernández Alba: "Ruinas en las estepas de Enoch" *Blocao. Arquitecturas de la Era de la Violencia*, Ed. Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 2000, page 14.

² CFR. Roger Callois: "Mimétisme et psychasténie légendarie", *Minotauro*, nº 7, Paris, June 1935.

confusion with its environment, the "inscription in the space", brings closer the SUJETO to the DESPOSSESSION, as if it lets the tentation exerted – exercised on itself because of the great external of the space itself, a tentation to the fusion³. I do remember now the so well repeated poster of Citizen Kane " Not entry!", that warns us that if we keep on we will get into a strange dominion⁴. Rosell Meseguer gets inside, certainly, in a *weird* dominion, takes photographs, with a extraordinary morbid curiosity, the military power shapes become ruins, traces an area of the Mediterranean coast , in certain way comes back to a subground childhood descend⁵. Comes back, one time and another, to the trenches, to the fortifications, to the tunnels, to the vestiges of a conflict, that although we don't have memory, still extends its roots in our disjointed time. "The concepts grown up from these military spaces- writes Rosell Meseguer- actually abandoned, articulate one to another as archive images of desertics, abandoned places...; melt up with postcards, pieces from revues, visual and written documents"⁶. This artist unfolds an spiral memory, recovers fragments of the historical map, juxtaposes contemporary events with past events, fascinated by the defence⁷ idea and with the attack imminence. "Batería de Cenizas is one of those fortifications, built by

³ Denis Hollier: "Mimesis and Castration" October, nº 31, winter 1984, pages 3-16.

⁴ It can be related to a repugnant excremental invasion: " There is the famous meaning of "No entry! at the beginning and at the end of the film: Citizen Kane: it is very dangerous to get into this dominion of the highest intimacy, where one gets much than expected and, suddenly one finds himself/herself in a viscous and obscene kingdom..." (Slavoj Žižek: *El acoso de las fantasías*, Ed. Siglo XXI, México, 1999, page 34)

⁵ "The beginning of this project starts with the descent during my childhood to a mine; a real labyrinth of galleries. I was living them in Cartagena (Spain), and some days my father used to take my brother, my sister and myself, to visit the sheeps of the harbour: a corvette, a submarine..., at home, a hole bunch of images of them were hanged on the walls. Those voyages, that touched the salt of the salt mines and the dockyards, have been the attraction to the subworlds and the round side of the sea coast; a tracker of vestiges and documents from the past..." Text written by Rosell Meseguer.

⁶ Rosell Meseguer. "Batería de Cenizas. Metodología de la Defensa", *Rosell Meseguer. Batería de Cenizas. Metodología de la Defensa*, Fundación Antonio Pérez, Cuenca, 2003, page 17.

⁷ Defence or Defense.

the relations between its measures and past events. Actually, an accumulation of galleries, empty stores and obsolete machinery, Which tunnels go down the mountain of "Cenizas" (...). Long subterranean halls that connect the back with the obverse, the underground with the ground"⁸.

We Know that architecture is, since the beginning a dramatic desire of a protection and security materialization, a panic response related to the other, that seems to us, in our delirium, destructive and always letal. The bunker, the blockhouse is, without any doubt, one of the most convincing manifestation of that *fear to the other that is about to happen*, is a rest that has something protohistorical and postnuclear: its time has past and, paradoxically, still about to come. " The despotism technologic-militar would have adopted, for its most extreme architecture, the vector of the language more deshumanize and funcionalist of the avant-garde"⁹. Fernando R. de la Flor outlines that the blockhouse is the protoruin of Modernity, a death work, a fascism fósil, better said, of the telluric fascism, with its war and ctonic mythology. In these forceful fortifications, the foundation is the order of the reason, maybe it could be the own metaphysics (the decantation of the occidental thought), the one that entrenchs. Is also a concrete fortification, a historical location.: " It talks, in the case of the fortification wich period goes from the 1930 till 1945, about the creation of a **DISABLEMENT INHABILITACIÓN** of the territory that converges with the eminent appearance in the historical scene of the new concept of "total war". It is about the creation of a "suicidal space". A "theater"¹⁰ of shapes conceived as a ideal *locus*

⁸ Rosell Meseguer. "Batería de Cenizas. Metodología de la Defensa", *Rosell Meseguer. Batería de Cenizas. Metodología de la Defensa*, Fundación Antonio Pérez, Cuenca, 2003, page 27.

