

# Inhabiting the City: An Approach from Kusch and Deleuze

Habitar la ciudad: un abordaje desde Kusch y Deleuze

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## Resumen

Este artículo propone una lectura del libro *De la mala vida porteña*, de Rodolfo Kusch, desde la perspectiva de la vida en las ciudades. Por un lado, pretende reflexionar sobre la filosofía del espacio interior propuesta por este autor y, por otro, sobre el movimiento existencial y afectivo que propone para hacer habitable el espacio exterior de la ciudad. En la segunda parte, buscamos resonancias entre este pensamiento y el de Gilles Deleuze, especialmente sus conceptos de territorio y devenir imperceptible. En la encrucijada de ambos autores, pretendemos articular algunas de las implicaciones políticas de estos conceptos.

**Palabras clave:** estar, convertirse, habitar, pueblo, territorio

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## Abstract

This article proposes a reading of the book *De la mala vida porteña* by Rodolfo Kusch, from the perspective of life in the cities. On the one hand, it aims to think about the philosophy of interior space proposed by this author, and on the other, the existential and affective movement that he proposes to make the exterior space of the city habitable. In the second part, we seek resonances between this thought and that of Gilles Deleuze, especially his concepts of territory and becoming-imperceptible. At the crossroads of both authors, we aim to articulate some of the political implications of these concepts.

**Keywords:** estar, becoming, inhabiting, pueblo, territory

## Introducción

An obsession pursued Kusch throughout his work: to find the foundations of a thought of our América. This search took shape through an increasingly intense immersion in the deepest América, that which beats in the most hidden corners, where the indigenous and the popular predominate over the bourgeois and cosmopolitan element of the big cities.

His path began with an analysis of the American landscape and history in his first work (*La seducción de la barbarie*, originally published in 1953; see Kusch, 2007a); then, he continued with a detailed interpretation of Joan de Santacruz's document Pachacuti in *América profunda* (originally published in 1962; see Kusch, 2007b); and later, in what has been called the second Kusch (Von Matuschka, 1985), he went deeper through fieldwork with Indigenous and popu-

lar informants about their customs and beliefs<sup>1</sup>. The conceptual fruits of this last period are reflected in works ranging from *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América* (2010, originally published in 1970/1973) to the end of his output, prematurely interrupted in 1979.

In this intellectual journey, a small work stands out in which Kusch seems to momentarily stop his immersion in the deep lands of America to dive into the city life of Buenos Aires, his hometown. Published in 1966, *De la mala vida porteña* (2007a) condenses the attempts of our philosopher to probe everyday life in the city, with the aim of finding there too a connection with the “wisdom of America” that he was discovering in the highland region.

This concern can be traced both in his plays and in articles and passages from books interspersed throughout his output, but which receives for the first time a systematic development, in the form of a book, in this 1966 publication. In this article, we will concentrate especially on some concepts of this work with the aim of thinking, on the one hand, of the conception of vital space proposed by our author from a dialogue with popular thought as expressed in the Buenos Aires slang, and on the other, on the existential and affective movement he proposes to make the space of the city habitable. In the author’s words:

<sup>1</sup>We keep the accent in “América” following María Lugones’s and Joshua Price’s criteria in their translation of *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América* (Kusch, 2010), as explained in their translator’s introduction: “When Kusch describes “América,” he depicts a repressed reality, a form of thinking that furnishes and connotes the authentic but suppressed experience of millions of people in their everyday lives. We have kept América because the accent marks a difference from what would be known and familiar to the English-language reader. It provides a certain textual resistance to the reader, a defamiliarization with the continent as she or he knows it. The accent makes the word, and its referent, harder to assimilate to a pre-existing understanding of this continent.(...) América for Kusch houses a metaphysic, a form of life that moves according to its own rhythm” (2010, lxix). This introduction also offers strong reasons for not using other forms like “Latin America” or “the Americas”, which could also be used but betray Kusch’s thought. Of course, “America” without an accent is the worst choice, since it is usually understood by English readers as including only North America.

“It is about nothing less than clarifying the ultimate background of our lifestyle that we fulfill on a daily basis in the big city” (Kusch, 2007a, p. 326)<sup>2</sup>.

As has been pointed out, the question of space is fundamental in Kusch’s project. Thus, Von Matuschka (1994) highlights this aspect of Kusch’s ontology in order to differentiate it from that of Heidegger. According to this author, the two philosophers think that man belongs as an ontic constitution to the pre-ontological domain of “being” (1994, p. 112). Although this formulation is problematic by virtue of the emphatic distinction proposed by the Argentine between the concepts of “ser” and “estar”<sup>3</sup>, it is important to underline here the point of his divergence with Heidegger: Just as the German proposes an existential analytic in which this pre-understanding of being is essentially resolved in a temporal dimension, Kusch thinks that the most original dimension of human existence must be thought in spatial terms (Von Matuschka, 1985, p. 113).

<sup>2</sup>In all Kusch’s works, as well as other texts originally written in Spanish and in French, if not stated otherwise in the references, I made the translations.

<sup>3</sup>This distinction is key to understanding Kusch’s thought and its impossible to translate properly to English, since those two Spanish verbs are included in only one expression in English: “to be”. Joshua Price offers a clear explanation of this problem: “In Spanish, *ser* and *estar* are usually translated as forms of the verb “to be”. As elementary students of Spanish conventionally learn, *ser* refers to permanent or existential statements (“I am tall”), and *estar* to accidental, circumstantial or temporary conditions (“I am sad”). They are both as common in Spanish as the verb “to be” in English (2024, 47-48). The same applies to the ontological concept of “Being”, which is what Kusch is discussing here, bringing forward an ontology which is alternative to Western tradition and has its roots in indigenous American thought. In fact, “estar” is itself, in Kusch’s approach, a translation of Aymara word *utcatha* and Quichua word *cay*, which complicates the problem of translation even more. Since Kusch ties the most deep ontological consequences of his philosophy to this linguistic distinction, we will keep the concepts of “ser” and “estar” in Spanish throughout this article, following once again María Lugones’s and Joshua Price’s reasons (Kusch, 2010, Translators’ Introduction). The same criterion will be used in all the expressions used by Kusch which are related to this fundamental ontological distinction, like *ser alguien* (to be someone), *mero estar / estar nomás* (just being), and the like.

