

The album of Charon
Arístides Santana

"The ocean is the unity and these things float on it."
(David Lynch)

Charon is the boatman, ploughing through the sea, charged with transporting the souls of the living from earth, or from ordinary life, to *Hades*, the resting place of the dead. A dismal land, an island in shadows. A habitat for eternity. As a ferryman, he is always on the way to somewhere else, sliding across the waters, floating in the desert. He is neither among the alive nor the dead, he forms no part of sleep in the world or of sleep in the underworld. His country is his boat. He knows the longings of men, and so on his journeys he listens attentively to their stories, fears and hopes. Until reaching land, where he leaves them, at the mysterious coast.

The drawings of Adrián Martínez, dense and dark, could be images stolen from Hades. An attempt to seize scenes from paradise and take them to death. As though the hand of Charon gripped the graphite, setting *pathos* down on the paper, taken from the situations and scenery observed from the boat, in the middle of the void. The graphite powder is spread across the paper like stardust; dead, nebulous constellations. The paradisiacal islands are enveloped in blackness, dark matter. The sky and the sea mingle in a single stain. The islands levitate like an oasis in a desert of water and shadows. An "unoccupied nature", "landscapes that hold energies"ⁱ. "The islands represented the edge of the world, a point of imbalance between the completeness and the emptiness of weightlessness, a place where the unknown was located", "unknown spaces are places of uncertainties, of realities and fantasies. In them the imagination is freed and the magical hope of all possible designs emerges"ⁱⁱ.

Images are captured, but works of art are constructed.ⁱⁱⁱ In their formalisation as drawings, they hold all of their *raison d'être*. Similarly to language, "the intention of drawing is to search for meaning"^{iv}. In classical Greece, *graphein* made allusion to drawing and writing^v, and in the action of tracing itself, in the impression on the paper, a symbolic function is being carried out and a symbology is developed. "It is not [just] the meaning (...) but the tracing that is significant in itself"^{vi}. Drawing is an equivalence of imagination and thought, "like models for a mental conception to which 'shape is given' through drawing."^{vii} This shape-giving, to which B. Nauman alludes, is not just a materialisation of thought through drawing, it is giving shape in an ontological sense: "in a certain way, images detach the look of the body, and lead the conscience to an imaginary place towards which the body cannot follow it. The imagination is also in this case a bodily activity when neutralising the body's feeling"^{viii}. If indeed those dark images of unreachable places seem to prophesy the inability of reaching them, denying all corporeality within them, "they affirm their existence in the world of bodies through the way in which they find their place in the social space."^{ix}

The relation of the island with itself, the island as *doppelgänger*, is similar to the ontological question of the body, which has its double constitution, as material and as conscience^x <<My body as I see it>> and <<my body as I feel it>>^{xi}. It would be possible to also say that two islands exist, *the island as it is seen* and *the island as it is inhabited*. If we can speak of the *body-medium-image* relation, we can also speak of the *territory(island)-medium-image* relation. "Nowadays we prefer to visit the locations of image"^{xii}, or even inhabit the image as location.

The islands that Adrián Martínez gives us are hypotheses, virgin lands to be discovered. "Prototypes of the world"^{xiii}, separated from the rest of the world. The question is where are we? In a boat, rowing towards the horizon, riding through the waves, without much idea of where we are headed or how much effort it will take

to get us to the shore. The important thing is to keep rowing. As we row, we encounter floating bodies, swimmers, corpses, tourists. In an uncertain and fluid medium, the acceptance of decisions and responsibilities takes on special importance. Retaking power and control over oneself. Making use of the brave deeds which are needed to act. Just like the moment before throwing oneself into emptiness, jumping from a diving board. The raft in which we sail is not *The Raft of Medusa*. Here there is no final destiny, or moral lesson. We are not the innocent victims of a shipwreck, we are in the shipwreck itself, the incarnation of a change.

The rafts, leaving from the shore in order to disappear into the horizon, distance themselves from the dystopia the majority of current lifestyles have turned to, in order to advance towards *atopy*, embodied by an island. The greater the context of uncertainty, *the ocean*, the more important it is to create a hopeful vision, *the islands*. To the extent that we know how to see and understand those islands, as well as the manner of arriving at them, we will know how to take control of our time on earth and crack some of the codes of the future.

- i WOOD, Yolanda. Caribbean Islands: nature, art and society. La Habana: UH Publishing, 2011.
- ii Ibidem.
- iii BUCK-MORSS, Susan. Visual studies and global imagination. Madrid: Visual Studies, 2004.
- iv ALEMÁN, Adrián. "Local rhetoric", in Peripheral vision. Another view on modernity. Santa Cruz de Tenerife: University of La Laguna, 2004.
- v DEBRAY, Régis. Life and Death of the image. Barcelona: Paidós, 1994.
- vi DIDI-HUBERMAN, Georges. The surviving image. History of art and time of ghosts according to Aby Warburg. Madrid: Abada Publishing, 2009.
- vii NAUMAN, Bruce quoted by ALEMÁN, Adrián. "Local rhetoric", in Peripheral vision. Another view on modernity. Santa Cruz de Tenerife: University of La Laguna, 2004.
- viii BELTING Hans. Anthropology of the image. Madrid: Katz Publishing, 2007.
- ix Ibidem.
- x LAÍN ENTRALGO, Pedro. The human body. Current theory. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1989.
- xi Ibidem.
- xii BELTING Hans. Anthropology of the image. Madrid: Katz Publishing, 2007.
- xiii SLOTERDIJK, Peter. "Insulations. For a theory on capsules, islands and greenhouses" in Review of the Occident. Islands, the abundance of the limit, n°342. Madrid: Ortega and Gasset Foundation, November 2009.