

The Phantom of Liberty
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(Why do I write what I write, was the question for this panel: “I don’t have any idea” would be the most sincere answer. But I know well **why it is not me who writes what I write**):

I

Under the influence of the daily-shrinking space of expression that we face in our countries (here, there and everywhere), confronting intellectual dangers and risks of this contraction, we only depend on ourselves. And, as is well known, self-confidence leads to nothing more than eccentricity: writing
 between lines, concealing sense.

Looking for alternative meanings, new methods, new styles and flamboyant literary architectures
 come to us.

I will never forget a terrible but accurate sentence I heard from a young European filmmaker:

Democracy has put to sleep our wildest dreams...

II

!VIVAN LAS CADENAS!

“Long live chains”.

That was the cry of the Spanish who, in the face of Napoleon's occupation of their country, preferred--or claimed to prefer-- the dreadful reactionary rule of the Bourbons over the liberal ideas of their revolutionary neighbors. In that moment of truth they preferred bad Spanish ideas to good French ones: a heroic and perverse choice of *unfreedom*.

Thus the heroic and perverse choice of writing. But what other means do we have to prevail against our tedious and authoritarian powers?

Humor, always.

Unconventional writing, maybe...

III

There exist but three respectable beings:

The priest, the warrior, the poet. To know, to kill, to create.

The rest of men belong to the fatigue party, made for the stables, in other words for the practice of that, which is called *professions*.

Charles Baudelaire, *Mon cœur mis à nu*

“Imagination is more important than knowledge.”

Einstein

LITERATURE Occupation of idlers

NOVELS Corrupt the masses.

POETRY Completely useless.

LACONICISM Language no longer spoken.

(*Flaubert's Dictionary of Received Ideas*)

IV

Artists are made from different wood. We don't have the practical skill of lying politicians do, or science's useful knowledge to destroy, so we claim to be at once honest and clever, the voice of God, the voice of our people. But beware, some of us don't even believe in God

(a few of us do not even believe in people...),

Therefore, we turn to poetry, prose, the most extravagant writing styles, to cope with our vague complex of superiority, to cope with repression as well as injustice, often to survive our many personal failures and our few personal achievements.

V

So then, why do I write what I write?: Because of T. S. Eliot, Mark Twain, Ezra Pound or Henry James; Paul Auster, Garcia Marquez, Borges, Camus and many others whose names I don't even know how to pronounce, and whose writings I sometimes don't even understand (take the wisest of them all: James Joyce).

VI

I write because it is a prolific, demanding, exciting, and revealing form of art, because is the cheapest way to generate counterculture and to pursue lost causes.

VII

I write what I write because I wrote for the movies, because I got tired writing for the movies;
 because, in movies every sentence has a production cost,
 and now I write (irresponsibly) what comes to my mind...

VIII

In Spanish we have a beautiful and accurate proverb:

El papel aguanta todo...

(Paper will put up with anything):

...The silence began to daze me. A resounding, irritating, intriguing deafness that transformed the scarce sounds into rumors, into dangerous inventions. Far down below, tied to a long dock like a narrow peninsula, floated a kind of schooner, and when it struck a buoy, a chilling metallic wail was heard. I had a bad feeling. And I feared that, at any moment, something terrible would happen. However, it was the creak of the cypress wood floor that caused me to back out from the balcony.

Though I could appreciate the lavishness of this exclusive suite, it was too late to bask in its luxuries: four gold censers adorned with motifs of bats and peaches occupied the four corners. The bed was covered in a raw silk comforter, scattered with red rose petals in a disordered harmony. At the foot of the bed, skillfully folded in half, was a woven bathrobe, so precious that I wished my initials were embroidered on its front. A vein of black jasper led to a sunken bath built into an indoor garden. My attention was drawn to a though framed in glass: In this garden are three philosophies: Confucianism, which prizes practicality, social responsibility, morality, and political thought. Taoism, which aspires to unity with nature and is indifferent to fortune and fame apart from morality. Finally, the thoughts of him who inhabits the garden. ...