Ana Zagari (2020), on the other hand, within a geocultural and situated perspective, has also insisted on the spatial aspect as an ontological plane deeper than the temporal one in Kusch's philosophy (p. 57), an assessment confirmed this time by a study of Kusch's aesthetic writings by Ignacio Soneira (2020, p. 103). These three interpretations, whose mention is not intended to exhaust the increasingly fertile field of Kuschian studies, show that the priority of the spatial is a characteristic feature of this philosophy.

Here we will try an alternative way to investigate this issue by concentrating especially, as mentioned above, on *De la mala vida porteña*. It is a matter of thinking about the specific way in which daily life develops in the city from the duplicity between the concepts of the sacred enclosure of the *pa'mí* and the *city of the others*. These two notions refer to two spatialities between which there is a distance that seems insurmountable, but that will have to be crossed somehow to make the city a livable space. In order to explore this alternative, we will first outline a reading of the concept of *estar* as a fundamental dimension of existence that seeks to be protected and cultivated in the sacred enclosure of the *pa'mí*.

In a second moment, we will explore what Kusch calls, in the same book, the getting *out of the pa'mí*, in dialogue with the Deleuzian concepts of *territorialization and becoming-imperceptible*. The paths of Kusch and Deleuze will be crossed, in this way, from the resonance that occurs especially between two conceptual pairs: sacred enclosure and *estar*, in the former; *territory* and *becoming*, in the latter. Indeed, both Kuschian *estar* and Deleuzian *becoming* are concepts with which both authors propose both a critique of the classical metaphysics of Being and the creation of alternative ontologies.

These two fundamental dimensions (*estar* and *becoming*) constitute the *element* from which it becomes possible to think of processes that make the (often inhospitable) space of the *city habitable*. This is, we believe, one of the central objectives of the philosophy of everyday life developed by Kusch and, at the same time, the heart that animates the latent political pulse of this work. Deleuzian theorizing around *becoming-imperceptible* shows an analogous impulse, especially in his commentary on Akira Kurosawa's film *Ikiru* (To Live).

## Two Brief Methodological Considerations

Before embarking on the proposed path, two brief methodological considerations are in order: first, the notion of “crossed paths” that serves as inspiration for the comparison between the two authors; second, the use of scenes or narratives.

First, the notion of “crossed paths” (Ferreyra et al., 2017, pp. 6–11) implies thinking of systems of thought as paths that are re-actualized and reformulated as they are traversed—these readings are enriched when they bring to light resonances between different systems. Such inquiries are even more transformative when they relate (as we will do here) two systems of thought that *a priori* have no link whatsoever. Kusch and Deleuze produced their work in total mutual indifference. Indeed, there is no mention of the other in their writings. Kusch has cited authors very close to Deleuze, such as Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault, but not the author of *Difference and Repetition*.

In the case of the French thinker, his ignorance of Kusch's thought is not surprising since it is part of the usual ignorance of European philosophers in relation to Latin American intellectual production. This empirical silence does not prevent us, however, from showing that there are deep resonances between some aspects of both philosophies. The method of study to demonstrate this is necessarily complex: It is a matter of investigating how they, each in their own way, have approached the question we are dealing with, searching for echoes that allow us to broaden the field of determination of the problem.

Secondly, this work will make frequent use of what we have elsewhere called “original scenes” of thought (Mc Namara, 2023). These are short stories that our philosophers insert in their theoretical development and that, far from being secondary, are fundamental for the understanding of concepts that pretend to sink their roots in concrete life. Kusch's work is populated by this type of staging, as is Deleuze's, who also offers some keys to conceptualize it.

Taking up the contribution of Diogenes Laertius to the history of ancient philosophy, from his famous *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Deleuze proposes to construct a method that seeks to reach the secret point in which an anecdote of life and an aphorism of thought are one and the same thing (Deleuze, 1969, p. 152). It is a matter of drawing on scenes that can be biographical, literary, theatrical, or cinematographic, which are presented as an inseparable part of the philosophical discourse—a sort of dramatization of the concepts that gives them vital and affective flesh.

Having made these two clarifications, we can begin exploring the problem posed in the introduction.

## Distances

In *La seducción de la barbarie*, Kusch begins with a typically porteño<sup>4</sup> scene: the experience of sitting in a bar, next to the window, looking absent-mindedly at people passing by on the street. The philosopher isolates the gaze of this solitary individual through the window and dwells on the sensation of distance that separates him from the passerby, also solitary, who passes by on the sidewalk engrossed in his own affairs. This idea of *distance* between individuals is a *symptom* of the bad life produced by the mode of social, urban, and cultural organization of the modern city.

The city is presented as a cold mechanism that organizes life according to personal progress, which is thought of as the accumulation of things, titles, and positions. It is the domain that Kusch would thematize in Part 2 of *América profunda* (“*Los objetos*”) with the figure of the merchant, who populates with merchandise a space conceived as empty. It is a spatiality devoid of meaning and transformed into pure quantity, the recipient of a life project based on calculation and individual interest. The city is thus transformed into a mechanism in which each individ-

<sup>4</sup>In argentinian slang, the word “porteño” refers to people from Buenos Aires city. Far from being just a geographical nomination, in the context of Kusch’s book *De la mala vida porteña* (which could be translated as “On the bad life of Buenos Aires”), it refers to a particular way of life, values and habits, such as the ones expressed, for instance, in tango lyrics and argentinian cinema. This is why we chose to use this word in spanish.

ual struggles for an existence increasingly emptied of meaning<sup>5</sup>.

The man leaning on the bar table would like to build some complicity with the solitary passerby, but the city erects an invisible wall between the two. Its spatiality is not that of the communal embrace but that of the struggle for recognition and competition between people. Within this mechanical space, there are, however, places apart, different spaces.

The bars, cafés, and pizzerías of Buenos Aires function as precarious refuges from the city’s inclemency, places where we escape from the hostility of the streets. And yet, the connection fails. In *Indios, porteños y dioses*, Kusch (2007a) comments on another bar scene: There, in a chewing rite, we look uselessly glance and search for the humanity of others, until we throw away the greasy paper, and go out like gentlemen, like nothing happened, to the street, to walk a few more blocks. But the path is still missing (p. 170). Once again, distance is imposed.

*Distance* is a concept that is repeated throughout Kusch’s work. There is a distance between us, middle-class citizens, and the Indians of the altiplano (hence their unfathomable silence) (Mc Namara, 2020). There is also a distance with respect to the beggar who comes to us to ask for alms—distance, in short, between us and the passerby we see on the other side of the bar’s window. The experience of that distance is the symptom of a *problem*: nothing matters outside this singular abyss that interweaves the café, the window, the passerby, and us (Kusch, 2007a, p. 18). The typically *porteño* scene is thus presented as a powerful image of thought, as a staging of an everyday situation that forces us to think.

