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RHINOCEROS: I believe that the moment is at hand when by a paranoid advance of the mind it will be possible to systematize confusion and completely disregard reality.⁷

Neunzehn Tage ohne Denken

Metaxia Markaki

Characters:
Narrator,
Delirious,
New York,
Rhinoceros,
The Logician*

ACT ONE

NARRATOR: «I want to talk to you about something that you never heard. I will narrate a story about something that you haven't yet seen. I want to stand here, in front of you, and claim something that maybe you don't see; in a language that maybe you don't understand.

And you cannot but listen and at the end ... believe me.»

ACT TWO

On 20 May 1515, an Indian rhinoceros arrived at the port of Lisbon. The rhinoceros, that an Indian sultan sent as gift to the King of Portugal, was the first living example of the species seen in Europe since Roman times.

Few people saw the tropical beast and witnessed its mythical existence, before it would be packed up again in a ship and get lost chained in a shipwreck off the coast of Italy.

At around the same time of its arrival, a letter of unknown authorship reached Nuremberg. The writer described the figure of the animal, enclosing a sketch by an unknown artist. Albrecht Dürer, acquainted with the Portuguese feitoria, never saw the actual rhinoceros; he read the letter, though. Based on the verbal description he reconstructed the figure of the mythical beast, in two pen and ink drawings and a woodcut.

The inscription at the woodcut with historical accuracy and nominological, encyclopedic precision described:

«On the first of May in the year 1513 AD, the powerful King of Portugal, Manuel of Lisbon, brought such a living animal from India, called the rhinoceros. This is an accurate representation. It is the colour of a speckled tortoise, and is almost entirely covered with thick scales. It is the size of an elephant but has shorter legs and is almost invul-

nerable. It has a strong pointed horn on the tip of its nose, which it sharpens on stones. It is the mortal enemy of the elephant ... It is said that the rhinoceros is fast, impetuous and cunning.»¹

The woodcut circulated in Europe and spread the imagery that was maintained for centuries as the main impression of a rhinoceros, even after a real, but different, Indian rhinoceros was witnessed.

DELIRIOUS: He fabricated...

NEW YORK: What?

DELIRIOUS: The evidence...

RHINOCEROS: I was a fact.

DELIRIOUS: He never saw that you were real.

ACT THREE

[*Paranoia*, {para+nous, parallel to thinking} a thought process believed to be heavily influenced by anxiety or fear, often to the point of irrationality and delusion. Paranoid thinking typically includes persecutory beliefs, or conspiracy beliefs, which are absolutely justified through the linkage of a series of unrelated facts by the believer.]²

However the delirium, the paranoid state of thinking, follows a *clear logic*.

THE LOGICIAN*: Here is an exemplary syllogism. All the cats are mortal. Socrates is mortal. So Socrates is a cat.³

Interpretations, although very subjective, are methodically articulated into a systematic structure. This aspect of paranoia reveals the critical ability of the brain to perceive links between elements, which are not rationally connected.

It mainly implies the possibility of fabricating a well-documented construction of reality outside the frame of rationale.

Deriving from this observation, *paranoiac-critical thinking* was invented as an instrument for



NEW YORK: Give me a smoke...

the surrealists⁴. It was defined as «a spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based on the critical and systematic objectivity of the associations and interpretations of delirious phenomena»⁵.

(Delirious steps in the front and pronounces clearly and loud with an emphasis of a declaration. The Logician*, propped up against the wall, with a little grey moustache, eyeglass and a straw hat³ performs a parallel monologue)

DELIRIOUS: With the meticulous care of a collector and the precision of a scientist, he collects...

THE LOGICIAN*: Allow me to introduce myself.³

DELIRIOUS: ...images, events, facts. The real world is his protagonist.

THE LOGICIAN*: I am a professional logician.³

DELIRIOUS: The most precise the medium of evidence, the most convincing his conjecture.

THE LOGICIAN*: Here is my card.

DELIRIOUS: As a thief, he robs reality...

THE LOGICIAN*: Let me explain the method of a syllogism.³

DELIRIOUS: ...but his whole art lays in the fabrication;

THE LOGICIAN*: It consists of a main proposition...³

DELIRIOUS: ...in the methodical engineering of evidences; the critical interpretation of stolen elements from the real world to support his own conjecture.

(Rhinoceros crosses the stage murmuring)

RHINOCEROS: Physics of paranoia; mathematics of a paranoid system...

(pause)

NARRATOR: ... It has been claimed that the above method was used for the construction of important manifestos of the 20th century.

NEW YORK: Give me a smoke...

ACT FOUR

«How to write a manifesto—on a form of urbanism for what remains of the 20th century—in an age disgusted with them? The fatal weakness of manifestos is their inherent lack of evidence. Manhattan's problem is the opposite: it is a mountain range of evidence without a manifesto.»⁶

(New York naked, in a pink bath-tab, while taking a shower)

NEW YORK: (singing) du bi du bi du...

DELIRIOUS: If you were not who you are, then who you would be?

NEW YORK: It has been claimed that the father of Modernism discovered the anti-city here; the existing ancestor to kill, before he re-invents his own theory of modernism.

DELIRIOUS: If the frantic delirium of a paranoid's mind could re-figure everything from scratch...?

NEW YORK: It has been claimed that the father of

Surrealism, found the evidences to re-invent the post-modern city here. Du bi du bi du ...

DELIRIOUS: If 1978 was 1609...?

NEW YORK: It has been boldly claimed that Manhattan existed even before Manhattanism projects its delirious theory on the blocks of the Grid.

DELIRIOUS: And if the city was a Globe...?

VOICE FROM THE RADIO: «Movie stars who have led adventure-packed lives are often too egocentric to discover patterns, too inarticulate to express intentions, too restless to record or remember events. Ghostwriters do it for them. In the same way I was Manhattan's ghostwriter.»⁶

DELIRIOUS: He fabricated...

NEW YORK: What?

(pause. Rhinoceros crosses the stage murmuring)

RHINOCEROS: I believe that the moment is at hand when by a paranoid advance of the mind it will be possible to systematize confusion and completely disregard reality.⁷

ACT FIVE

(All sitting around a poker table)

DELIRIOUS: Split.

NEW YORK: Cut.

RHINOCEROS: Bad hand of cards.

DELIRIOUS: Re-shuffle...

(lights off)

NARRATOR: «I want to stand here in front of you and tell a story, not well-told; a story that you know, because it has for years been re-told. And then I want to speak again; meticulously decompose and precisely re-order; word by word, the syllables, the letters; until up is down and right is left;

And you cannot but listen and at the end ... believe me»

- 1 Clarke, Tim H., *The Rhinoceros from Dürer to Stubbs, 1515-1799*, (London: Philip Wilson for Sotheby's Publications, 1986).
- 2 *Collins English Dictionary—10th Edition*, (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, 2009).
- 3 Eugène Ionesco, «Rhinoceros», (Paris: 1959). Abstracts. THE LOGICIAN* is a character from the play.
- 4 Salvador Dalí, «Conquest of the Irrational», (New York: Julien Levy, 1935).
- 5 Salvador Dalí qtd. in Breton, André (1934), *What is surrealism*, lecture in Brussels.
- 6 Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994).
- 7 Salvador Dalí, «The Stinking Ass» in *La Femme Visible* (Paris: Éditions Surréalistes, 1930).

fig.1 based on Albrecht Dürer, *Rhinoceros*, 1515 (woodcut, National Gallery of Art, Washington). Potlatch Architecture, 2016

fig.2 based on Madelon Vriesendorp, *Illustrations for Delirious New York*, (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994).