⁹ Fernando R. de la Flor: *Blocao. Arquitecturas de la Era de la Violencia*, Ed. Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 2000, page 24.

¹⁰ Theater or theatre.

where for the first time the State tries the annihilation of itself¹¹. A place where to establish the enemy' control, a location for the *domination*, the landscape transformed into a warlike device¹². When one is in the location of the casemates and trenches, is able to see a sublime scene (a landscape that can' t be reduced to a concept) but , at the same time, realizes that those places are disappearing, the view hardly recognize the past face of the horror¹³. There 's no doubt that trenches and bunkers set up, actually, a ghostly topology. Virilio pointed out that the bunker is the last theater gest of the militar occidental history end. That brutalismo f the polemical space requires a strange archeology.

We need to meditate, slowly, about the logistic and the operations theater¹⁴ in a period of metamorphosis of the militar objects as projectiles¹⁵. as Virilio has pointed out, the weapon invents the speed, or the discovery of the speed invents the weapon, this determinates the projective character of the weapons. The war machine involves the liberation of a speed vector. "In occasions the

¹¹ Fernando R. de la Flor: *Blocao. Arquitecturas de la Era de la Violencia*, Ed. Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 2000, page 26.

¹² " If we fly over the history of control and militar espionage, we can confirm that this "domination" is done by the strong occupation of natural peaks, important places, elevate locations of the territory, (...). These militar provisional occupations and others (...) will be new towns for the peasants to protect themselves against thefts or burglary. These dominant places will be fortified with *atalayas*, towers or abbeys, wich bell tower could work as a observatory and place of alarm" (Paul Virilio: " El inmaterial de guerra", *Un paisaje de acontecimientos*, Ed. Paidós, Buenos Aires, 1997, page. 175).

¹³ "The Empire of the ephemeral conquest these last strong positions or tragic traces of history, dispersing efficiently into the air the violent coagulation that they represent. The history of debris sees dissolved its facies threatening" (Fernando R. de la Flor: *Blocao. Arquitecturas de la Era de la Violencia*, Ed. Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 2000, page 28).

¹⁴ Cfr. Paul Virilio: *Logistique de la percepción*, Ed. de l' Etoile, París, 1984.

¹⁵ "L' economie de la Guerre qui tendait jusqu' alors à transformer le paysage humain en "réduit défensif" para une congruente des fortifications, tend maintenant à réduire les disparités de l' armement en métamorphosant les objets militaires en aurant de projectiles" (Paul Virilio: "L' espace militaire", *Bunker Archéologie*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1975, page 16).

speed is abstracted in a projectil, bullet or a howitzer, that condemns the weapon and the soldat to immobility (example: the immobility during the war of the 1914). A balance of forces is a resistance phenomenom, in opposite, the answer involves a precipitation or a change of speed that breaks the balance: the tank will regroup the whole of operations in the speed-vector, and will give back again to the movement a plain space, disinterring men and weapons"¹⁶. At the end that entrenchment reveals the impotente, more precise, its essential ineffectiveness: contemporary speed spoils that panic location¹⁷. The contemporary projectil causes the disappearance of the walls, " of the solid shields, the desintegration of the combat groups into smaller units less vulnerable: desmaterialization that affects the army and its exhibition, the fort and the fortified town, the troop and the soldier"¹⁸.

Rosell Meseguer understands the bunker as a nomadic self-sufficient, minimalist, with a great vigour¹⁹, a foro where the ornament is certainly an offense. it could be also as a *zero zone*, a terrritory where all energies are consumed and every defense knows its extinction, but as a desire architecture of the Apocalipsis times. That defense monument express an enigmatic love to the earth, establish a radical settlement, O VALGA LA DERIVA, a melancolic structure. "Monument ctonic, without any doubt, architecture that express the mourning. Testimony of a Front with an undone time, slowly faded away. This architecture express nostalgia from the strong days and

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze y Félix Guattari: "Tratado de nomadología: la máquina de guerra", *Mil Pesetas. Capitalismo y esquizofrenia*, Ed. pre-textos, valencia, 1988, p. 399.