## The Sacred Enclosure

The space of the café is once again the setting chosen by Kusch as the starting point in *De la mala vida*

<sup>5</sup>Philosopher Sergio Rojas (2019) eloquently expressed such an effect on the lives of Chilean citizens, when trying to understand the background of the revolts that took place in October 2019. He puts it in this way: “Then people realize that, suddenly, in a regime that has been established and naturalized on the principles of private property and individualism, there is something they share: the pain inadvertently accumulated in existences that the imperative of daily resignation has been depriving of meaning”.

*porteña*. This time, the narrator works in an office. When he leaves his shift, he walks around the city, thinking about the good day he had and the recognition he got from his boss. He is satisfied and proud of the task accomplished and of having done his bit for the country's progress. After walking a few meters, the man decides to enter a bar. He sits down to have a coffee while he watches the people passing by. Unlike the subject of *La seducción de la barbarie*, here the city seems hospitable.

All the people walking along the downtown streets, among stores and shop windows, seem to be part of the same common enterprise of "moving the country forward by working," believing in progress and thus embodying the ideals of the Goddess Reason who strolled through Paris at the end of the 18th century, at the dawn of our time. However, the situation changes when a friend appears on the scene. This new character, recognizing the narrator, also enters the café and sits at his table, with a friendly "*What'up, pibe?*" (Kusch, 2007a, p. 330). Here begins a dull existential drama. Instead of conveying to his friend his joy for a good day's work, our protagonist replies with a listless "well... not much, here I am" (p. 330)<sup>6</sup>. If he had answered what he really thought at that moment, a wall of silence would surely have been erected between the two of them, and the distance would have been present once again.

The friend would have believed that the narrator was showing off, *mandándose la parte*, as the Buenos Aires slang that Kusch analyzes in this work says, that is, playing a role that stages an individual with an importance that he really does not have (that of being an industrious citizen who collaborates with the progress of the country). Therefore, the subject changes the story and tells his friend that he "tricked" his boss, that he made him believe that he had done his job when, in fact, someone else had done the task. Kusch wonders: Where is the simulation? Before, at work, or now, at the café? What idea of humanity underlies this simulative and even contradictory behavior? What kind of complicity am I trying to build with

<sup>6</sup>"Pibe" means "kid" or "boy" in argentinian slang, but it's not used only for children or adolescents. One can perfectly call an adult "pibe", and it can be both friendly or downgrading in a playful or a slightly insulting way.

the friend when we are both outside the good job and sitting there, out of the industrious city, in the bar?

In these places, Kusch (2007a) finds a "rare wisdom," which, although it seems more typical of Indians and peasants, is also found in its own way "in the well of the city" (p. 334). Within this rare wisdom lies the experience of a profound humanity, which only emerges when the eagerness to *ser alguien*<sup>7</sup> in the mechanistic armature of the city is relaxed. Indeed, in the city, we are always being harassed to do anything, to be productive. "We never have time to appeal to the heavy humanity that emerges when we do nothing" (Kusch, 2007a, p. 484). That is why the bar can be a refuge, even when it implies peering into the silent and disturbing well of our *mero estar*.

This inward look implies the expansion of a part of our life that is subtracted from the mechanical work task that is done for the outside, for others (for example, for the boss). Thus, while we work, a part of us is distracted and thinks about our own things: about vacations, about the dinner that awaits at the end of the day, about a gift for the loved one, etc. We subtract that part from the public sphere to a space that Kusch (2007a) calls "our sacred enclosure of the *pa'mí*"<sup>8</sup> (Kusch, p. 336). Around this concept revolves the whole development presented in *De la mala vida porteña*.

The "sacred enclosure of the *pa'mí*" is an affective space separated from the inhospitable exteriority of the city. The things that really matter are found

<sup>7</sup>This is the expression (very common in everyday conversation) with which Kusch uncovers the true meaning of the ontological notion of Being for the concrete form of subjectivity inherited from modern european thought in América. It means "to be someone", an aspiration of individual progress for urban middle-class's way of life. As is usual throughout all his books, Kusch transforms a common expression in a concept. This one in particular is often used as a counterpart for concepts like *estar nomás*, *mero estar* and *dejarse estar*, which are developments of the main opposition between *ser* and *estar* (see note 2).

<sup>8</sup>Once again we need to leave this expression in argentinian slang to stress its origin in Kusch's thought. It is a contraction of "para mí", which means "for me", and points towards an intimate sphere that has nothing to do with private property. That is why is sacred. In his conceptualization, Kusch transforms this expression in a noun, that is why it the "sacred enclosure of the *pa'mí*".

there. These objects, in reality, are not “things” in the strict sense, but meaningful signs that organize our intimate world. It can be the house we live in or the neighborhood, with the series of objects and people that weave the “affective network” (Kusch, 2007a, p. 338) that forms our zone of protection, where we can relax the productive tension of the city and rest. My table, my cup of tea, my window are not mere objects. They are folds of the universe charged with an affectivity that constitutes the familiar, where I can simply *estar* without worrying about the gaze of others.

The sacred enclosure of *pa'mí* is, then, the citadel of *estar* in the middle of a cosmopolitan city (which shows that, deep down, perhaps it is not so cosmopolitan and is, as Kusch likes to say, more committed to América than one would like to admit). We go out and work out there, in the harsh, cold city, in the world of others, to achieve the material means necessary to sustain this enclosure to such an extent that the Cartesian “I” does not exist here, but is reduced to the mask we wear to pretend to ser *alguien* in the world outside, where I do not say that I “estoy,” but that I “soy” an employee, a teacher, an engineer, a professor, etc. In the *sacred enclosure of pa'mí*, on the other hand, there is no “I,” but a *mero estar* where pure life takes place. Now, what does this “mystery of *estar nomás*” consist of? (Kusch, 2007a, p. 429).

Determining a concept of “*estar*” is one of the most persistent obsessions throughout Kusch’s work. The philosopher finds this notion to be the key to a proper American thought. Unlike Western ontology, which revolves around the concept of *ser*, the American ontology would be, first and foremost, an ontology of *estar*. But more than the scholarly modulation of the dialogue with the history of philosophy (which, of course, is not absent in Kuschian developments), the philosopher is interested above all in the expression of these ontological planes in everyday speech. Hence, in many fragments, the question is supported by the analysis of two colloquial expressions: the *afán de ser alguien* (“desire to be someone”) and the *dejarse estar* (“to let oneself just be”). The first refers to an active and calculating being, productive and projective, which appears as the ideal of the good citizen. The second, on the other hand, refers to a passive

and static position, which is negatively valued in the official discourse.

