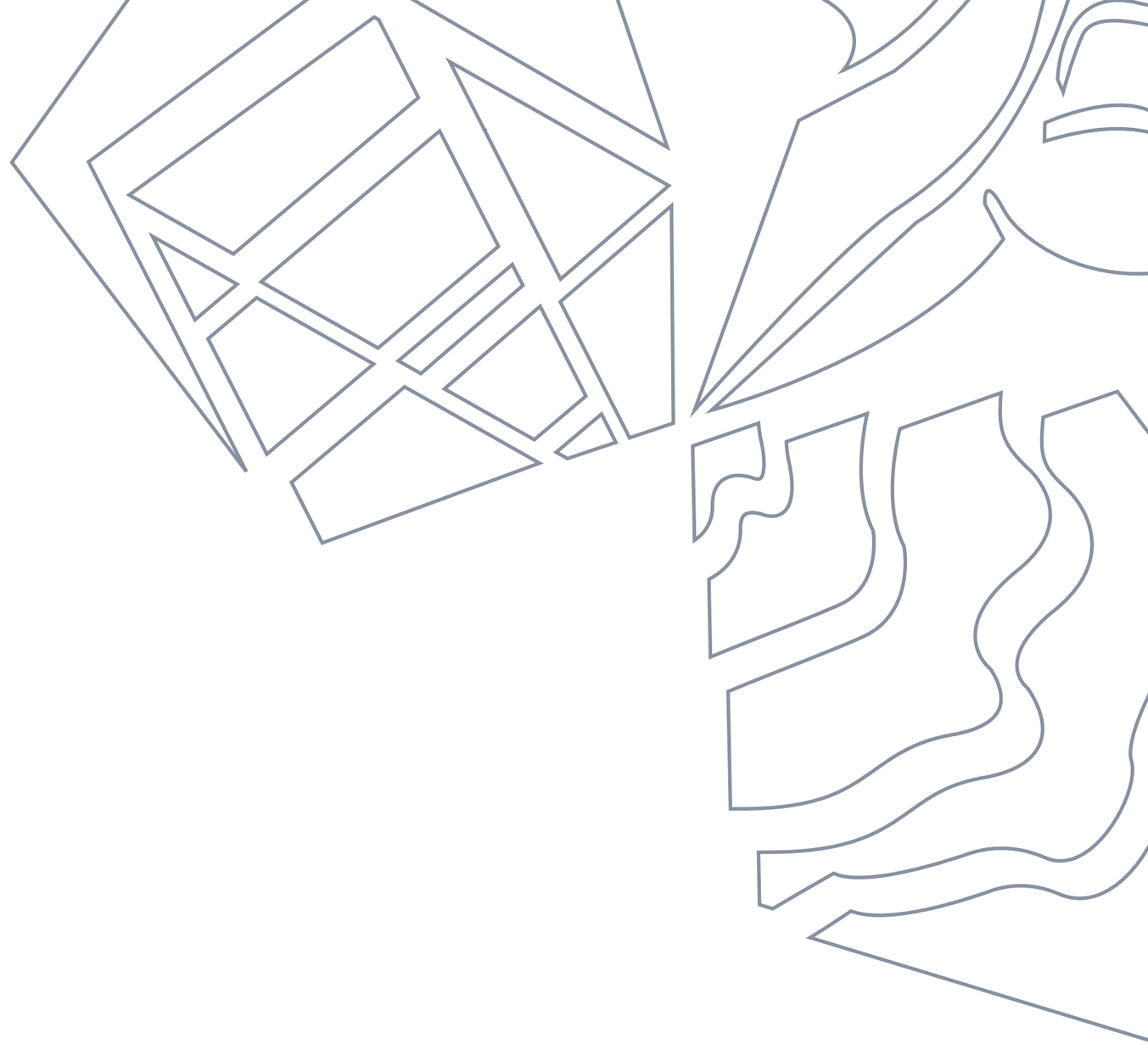
IMMORTALITY & NECROPOLITICS

by Melissa Aguilar



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Melissa Aguilar // 2 0 1 9 // meliaguilar.com

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”The ultimate goal of technology must be to overcome death; all people who had ever lived on Earth must be brought back to life.”

N. Fyodorov

This was one of the claims that Nikolai Fyodorov (1829-1903) stated when he was one of leaders of the Cosmism movement. Cosmism, was a Russian movement that sat relevant ideas about the possibility of extending life through technological means, in the XX century.

Some artists like Hito Steyerl and Anton Vidokle, consider that the movement might have influenced the contemporary thoughts about transhumanism regarding biotechnology, regenerative technologies and digital spaces.

In a revision of the cosmism movement, during the talk Immortality for All! Steyerl also argues *“Immortality of human kind or the improvement of it is always accompanied by this dark undercurrent of extermination, yet it seems to be progressing anyway.”* [1]

She refers here, to the implementation of practices like cryonics, the extension of life, and the abolition of death in contraposition to necropolitics used in this undercurrent of extermination.

Necropolitics are understood as the administration of death through mechanisms of power (technologies of control, death and destruction). According to Achille Mbembe, is linked to the concept of sovereignty, where
“the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die. Hence, to kill or to allow to live constitute the limits of sovereignty”. Mbembe developed the concept around Foucault’s ideas of “biopower” looking to question *what place is given to life, death, and the human body in the order of power?* [2]

The road to immortality will usually imply extermination practices. Some of these practices, are already implied in our new daily routines, through the use of digital technologies and corporate privative media platforms that capture, administer and manipulate our information; information that in many cases is used to limit or privilege some bodies over other ones considered as unwanted, alien or dangerous.