¹⁷ 1944 is also the date where the pathetic ineffectiveness is revealed, specially related to the aerial weapons, from this utopia of the still defense, overpassed by the war technologies that are born from speed and access to control the World" Fernando R. de la Flor: *Blocao. Arquitecturas de la Era de la Violencia*, Ed. Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 2000, page 45

¹⁸ Paul Virilio: "El inmaterial de guerra", *Un paisaje de acontecimientos*, Ed. Paidós, Buenos Aires, 1997, page 177.

¹⁹ Vigour or vigor.

has the deep corrosions of its iron structures, the passion print of the materia, from the via crucis and the holocaust that suffered the things that were set up in the line of no return, and sacred, of the Front²⁰. We can take the work of Rosell Meseguer as a radiography of the quiteness of the violence into where we are. The abandoned fortifications are the negative space of a time where silliness is spread out, the moment of the groups, of the small flan hanging down the banality. The violent reality that we don't want to face drives the imaginary postmodern to an impotent IMPOTENTE camouflage that sets us up in complicity with the negative. "As ruins, this fragments of a military order, allegorize worlds – we could also say *climas*- built up and overcome by the invisible dynamic of the historical that condemns them to the non meaning, non trascendent; while they become an object o demolition, once they have been used during a long period, squeezing them in their task of giving death"²¹. The decisive question is the *demolition*, as Berger relates, even street dogs know about this: "*Humare*, King, the latin word which means *bury*, is not use anymore. The new word is demolition. Demolition, demolition, NI RASTRO. To demolate, so nothing can be seen"²².

The great photography work by Rosell Meseguer, takes us to the Fort, to the borderline, and to the frontier, to the buried memory, to the crypt that has an intense poetic value. We should insist about the "esthetic" experience of the blockhouse, as the thing that preserves the identity threatened of the modern SUJETO: of the SUJETO kafkiano, always blockaded by the desire of return to the uterus,

²⁰ Fernando R. de la Flor: *fragmento de su "Epílogo. Fragmentos de Apocalipsis" en Blocao. Arquitecturas de la Era de la Violencia*, Ed. Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 2000, no page.

²¹ Fernando R. de la Flor: *Blocao. Arquitecturas de la Era de la Violencia*, Ed. Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 2000, page 29.

²² John Berger: King. Una historia de la calle , Ed. Alfaguara, page 204

protective and primary. The underground, where the *belic house* is founded in a tumular and monolithic development, fades away the promises of the fear imaginary. BLOCKHOUSE: space of a awakeness (without hope); architecture of the imaginary protection..."²³. This is, of course, *something from the past*. We have reached the militar non location²⁴, *when the war man is oldfashion*²⁵. Rosell Meseguer walks down her territory, as real as imaginary, with an archeological behaviour, showing a singular land-art of the bunker, not a pintoresc landscape. We drift from the enigma of the rests, without losing the view contemporary dislocation, in the moment where abstraction reveals the agoraphobia, or in other terms, the separation and concern²⁶. In the bunker remains an enigmatic meaning. Maybe they could be the survival headlight that is hardly readable for us. "Banal vestiges, these works – says Virilio- have turn the simple morphology into TALUS-SLOPES, only preserved because of the difficulty that has its demolition. Amazing examples of the blindness from a time, these fundamental works talk about a new architecture based on not only in

²³ Fernando R. de la Flor: *Blocao. Arquitecturas de la Era de la Violencia*, Ed. Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 2000, page 58.

²⁴ "If as Lenin pretended, the strategy is the choose to the aplication points of the forces, we are obligad to consider that those points, nowadays are not anymore points of support geostrategics, because now any point can reach another one , wherever it may be (..) the geographic location seems to have lost its strategic value, and the opposite, that value is related to the non location of the vector, a vector in a permanent mouvement" (Paul Virilio: *Vitesse et politique*, Ed. Galiée, pari, pages 132-133)

²⁵ "Without any doubt, there is nothing more oldfashioned than a war man: a long time ago he trasnsformed himself in a completely different carácter. The worker, himself, has suffered so many desventajas... However, new war men have appeared, with lots of ambiguities: all of them that know about the uselessness of the violence, but are attached to a war machina ready to recreate, of revolution and active answers. New workers that don` t relieve in work, but in a work machina to recreateof active resistente and technology liberation. (..) They are the new figure (..): the nomadic warrior, the ambulant worker (...). Gilles Deleuze y Félix Guattari: "Tratado de nomadología: la máquina de guerra", *Mil Pesetas. Capitalismo y esquizofrenia*, Ed. pre-textos, valencia, 1988, page 405.