In contrast to bourgeois ideals, Kusch tries to show that in this distended plane, a vital dimension emerges, which, in América, has achieved a consistency that is impossible to eradicate. Let us look at some of its fundamental features, as they unfold in the works published in the period we are dealing with, between 1962 and 1966, that is, between *América profunda* and *De la mala vida porteña*<sup>9</sup>.

With his ontological conceptualization, Kusch approaches a vitalist philosophical approach<sup>10</sup>. *Estar*

<sup>9</sup>We leave aside the layers of complexity that the philosopher adds to his thought in later works (although preserving, we believe, the fundamental core already outlined in that founding work). We do so with the aim of concentrating, as we said above, on the philosophy of the city deployed in the 1966 essay, which has in *América profunda* its immediate antecedent and from whose conceptual acquisitions Kusch’s approach is undoubtedly nourished.

<sup>10</sup>Daniel Von Matuschka (1985, p. 147) has rightly pointed out the fundamentally vitalist character of Kusch’s thought. This way of understanding Kusch’s project seems to us to be extremely fruitful. It is based, in principle, on the distance Kusch (2007c) takes from Heidegger when he states, in *Esbozo de una antropología filosófica americana*, that “the polysemy of the term life places us at the limits of philosophy, where thinking in general appears and the rational and the symbolic are combined,” and that it is necessary to overcome the *asepsis* Heidegger feels towards the term, to the point of excluding it from philosophical language because of its ambiguity (p. 402). In the small book that concerns us, as in the rest of Kusch’s works, the question appears insistently. For example, when Kusch (2007a) explains that “*estar en la vida*, as we usually say, means being exposed to the vicissitudes that life brings with it. And it is curious, we cannot say to *ser en la vida*. Could it be that *ser empleado* [being employed] is done at the cost of life, as if we were apart from it?” (p. 424). A philosophy of *estar*, such as that proposed by Kusch, has one of its touchstones in the concept of *life* (“*vida*” in Spanish), as a pre-ontological, genetic and indeterminate dimension. Hence, his thoughts can be formulated under a vitalist rubric. Along this path, a comparative study with Deleuze may also prove fruitful. It is worth remembering here that, in his late work, the French philosopher expressed his vitalist impulse without half-measures: “Everything I have written—at least I hope so—has been vitalist” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 196).

refers to the dimension of pure *life* and nothing else, without objects or projects. This *pure life* is affected by an essential *indeterminacy* that contrasts with the *defining* eagerness of the ontology derived from the concept of *ser*. Thus, while *ser* refers to classical concepts such as “essence” and “substance,” that is, to what is clear and distinct, to the solidity of the foundation, *estar* refers to what is circumstantial and accidental. It carries, therefore, a characteristic margin of instability and indefiniteness, as something thrown into the world and subordinated to forces it does not control. Thus, the expression “*soy empleado*” (“I am employed”) changes completely if we say “*estoy empleado*.” In this second option, “I do not attach so much importance to employment itself, but suggest a certain instability, a certain desire to change occupation, as if in the world in which *estoy*, I occupy a transitory, even ephemeral location” (Kusch, 2007a, p. 424).

All *determination* arises, for Kusch, from an indeterminate background. Hence, the preeminence of *estar* over *ser*. To illustrate this, the philosopher uses the metaphor of the tree and its roots: If the visible tree, with its identifiable form, refers to the dimension of *ser*, its roots sink into the abyss of mere *estar*. Beyond the world of things and projects that we integrate in the big city, where we try to *ser alguien* who fulfills their function in the mechanism, there is the daily return to that vital dimension implied in the sacred enclosure, as a necessary immersion in the distended plane of a *pure life*. In the face of the frenetic activity of *ser alguien*, which seeks the domain of the real thought of as a space of pure objects, *estar nomás* refers to a “vegetal passivity” (Von Matuschka, 1985, p. 6).

Vegetation as an image of the living occupies a central place in Kusch’s work. This image refers to a vitality that affirms itself in the soil and embraces the original fear of existing in the open. It is a life that is rooted in an affective, informal, but form-generating spatiality. Contact with this original dimension only occurs when the fictitious tension of *ser alguien* relaxes, when the individual withdraws into his “sacred enclosure, returning to zero, perhaps to consult his pure life again” (Kusch, 2007a, p. 427).

The movement of “returning to zero” implies a vector of de-determination or de-definition, a dissolution

of the forms wielded to confront others, and an immersion in that pre-ontological region of *mero estar*. The native peoples know this, and that is why they built a way of life that does not isolate itself from the landscape in the walls of the city but identifies with it and with the forces that inhabit it. Exactly as the plant does, which does not deny the landscape in order to affirm itself, but takes what the landscape offers it (both the favorable and the unfavorable). In any case, *estar* does not pretend to overcome reality but seeks to conjure it, to win its favor with resources of a more magical than rational order.

However, it would be a mistake to simply stick to concepts that give *estar* the simple connotation of passivity. As Kusch’s research in *América profunda* shows, the dimension of *estar*, as it appears in the Indigenous peoples of the altiplano, implies a whole symbolic, social, and economic work that produces at the same time a mandalic ontology and an economy of protection. In this framework, the city itself is organized as a great protective mandala, as Kusch demonstrates in his comments on the social, political, and urban organization of the Tawantisuyu.

Indeed, the entire Inca territory was organized according to a spiritual order, tensioned by the four regions and with the germinative center located in the city of Cuzco. “Everything was like a magical network that maintained the unity of the pre-Columbian world through a sanctuary-city” (Kusch, 2007b, p. 111). The member of that society was consoled and rested in this symbolic structure embodied by the city itself, full of symbolism. The urban conception of this people was at the antipodes of the modern city. It was based on the idea of the cosmos as a house, as represented in the graphic of the *yamqui Santacruz Pachacuti* analyzed in *América profunda*<sup>11</sup>.