While some people will get insurance to pay for their cosmetic surgery thanks to their remarkable online profiles; migrant populations forced to leave their homes due to wars that they never asked for, will most likely be surveilled to a molecular level and exposed to some kind of confinement (whether it’d be physical, psychological or virtual).[3]

I think about the migrants in the border of Mexico, and the people in Chile not only being threaten by police, but also by the multiple lenses capturing their biometric information, their voices, and movements in high definition. I think about these data being classified, labeled as unacceptable, inhuman, and inadmissible. Their digital shadows rendered without their consent into material to convince and control the minds of the general public and stain their real identities now stored into cells of databases. Neural networks enabling a division of space into compartments as neo-colonial digital occupation or a not-so-new form of digital racism. [4]

Humans are not just brought to existence in the physical plane, but now, also replicated in the virtual world without being asked. Apparently there is no way to not live at least two lives in the contemporary society, but also, it seems that we cant manage either one of them. Our virtual life affects directly our physical life and vice versa.

Can we reclaim our rights of decision in either of one? Can we at least protect a part of our life that will live forever in the virtual world? Is art a way to achieve agency through the use of digital tools and allow us to create a future where we will want to live in?

“We forget that all our data lives on long after we die. Our online profiles and the digital systems that haunt us through life, continue their haunting after we are gone. Many people do not understand the complications of our newfound immortality.”
Compiler Collective

Facing this landscape, we can argue that immortality stops being a privilege reserved for queens, kings, pharaohs, illuminates and privileged beings with power, and actually becomes an obligation imposed by private tech corps, as a means of controlling civil society, its behaviors and histories.

The servers that store our without giving us access, are data graveyards; spaces that virtually substitute purgatory. Our data, as our digital immortal souls, lives in this new Uroana for as long as the tomb-sarcophagus keepers wish.

1 H Steyerl. Hito Steyerl & Anton Vidokle: Immortality for All! 2017. HKW Berlín. Retrieved from: https://soundcloud.com/hkw/immortality-for-all-hito-steyerl-anton-vidokle

2 A. Membe. (2003) Necropolitics p.12

3 A. Mbembe – VIOLENCE Dictionary of Now #6 - May 11, 2017 Video 0:30:17 . Retrieved from: https://hkw.de/en/app/mediathek/audio/56626

4 A. Membe. (2003) Necropolitics p.26

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INVITATION:

E-LIXIRS, AMULETS, KITS, AND TOTEMS. CRAFTING MORE TOOLS OF EMPOWERMENT AGAINST E-NERGERTIC VULTURES!

I.

We still don’t know the clear consequences of our misuse of technology, but we can except them to be tragic, unfair and traumatic.
Lets not repeat our naivety, as we were with Internet, with democracy, freedom, with Github or Google Street View.

Despite everything we do have agency.
We have access to knowledge for creating tools of resistance.
We can control our data, our digital shadows, we can seed and harvest consciousness, we can decide who to trust our data to.
However, it requires a lot of work, and willingness.
Let's create together e-xilires, amulets and objects to protect and guide our eternal digital souls.
This is the first call.
Want to confabulate together?
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II.

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{CLOSING INVOCATION}

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Existing in the most documented period of human history calls for urgent eye opening, meliponia drops for the mind's screen-eyes.

An injection of clarity.
The removal of clouds depicted as distracting advertisement algorithmically selected to match our profiles.
May we navigate the streams of information anticipating big data storms.
May all bodies be recognized as individual authentic human or non human beings with rights and agency.

May we be brave to use that power in our defense, to overcome the exhaustion and anxiety attacks that this fight might bring.

May all the efforts our network-army of electro-witches, activists, hackers, AIs, avatars, crystallized forms of electromagnetic specters, chlorophyll chimeras, shape-shifting demons of dark multiverses- be felt and cause effective scratches and irreversible damages in the hard drives, subconscious and prefrontal cortexes of them trackers, aggressors, malware and techno utopianism lambs that aim to destroy us.

Lets optimize, de-bug, troubleshoot our-self(ves)

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Melissa Aguilar, Oct. 2019

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{INVOCACIÓN FINAL}

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Existir en el periodo más documentado de la historia humana requiere que abramos los ojos urgentemente, gotas de meliponia para la pantalla-ojo de la mente.

Una inyección de claridad.
Apartar las nubes en forma de anuncios distractores algorítmicamente seleccionados para calzar con nuestros perfiles.

Que podamos navegar los rios de información anticipando las tormentas de big data.
Que todos los cuerpos sean reconocidos como individuos auténticos, humanos o no humanos con derechos y agencia.
Que podamos ser valientes para usar ese poder en nuestra defensa, superar el agotamiento y los ataques de ansiedad que esta lucha conlleve.

Que todos los esfuerzos de nuestra red-ejército de brujas electrónicas, activistas, jaquers, inteligencias artificiales, avatares, formas cristalizadas de espectros electromagnéticos, quimeras clorofílicas, demonixs cambiantes de oscuros multiversos- se sientan, impacten y causen scratches efectivos y daños irreversibles en los discos duros, subconscientes y cortezas prefrontales en los rastreadores, agresores, malware y ovejas tecno utópicas que atenten contra nosotrxs.

Optimicemos, de-bugiemos, probemos nuestro(s) ser(es)

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Melissa Aguilar, Oct. 2019

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