²⁶ "The abstract tradition is not proud about the man who feels himself as one with the world. It is based in the separation, in the concern produces by the changing nature and by the desire of redeem by a "crystalline", as Worringer says, visiono f the space ruled by laws (...)" (Dore Ashton: *Una fábula del arte moderno*, Ed. Fondo de Cultura Económica – Turner, Madrid, 2001, page 171)

physical characteristics but mostly on the psyche. They are a kind of urbanism where the elemental análisis of the social reality has faded away A FAVOR DE an habitat able to be created by the secrets disponibilidades of the human beings"²⁷.

Rosell Meseguer is working on an archeologia of Cartagena, specifically of its defensive systems²⁸, looking over a past history, also going through her own unconscious, she faces in an elliptical manner an affective memory. There are melancholic and contemplative signs in her images, a solitude atmosphere, maybe waiting for another other. Talking about the logic of the non-sites, about the transit, literally in no man's land²⁹, this artist tries to create a place of memory. "Batería de Cenizas. Metodología de la Defensa", is a group of real images recreated, a tower of images living evidence of the reality, a symbolic and changing reality. a reality showed in the photographs as a beehive, as a group of graves; as windows that show the contradiction of a defense as an attack, of a war strategy in front of the idyllic Mediterranean Sea"³⁰. Seems that Rosell Meseguer has erased herself from her images, has reached the *aphanisis*³¹, she's making a portrait of her treasure,

²⁷ Paul Virilio: "Arqueología del búnker" *Acto*, nº 1, La Laguna, 2002, page 92.

²⁸ "This military city, which construction was done during the 1930-1936, works as a link between what is seen and what is not (...) (Rosell Meseguer: "Batería de Cenizas. Metodología de la Defensa" *Rosell Meseguer. Batería de Cenizas. Metodología de la Defensa*, Fundación Antonio Pérez, Cuenca, 2003, page 27

²⁹ Cfr. Marc Augé: Los "no lugares". Espacios del anonimato. Una antropología de la sobremodernidad, Ed. Gedisa, Madrid, 1993, page 83.

³⁰ Rosell Meseguer: "Batería de Cenizas. Metodología de la Defensa" *Rosell Meseguer. Batería de Cenizas. Metodología de la Defensa*, Fundación Antonio Pérez, Cuenca, 2003, page 27.

³¹ "There is a BREACH – OPENING, that will separate the nucleus of the being from the most "superficial" shapes of the symbolic / imaginary identifications – I can't never assume (in a symbolic integration sense) the nucleus from myself: when I get closer to it, happens the aphanisis of the SUJETO: the SUJETO loses his symbolic consistency. Maybe, the updating forced in the real society of the same nucleus of myself is the worst and most humiliating way of violence, a violence that mines the base itself of my identity (my "own image of myself") (Slavoj Žižek: *El acoso de las fantasías*, Ed. Siglo XXI; México, 1999, page 197)

showing in an elliptical manner her "portrait". That secret treasure could have something to do with the desire, with the jewel that shines in the own darkness and seduces us in a vertiginously manner, as the *agalma* that guarantees a minimum of ghostly consistency to the being of the SUJETO: the *object a* as an object of fantasy that is something else than myself, by which I perceive myself as something "worthy of being desired by the Other". The original question of the desire is not the one that wants to know exactly what you want to say, however the one that waits to know what the other ones want from me: what do they see in myself?, what am I for the others?. Rosell Meseguer doesn't illustrate these questions, but her obsessive accuracy talks about her *pertinente*.