Not only did the symbolic organization of urban space provide shelter, but the organization of economic production was also resolved in an agrarian culture oriented by the same scheme. This is what the philosopher calls a “economy of shelter” (Kusch, 2007b, p. 114). Such an organization presupposes a strong state control of the production, distribution, and consumption of food, so as to guarantee the sur-

<sup>11</sup>This conception, as Gustavo Carreras (2022), following Josef Estermann (2006), has shown, is the basis of Andean philosophy.

vival of the community and avoid shortages. It is precisely this organization that, with the predominance of Western civilization, has been lost. Here, a model of *helplessness* prevails, where individuals compete with each other, each left to their own devices. Thus, the experience of that sacred and protective city of the Inca is reduced, in the *porteño* experience, to a precarious sacred enclosure in which the citizen seeks refuge for the unfolding of his pure life, although without the protection of the community or the solid symbolic universe that it offered.

### The Getting Out of the *Pa'mí*: Making the City a Territory

The old citizen of the Inca empire inhabited his city surrounded by divinities. This is not the case in the modern city. Therefore, although it is essential, the constitution of a sacred enclosure in the private sphere is not enough to make the urban space habitable. We fall prey to an alienating dichotomy between a familiar inside and a hostile outside. Therefore, for Kusch (2007a), “if we were locked in our sacred realm, our life in Buenos Aires would become unbearable” (p. 343). Hence the need for “the getting out of the *pa'mí*.”

If there is a sort of affective moat that separates the sacred enclosure from the outside, putting a prudent *distance* with respect to the world of others, there is also the need to jump over that limit and contaminate reality with one's own. It is a matter of making that outside a habitable place, taking away from it part of its coldness and indifference: “What does it mean to make a world? Well, to throw the *pa'mí* outside (Kusch, 2007a, p. 352). This implies a work on the plane of the symbolic, a bit like the old Incas did. It is as if we were throwing that affective net of the *pa'mí* on the outside, in such a way as to transform the strange into the familiar. Thus, “in order to live we throw symbols outside, like someone who throws pieces of his flesh so that the wild beasts devour him, or, in any case, to see if in this way, that no man's land, which is outside, becomes a little contaminated with our *pa'mí*” (Kusch, 2007a, p. 347).

In this reality transformed into an extension of our sacred enclosure, the getting out towards an exteriority that is pure chance and contingency takes place. Here, something like an incantation operates in our

actions. It is as if we were throwing the seeds of our possibilities into the air in the hope that the earth outside will be fertile and allow the realization of our projects. In order to live, it is necessary to extend our “affective empire” (Kusch, 2007a, p. 381) outwards, to overcome the opposition that the mechanically armed reality imposes on us, without taking into account the affective life that we deploy in the sacred enclosure. Thus, alongside the mechanical and cold city, “a city for personal use” (p. 375) is achieved. No longer the city of the objective plane, made by technicians, but the one where we love and hate. “In short, with our *pa'mí* in tow, we slobber and pollute the harsh reality” (p. 349). This requires a prudent work, a continuous measuring of distances and thresholds from which danger and weathering begin, but knowing that it is not possible to live walled in.

In this getting out, there is a movement that can perhaps be compared to the process of *territorialization* according to Deleuze and Guattari (2000). To explain this function, the authors take an example from the animal world: the construction of the space of the bird *Scenopoeetes dentirostris*. The procedure is simple: At a certain moment, this bird drops several leaves that it has been cutting every morning. It then turns them over to show their lighter side and produce a contrast with the color of the ground. With this action, an element of its external environment (the tree) becomes expressive.

A new *quality* emerges as a *mark* of a *property*. The space becomes significant, and thus a territory is produced. Something similar happens with the urine of certain animals, which emits a particular odor. In this case, an element of its inner environment becomes expressive by externalizing itself and creating a territorial mark. This is why the authors say that when a component of the environment becomes a *quality*, it becomes a *property* at the same time. These new qualities, then, are not “pure” but “proper,” that is to say, they generate an “appropriation”: “quale and *proprium*” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2000, p. 322). In order to appropriate the external space, the animal performs a whole semiotic work that gives it a certain expressiveness.

The ownership of a territory is, first and foremost, the ownership of distances. With their banners, their smells and sounds, animals express the critical limit



beyond which a conflict over territory can arise or the threshold beyond which a mating can occur<sup>12</sup>. For Deleuze and Guattari (2000), critical distance is a rhythm (not a measure) by means of which a territory keeps away the forces of chaos and enables intraspecific relations, not only in the animal world, but also in the human world. This happens, for example, in the territorial distribution between street vendors who share the same space, based on their songs and dances, their *signatures* and *styles* (the train carriage as a space or territorial dance and marking of distances based on the style of each vendor, a typical scene for the usual passenger of Buenos Aires's trains).

Let us return again to the *porteño* world described by Kusch. The Deleuzian theory of territory provides new perspectives to understand the movement of leaving the *pa'mí* as the creation of a world. Thus, for example, in our dealings with the people around us, there is a movement analogous to that of the Scenopoeetes when he turns the leaves to construct the borders of his territory with chromatic signs. When we Argentines use "vos" as second person instead of "usted"<sup>13</sup>, we bring our interlocutor to this side of the deep moat that separates our sacred enclosure from the world of others. The "vos" is an appendix of the *pa'mí* and marks its limit. With this pronoun we point out the familiar, we reduce the distance with the other and we trap him/her in our world, "as if we were spreading an affective net and with it we were captivating our loved ones" (Kusch, 2007a, p. 338). When we address people as "usted," on the other hand, we move them away to the other side of the moat, where the strange world outside begins, as if we were irremediably marking a cold distance (p. 339). The same *distance* that separates home from work and the street, that is, the sacred from the profane (p. 340). Something analogous happens with language: On the one hand, there is the correct language of the Royal Spanish Academy, on the other, the language of the street, with which we deform and imprint our lifestyle on the former. Here,

<sup>12</sup>For other examples from the animal world, see Borghi (2014, pp. 45 et seq.).

<sup>13</sup>In Spanish, we have at least two ways of saying "you": the formal way, "usted", and the more familiar way, "tú". In Argentina, there are many places (not only Buenos Aires) that use "vos" instead of "tú".

it is also as if we were turning over the leaves on the floor to dye the world with our own and make it habitable (in this case, the linguistic universe that came from Europe). To speak of "vos" instead of "tú," to say "*chamuyo*" instead of "*conversación*," is a way of bringing words closer to one's own intimacy, it is a way of trampling on what one has been granted by tradition just to say *here I am*" (Kusch, 2007a, p. 423).

### To Charge the World with Data

In the course of his long seminar on cinema, during the first part of his lecture of March 15, 1983, Deleuze (2011) offers a remark of notable resonances with the Kuschian *getting out of the pa'mí*. The question is framed in the analysis of a particular type of cinematic space, the "space-breath" of the great Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa (p. 400). It is a dilated space, a totality that exceeds the empirical situation to refer to a kind of metaphysical spatiality. Kurosawa's heroes are immersed in a situation that poses a challenge, in the style of the classic action film, but imperceptibly, they move beyond that situation towards a *question* that signals to a deeper *problem*, hidden in the initial situation.

For example, in the film *The Seven Samurai*, the protagonists start from a typical action film situation (they are hired by a community to defend themselves against bandits), but, deep down, the samurai are beset by a more urgent question, which exceeds the initial situation. The question is: *What does it mean to be a samurai today?* Here, we will dwell on another of the examples offered by Deleuze, since it refers directly to the theme we have been discussing with Kusch: transforming the space of the city into a habitable place.

The film *Ikiru* (To Live, 1952) begins with an extreme situation of great pathos: The protagonist of the story, Mr. Watanabe, learns that he has only a few months to live, as a result of a serious digestive system disease. The situation immediately raises a series of challenging questions that lead him to imagine what to do with the time he has left. Since he has been a gray man all his life, the first answer is that he should enjoy what he has left, indulge in worldly pleasures. So he starts drinking, frequenting brothels, and the like. Along the way, he meets a sort of mentor, an existentialist writer who initiates him into the

pleasures of the night. This soon proves to be useless. Our protagonist feels empty.

In a second moment, Watanabe enters into a relatively paternal, relatively ambiguous relationship with a girl much younger than he is. But very soon she feels uncomfortable, she senses that the situation is becoming more and more strained, and tells him that they cannot go on, that they have nothing more to talk about, and that, moreover, his strange attitude frightens her. In the breakup conversation, when he confesses his situation to her, she offers him precious advice. She encourages him to find an activity that will give meaning to his life. It can be something very simple. The girl uses herself as an example: She works in a mechanical toy factory. It is a seemingly gray and alienating job, since she is a simple worker. Yet she affectively invests the products of her work and is happy every time she sees a child playing with the toys she contributed to making. With that, she feels that there is something in the world produced by her that not only circulates but also produces joy in the children who use it. “I feel like a friend of all children,” she says in conclusion. Deleuze (2011) comments, “She recharged the world with data” (p. 400). For the protagonist of the film, the relationship with her ends, but the exploration of the real *problem*, hidden in the initial situation, begins.

According to Deleuze’s comment, it is not a question of thinking about what to do with his last days, but of asking himself why he should do something. What would give meaning to a life that perceives itself as gray and that is coming to an end? The conversation with the girl gives him a formidable Idea. This moment is staged by Kurosawa almost as if Deleuze had written the script: When the old man leaves the restaurant where they had met, a group of people seem to surround him, singing Happy Birthday. The end of the shot reveals that they were actually singing to someone else, but, cinematographically, it is as if Kurosawa had made his own the words pronounced by the French philosopher thirty-five years later: “to have an idea is an event that happens rarely, a kind of party” (Deleuze, 2003, p. 291).

The idea is as follows. Our hero is a state official. Throughout the film, in the office where he works, a group of women appears who demand the construction of a park in a vacant lot, but the project is shelved

in the drawers of the municipality, and the women are sent from one office to another in an endless bureaucratic labyrinth. Watanabe decides to carry out the project. It will be the project of his life: He will overcome all obstacles and will not give up until he gives shape to this park where the children of a poor neighborhood will go to play. He gets down to work. He seems to be transformed: In those days, he takes on an unusual vitality, and nothing stops him. As many of the bureaucratic steps do not depend on him, he insists relentlessly in every office so that the corresponding officials respond efficiently to the needs of the project. Finally, the park becomes a reality, just before the medical prognosis is fulfilled. The story of Watanabe ends with his visit to the park. It is a cold, snowy night. He sits on a swing and lets himself freeze to death, happy.

Deleuze disputes the interpreters who speak of happiness for the task accomplished. It is not a question of that, but of charging the world with data, the data of a problem that refers to the sphere of sens. It is a matter, in our terms, of making the world a habitable place. To charge the world with data is like contaminating the hard reality, drooling it with our *pa'mí*, as Kusch used to say. For Deleuze, Mr. Watanabe “has become a park” (2011, p. 401). With this, the city (and the state that administers it) is transformed into a less hostile place.

### **Becoming-Imperceptible, Becoming-- Like Everybody / The-Whole-World.**

Deleuze interprets the image of Watanabe letting himself die on the swing, under the snow, as a *becoming-imperceptible*. In this case, it would be, literally, a becoming-landscape or becoming-park. Thereby, the old man passes to the “periphery of the world” (Deleuze, 2011, p. 403) and leaves the park as the circulation of an impersonal joy, actualized every day by the children. The world remains unfailingly charged with new data that remains as the trace of a *life* that, in its final stretch, became meaningful. In the aforementioned lecture, Deleuze mentions a text by Henry Miller to think about this becoming, taking up a development published in *Dialogues*:

I no longer look into the eyes of the woman  
I hold in my arms, I swim through them,  
my head, arms, and legs too, and I ob-

serve that behind the orbits of those eyes an unexplored world extends, a world of future things, a world devoid of logic... The eye, freed from the self, no longer reveals or eliminates anything; it moves along the line of the horizon, an ignorant and eternal traveler... I have broken the wall that creates birth, and the tracing of my journey is curved and closed, without rupture... My whole body must become a perpetual ray of light, more and more intense... I press my ears, my eyes, and my lips. Before I become a man again, I shall probably exist as a park.... (Henry Miller, as cited in Deleuze and Parnet, 1997, p. 55)

I no longer look into the eyes of the woman I hold in my arms but I swim through, head and arms and legs, and I see that behind the sockets of the eyes there is a region unexplored, the world of futurity, and here there is no logic whatever [...]. The eye which was the I of the self no longer exists; this selfless eye neither reveals nor illuminates. It travels along the line of the horizon, a ceaseless, uninformed voyager. [...] I have broken the wall created by birth and the line of voyage is round and unbroken, even as the navel. [...] My whole body must become a constant beam of light, moving with an ever greater rapidity [...]. Therefore I dose my ears, my eyes, my mouth. Before I shall have become quite a man again I shall probably exist as a Park (Henry Miller, \*Tropic of capricorn\*, as cited in Deleuze and Parnet, 1996, p. 57-58).