Rosell Meseguer is investigating, with a great clairvoyance, a frontier site, between the earth and the sea, between the panic and the violence related to the other³², she builds a space, at the same time, fortified and in ruins, to the other. We could point out in topological terms that the division of the SUJETO, is not the division between one and the other, between two contents, but the division between something and nothing, between the identification and the emptiness. "The non center designs first the ambiguity, an oscillation between the symbolic and imaginary identification – the indecision related to where I am, in my real MYSELF, or in the external mask, with the possible involvements that my symbolic mask can be "more real" than it hides, the "real face" behind it"³³. The non center (not the Cartesian window related to the central conscience that builds the

³² "There is a distortion of the senses: an ear that can't hear, $1 + 1 = 3$ (...), a bullet in a glass as an empty eye, blind and opposite to the exhibition called Veo Veo related to the senses against the unknowledge of the other. There is the militar battery, a group of militar machines (..) set up against the enemy, in a frontier place between the earth and the sea, the north and the south(...)" Rosell Meseguer: "Batería de Cenizas. Metodología de la Defensa" Rosell Meseguer. *Batería de Cenizas. Metodología de la Defensa*, Fundación Antonio Pérez, Cuenca, 2003, page 27-33.

³³ Slavoj Žižek: *El acoso de las fantasías*, Ed. Siglo XXI, México, 1999, page 161.

subjective focus) is, in some way, a way of identifying the emptiness. When I see the magnificent photographs by Rosell Meseguer, I think they are places but also are a question: where am I?. That need of knowing where we are implicates, a question, what is a place?. As Michel Serres adverts in his book *Atlas*, we must find another definition of site-transit, where the real and the virtual map must be superimposed, in a unceasing fold³⁴. The site, melancholic and enigmatic, of Rosell Meseguer is as bunker as a crypt³⁵, where we could find more than an allegory or materialization of the freedom, an indecisión or, being more (syco) physical, an intolerable claustrophobia³⁶. Virilio has pointed out that, in a globalization time, everything goes around two subjects, that are also two terms: Verwefung: rejection and refusal and exclusion o locked- in

³⁴ Where am I

?, Who I am? Is it the same question talking about a response about the “there”? I just live in the folds, I am just folds. So strange that the embryology has taken so little from the topology, its mother and sister science!. From the begining fases of my embryonic formation, *morula*, *blástula*, *gastrulla*, vague germs and precises little men, called material, it folds, once, one hundred of times, a million of times (...), it conects, it torns, it gets holes, (...) and ends forming the volume, the mass, full and empty, the flesh gets into the minuscule cell and the whole world, it is named by my own name and wich hand is now drawing on the page (...)” (Michel Serres: *Atlas*, Ed Cátedra, Madrid, 1995, page 47

³⁵ “ The phenomenon of the incorporation of the crypt, described by Abraham and Torok, has been revised by Derrida in the text *F(u)ori*, in which he points out the singular space defined as external and internal: the crypt is, “a place inside another but separated from the other at the same time, isolated from the general space with walls, an enclosure, an enclave”: that is the example of an “intestine exclusión” or a “ clandestine inclusión”. (Mario Perinola: *L’ arte e la sua ombra*, Ed. Einaudi, Turín, 2000, p. 100)

³⁶ “The general disposition will cause an intolerable claustrophobia; an excess of opciones will be experimented as the impossibility of choosing ; the direct mundial community will exclude hardly the ones unables to participate. The cyberspace vision opening the door to a future of infinite possibilities of unlimited change, of new sexual organs, etc, etc, hides its exact opposite. (...) So that is the Real that is waiting for us, and all the efforts to symbolise this real, from the uthopic (*New Age* celebrations ...) till the darkest diathopic (the perspectiva of total control in hands of a seudodivine web...), they are other ways to avoid the true “ end of history”, the paradox o fan infinitivo much more suffocating than any actual confinement” (Slavoj Zizek: *El acoso de las fantasías*, Ed. Siglo XXI, México 1999, page 167)

syndrom³⁷. There, in those empty fortifications, in that ruinous memory, appears a *disconcerted beauty*, the possibility of living and meditating in a place where everything was ready for a violent unfold. Pascal said that all our sorrows come from an unique cause: our incapacity to stay calm *in a room*. Much more complicated is to reach the underground which dreams about Rosell Meseguer, that childhood mine that she is being so much time recalling with a cordial tone that bewitches – charms us.

³⁷ “The locked-in syndrom is a weird neurologic pathology, a complete parálisis, an impossibility to talk, but still being able to talk, and having the conscience and the intellec in perfect conditions. The establishment of the synchronization and the free interchange is the temporal comprensión of the interactivity, that interacts over the real space of our imminent habit activities, but most of all over our mentalities. (Paul Virilio en diálogo con Sylvère Lotringer: Amanecer crepuscular, Ed. Fondo de Cultura económica, México, 2003, page 80)