In the becoming, there is a dissolution of the rigid frontiers of the “I,” of *ser alguien*, as Kusch would say, to arrive at a dimension “with no logic whatever.” Thus, after having become a beam of light, something like becoming-park is possible. In stories like Kurosawa’s Mr. Watanabe and Miller’s sexual mysticism, the becoming-imperceptible appears, for Deleuze, as the essence of all becomings, “its cosmic formula” (2000, p. 280). Thus, in order to understand the practical modulations of becoming in *A Thousand Plateaus*, such as becoming-woman, becoming-animal,

and others, it is first necessary to make deeper ontological consideration.

Deleuze’s philosophy can be characterized, broadly speaking, as an ontology of *becoming* that is opposed to classical ontology, which revolves around the concept of *being*. The notion of *becoming* thus designates a fundamental ontological dimension. It is the intensive plane as a transcendental field. This field determines the very substance of every passage, the *real* of the becomings mentioned above. It is never a question of imaginary transformations that would go from one identity or quality to another, as if becoming-animal implied actually transforming oneself into an animal. Deleuze (1994) already said in *Difference and Repetition*: “in the passage from one quality to another, even where there is a maximum of resemblance or continuity, there are phenomena of delay and plateau, shocks of difference, distances, a whole play of conjunctions and disjunctions, a whole depth which forms a graduated scale rather than a properly qualitative duration” (p. 238).

“Depth” is the name Deleuze (2002) gives to the intensive transcendental field in that seminal work, where he states that everything that exists is the effect of differences of intensity (p. 333)<sup>14</sup>. Now, intensity is not only the genetic element of everything that appears in the world, but also, at the same time, the vector of deindividuation that can make every form submerged again in the informal<sup>15</sup>. The deep resonances with Kusch’s thought take on a greater thickness here, since, as we saw before, the fundamental

<sup>14</sup>Elsewhere we have deployed a reading of this intensive dimension of the Deleuzian transcendental field, paying special attention to the concept of “depth.” (see Mc Namara, 2022).

<sup>15</sup>This movement is thematized through the concept of “*bêtise*.” The polysemy of this notion (with which Deleuze plays) prevents a definitive translation (it can mean stupidity, idiocy, bestiality, imbecility, etc.). Deleuze presents this notion as a fundamental part of the new image of thought that he proposes in Chapter 3 of *Difference and Repetition*, opposed to the category of “error” that the dogmatic image proposes as thought-negative. The concept far exceeds, however, that bounded place, and as Julián Ferreyra (2016) has rightly emphasized, by implying an experience that produces a violent link between the individual, the background and thought, “it articulates the different planes of Deleuzian ontology” (p. 228).

dimension of *estar* also refers to an informal plane on which every identifiable form depends.

From what has been said, it follows that although a concrete (empirical) process of becoming can include games of resemblance (such as adopting some animal behavior in the becoming-animal), this is not what is fundamental. Similarities can only appear on the plane of sensible or imaginary forms, but the intensive transcendental field, insofar as it lacks form, is only populated by pure differences. What is essential then lies in an involutionary process that should not be understood as regression to previous forms, but as the entry into an “objective zone of indeterminacy or uncertainty” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 335), that is to say, a process of dismantling individuality thought of as a *defined*, personal *being*.

It is from there that, by entering into an intensive process that takes him to the misty confines of his being, the subject can enter zones of indiscernibility with different intensive particles (for example, a molar man can be traversed by a molecular microfemininity). “We do not transform ourselves into something else, but we feel that our molecules enter into new relations and begin to move with an unthinkable rhythm” (Ferreira, 2021, p. 126).

Since what is essential, in ontological terms, is not the extreme terms of a concrete becoming but the *real* of the process as an *intensive block*, the *imperceptible* appears as the secret of all becomings. When, from the molar point of view, there are not two terms but a pure mutation in situ, the intensive nature of becoming appears in the foreground. Thus, in the first place, the becoming-imperceptible manifests itself, curiously enough, in a “being like everybody / the whole world” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 244)<sup>16</sup>. It operates by subtraction and sobriety, a kind of elegance that consists of going unnoticed, blending in with the crowd. Secondly, the authors add: “to become the whole world is to create multitude, to create a world” (p. 281).

Finally, becoming-imperceptible is to make the world itself a becoming or to put the world in flight. This is what the pink panther does by creating a pink

world and blending in with the walls<sup>17</sup>. By entering the objective zones of indeterminacy and indiscernibility, by eliminating everything that prevented the deep communication between beings, an individuation can find the abstract lines that connect it with other individuations and thus appeal to the constitution of a strange *people / pueblo*.

In one of the few studies we know about the relationship between Kusch and Deleuze<sup>18</sup>, Julián Ferreyra (2023) points out an important indication: the dimension of the mero *estar* of the Argentine philosopher, as a stinking dunghill that comes upon us when we come into contact with the deep reality of America, can be thought under the Deleuzian idea of the ground that rises to the surface.

That ground, insofar as it dissolves the habitual forms, is nothing other than that intensive depth that makes all becoming possible. When the ground rises to the surface, the forms dissolve and the monster appears: the indeterminate<sup>19</sup>. It is no other movement than that of the *porteño* who, when the city presses excessively, withdraws to his sacred enclosure to “*estar* and nothing more, returning to zero, perhaps to consult his pure life once again” (Kusch, 2007a, p. 427).

This “returning to zero” that we have already had occasion to comment on can be interpreted as a *becoming* in the Deleuzian sense, as involution or submerging into the intensive transcendental field. Like the creative involution implied in Deleuze and Guattari’s becomings, here it is not a regression to primitive forms of the human but an indetermination of *ser alguien* where a stinking ground rises to the surface

<sup>17</sup>In considering another example, that of camouflaging fish, Brent Adkins (2015) accurately summarizes this movement by saying that “the fish doesn’t look like anything; it looks like everything” (p. 163).

<sup>18</sup>In this field it is also worth mentioning the study by Matías Ahumada (2021, p. 50) which, in a different perspective from ours, includes a reflection on the resonance between the Kuschian concept of *estar-siendo* and the *Deleuzian* notions of *agency* and *rhizome*.

<sup>19</sup>It is worth recalling that Kusch (2007d) encoded in the monstrous the specificity of an American aesthetic in his seminal early writing “Anotaciones para una estética de lo americano” (pp. 779–815).

<sup>16</sup>For the translation of “devenir comme tout le monde”, we use Brian Massimi’s choice in his translation of *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

and produces the “salida del *indio*” that we had so carefully hidden<sup>20</sup>.

### From Becoming-Imperceptible to Becoming-Pueblo<sup>21</sup>.

Sinking into the intensive dunghill harbors political drifts in a sense that we will try to unravel from a commentary by Jun Fujita Hirose. In his reading of Deleuze and Guattari’s political philosophy, this author interprets the becoming-like-everybody / the whole world on the basis of becoming-minoritarian. In his words, “Deleuze and Guattari argue that the becoming-minoritarian of the whole world necessarily rushes towards a ‘becoming the whole world’” (Fujita Hirose, 2021, p. 62). For the French authors, all becoming is minoritarian, since the majority refers to hegemonic forms that, precisely, pretend to block all becomings.

If this is so, according to Fujita, becoming-like everybody / the whole world would be the experience of the interweaving of all minoritarian-becomings (becoming-woman, becoming-Indian, becoming-black, etc.) in the imperceptible, the indiscernible, and the impersonal becoming. Anyone can go through this experience if they allow themselves to be affected by the minorities in struggle. One becomes a woman with the women in struggle, one becomes an Indigenous person with the Indigenous people in struggle (and so on indefinitely, with all the minority struggles that furrow the social). For this reason, the intensive,

<sup>20</sup>From the popular expression in Argentina “*se le salió el indio*” (habitually used to qualify an outburst; one could translate the expression as “the escape of the inner savage / indian”), Kusch (2007a) thematizes the ways in which the neat bourgeois mask is torn in certain situations (p. 367 et seq.). The expression shows once again, according to Kusch, the wisdom that beats in our everyday speech, a wisdom of ancient America to which this author intends to give a philosophical expression.

<sup>21</sup>We use the Spanish word “pueblo” instead of the English “people” following once again María Lugones’s and Joshua Price’s translation: “Pueblo points not to ‘the people’ as an abstraction, but to the concrete, disoriented human manyness that contains the possibility of community.” (2010, lxi). This is a key concept not only in Kusch’s thought but also in many Latin-American philosophies, such as, notably, philosophy of liberation (Dussel, Casalla, Cullen and others).

insofar as it is imperceptible to the consciousness of an I, is also characterized as an element of the indiscernible, since when a subjectivity loses the contours that close it in on itself, it enters zones of indiscernibility with the other that is becoming at the molecular level (be this other designable as “woman,” “animal,” etc.). By the same token, the imperceptible and the indiscernible are put in series with the impersonal (and together they form the three virtues of becoming) since the entry into zones of indeterminacy makes possible the constitution of impersonal individuations into which one is drawn. Becoming like everybody would then be, according to Fujita, the result of the interweaving of all the minoritarian-becomings.

In our reading, the becoming-imperceptible constitutes rather the very *condition* of all *real experience* of becoming in the interweaving of all minority becomings (and not its result, as Fujita wants). Indeed, the imperceptible supposes the immersion in a zone of transcendental indeterminacy that is what both Kusch and Deleuze call, each in his own way, life in itself (“pure life” in Kusch, “a life” in Deleuze, 2007, pp. 347–351)<sup>22</sup>. Thus, this stinking ground that rises to the surface is none other than the transcendental field, which, as zones of objective indeterminacy, is the element in which all crossings of becomings, in Fujita’s sense, become possible.

Becoming the whole world and making the world a becoming implies a mode of inhabiting the mundane such that the resulting impersonal individuation can be confused with others. Likewise, as Cepeda (2010) rightly points out, the verb *estar* in Kusch does not engage the subject, since the subject’s intervention is totally anonymous (p. 171). The becoming-imperceptible, thought with Kusch as a becoming-anonymous in the dimension of *estar*, is an area where the constitution of a *pueblo* becomes possible. Indeed, “becoming-impersonal happens in crowds” (Adkins, 2015, p. 164). The Kuschian *estar*, on its part, consciously or unconsciously, beats in the popular layers “with its ancient communitarian and collectivist breath” (Kusch, 2007b, p. 194).

If we take the scenes with which Kusch begins some of his writings as original scenes of thought, his path always seems to begin with the search for an element

<sup>22</sup>Hence, as we suggested above, both philosophies contain deep vitalist resonances.

that enables the connection between heterogeneous worlds, something that allows us to cross the unfathomable distances. We refer, in the first place, to the bar scene in the first lines of *La seducción de la barbarie* already mentioned, but also to the ascent up the Santa Ana slope in *América profunda*. We have already commented on the first scene, where an abysmal space is played out between the gaze of the man sitting at the bar, the window, and the passerby. In the second, the narrator no longer walks the streets of Buenos Aires, familiar even in its strangeness and melancholic background, but moves in a decidedly hostile and uncomfortable territory. An even more insurmountable distance manifests itself between the middle-class citizen who walks the streets of Bolivia and the locals—a distance that manifests itself in distrustful glances and abysmal silences.

In *De la mala vida porteña*, the search goes through a sort of utopia: the widening of the small sacred enclosure of the *pa'mí* until reaching a space-breath that embraces everyone. It is about finding the passage that takes us from *pa'mí* to “*pa'todos*, where there is neither stone nor cement, but our pure loose life (Kusch, 2007a, p. 382). The girl in the film *To Live* put us on the path of a similar thought: Life will only make sense if we manage to charge the world with data that gives joy to others. It is all the more significant that, in this film, these others are children—the seed, perhaps, of a people / pueblo of the future. That is why it can be said that, if this (de)territorializing exercise derives, in the Deleuzian reading, in a becoming-imperceptible (the becoming-park), in a Kuschian reading, the movement seems more ambitious: It points towards a becoming-pueblo and a becoming-nation, in the strong sense that these concepts have in the tradition of Latin American philosophy.

In fact, the deep question that, according to Kusch, underlies the daily tasks that every individual carries out in Buenos Aires is, precisely, the question of national identity. This question beats strongly in the everyday speech of the city of Buenos Aires, where Kusch finds expressions that account for the strategies for living in the *porteño* city, strategies that seek to preserve some of the old wisdom of América as a resistance to neo-colonial pretensions. To make the inhospitable space of the city habitable implies

an opening of the sacred enclosure that conjures the problematic distance with the others by charging the world with data, by drooling it with the sap of *pa'mí*. Such is, according to Kusch, the utopian demand of our life when the ground of *estar* rises to the surface and challenges the pretensions of the desire to ser *alguien*. At that point, popular power subverts the forms that imprison life and liberates the possibility of a true birth. Indeed, the *mero estar* as affective empire is that true “primary magma of life from which everything comes out anew: nations, characters, culture” (Kusch, 2007b, p. 196). At this point, the Deleuzian theorization on territorializations and becomings, fagocitada by Kuschism, can acquire an unthinkable political modulation: that of a popular thought of our América.

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