

Lecture by Boris Ondreička in conjunction with the exhibition *The Otolith Group: Xenogenesis* at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (IMMA) as part of a programme of DXG events curated by Anjalika Sagar and Kodwo Eshun of the Otolith Group

Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 January 2023

Good afternoon. It's not only honour but pure pleasure to me to be in such a fabulous context here. Many honest thanks for invitation. I will speak on behalf, about, through and from the work of Suzanne Treister.

Suzanne Treister (born 1958) is a British artist based in London. She deals with the relationship between new technologies, society, variety of belief-systems and potential futures of humanity, nets of power and control retrospectively but constructs also immersive prognoses / hypotheses. Trained as a painter, nevertheless, conceptually oriented around emerging technologies, she is one of pioneering artists working with digital / computer, programming and web-based and interactive (new) media—sometimes even in a direct dialogue with physicians from CERN for example as well.

The family name Treister may be derived from the Yiddish word *Treystn / Trejst* which means "consoler, comforter". Alternatively, this family name may be a variant derived from Yiddish *Trest* meaning "lace", and would therefore be an occupational name associated with the raw material, its manufacture or its trade. The name Treister may also be a toponymic, associated with the Ukrainian city of Trest or less likely with the Italian port Trieste. Other related family names include Trejstman, Trejsman, Trajstman, Treistman. Just to add: *trest* means "trust" in Ukrainian, is related to "content" in Polish but "punishment" in Slovak and Czech languages. I am from Slovakia.

Suzanne's father a Polish Jew, was born in a village in Eastern Galicia (then part of Poland, now Ukraine) in 1912. He studied law in Lwow / Lviv / Lemberg (now also part of Ukraine). He moved to Paris in the 1930s and there he studied political science at Sciences Po. He was in the French Resistance during the Second World War in Paris and later in the unoccupied zone. He escaped to the UK in 1943 and joined the Polish Government-in-Exile in London. Then after the war he started a business there dealing with military spare-parts and broadcasting equipment. Suzanne's erudition in central nervous systems of surveillance and power seems to rise from her authentic childhood.

By the way: the name of the city of Lviv has its root in "lion".

Just to mention: amongst many, also fabled sci-fi icon Stanisław Lem or noble-man Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (the author of notorious *Venus in Peltz*, after whom we name *masochism* and who was very vital fighter against anti-Semitism in Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Socialist himself) were born in Lviv. By the way: Marianne Faithfull is his grand-grand-niece.

Suzanne invented the name of Rosalind Brodsky as an alter ego in the 1980s. Then in 1995 when she started this extensive project she used this name. Her Polish grandmother's name was Rozalia Blum (which might mean "rose the flower") and Suzanne's middle name is Rosalind after her as well. Brodsky was loosely derived from Blum. Her grandma was a cousin of Léon Blum—a French socialist politician and three-time Prime minister.

Rosalind originally arrived from the Germanic *hros*, meaning "horse" and *lind*, meaning "tender" or "soft", but it later changed to mean "lovely rose", from the Latin *rosa lindal*.

Associated with Venus, beauty, sensuality and love (later with Virgin Mary), symbolism of rose leads us also to mysteries of Rose Cross, meditative Rosary and hermeticism of Rosicrucianism. Rose is a symbol of painful and unpenetrable Jews as "beautiful amongst thorns" and the divine

mercy. Much later rose is becoming an emblem of Socialism. Latin *sub rosa* ("under the rose") denotes secrecy / confidentiality, silence. And yes, remember the crown of Jesus, even consensus among Christian scholars tends toward Ziziphus Spina-Christi jujube.

Czech and Slovak surname Brodský is habitational name for someone from any of numerous places notably in Bohemia named Brod from Slavic meaning "ford". Americanized form of Brodzki is habitational name for someone from places in Poland called Brody. Jewish (eastern Ashkenazic) and Ukrainian is habitational name for someone from Brody = a place in Eastern Galicia (now Ukraine) which was an important center of Jewish life up to the time of the Holocaust. For example 200.000 Jews living in Lviv in 1939 was about quarter of its entire population.

All of these places I mention were part of Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918.

And yes, to complete: Suzanne is a form of the Hebrew name *Shoshannah* derived from the word *shoshan* meaning "lily" which in modern Hebrew also means "rose".

As clear from this onomatological enumeration—Treister starts with tracing her spontaneous authentic primary social substrate (all carefully selected genealogical ingredients) in very delicate manner as a matrix of identity, emancipatory departure both in allegorical and virtual-physical way. Her work is language-oriented in terms of logistics of hyper-textual linkage between documents, facts, references, analogies and metaphors. She is conscious about the cultural and political world being held by the net of (dominantly informational) strings which do not connect nodes of wholes to wholes but just affinities, magnetisms or even sympathies (in words of Jane Bennett) / attractions of compatible fragments. Fragment to fragment can connect everything together vitally. Even opposites. Fascism and Communism for example.

Conspiracy and/or conspiracy (so much present in Treister's body of speculative work) means "breathing together" (*con-spirare*). It describes confidential whispering (*sub rosa* again). Prefix *con-* means "with", union, agreement, harmony in consensus but also "against" which means more face-to-face than any conflict, controversy here. *Con-* is hyper. Whispering delivers a touch of breath to your ear and at your neck, so these words are pretty tangible, intimate, erotic. *Spiritus* means breath, wind. In this case we are speaking about inner air, gas, which we also call soul, spirit (*Seele, Geist*), personal psyche, superpersonal pneuma and alien ghost. *Pneumatics* (those who negated materiality which supposed to be evil) were considered the highest in apocrypha of *Gnosticism*.

Space in and between is not empty. It is filled with that air and many other things. It only looks empty because the matter between is invisible = occult. It is inhabited by occultures (in words of Christopher Partridge, Carl Abrahamsson but also Eugene Thacker) = invisible diasporas of pilgrims. Occultures are not sub- (under-) but everywhere. Pilgrims are nomadic aliens, distributed *xenos*. They need some place to stay for a night. Greeks generously invented institution of *xenodochions* for them. *Xenodochion* is a predecessor of hotel, hostel, hospital and hospice.

Space between is transparent and transparency (in words of Thomas Metzinger) is "new kind of darkness". Darkness is associated also with negativity, sadness, fear, decline, catastrophe. By the way: so-called hypothetical dark matter thought to account for approximately 85% of the matter in the universe. It is matter one can't see. It is not dark. It is transparent. We can only measure some of its gravitational effects. Gravitation belongs to the family of magnetism, attraction, sympathy.

Occult means hidden or secret (that confidentiality of whispering...) and speculation (from Latin *specere*) simply means just "to look at", "view". To see sometimes needs to know what to look at. And yes, eyes do not see, they only look, watch, stare, gaze. Brain sees.

Rosalind Brodsky was a pilgrim, a dynamized visualization, socialized embodiment, simulacrum mutation, alter ego / partial replica, doppelgänger, avatar, mental prosthesis, idea of diy Golem modelled of psycho-active substances or gadgets; gmo-homunculus, humanoid made of spare-parts of her dna / real-

doll, artificial offspring / mechanic daughter, anthropo-technic automaton / cyborg / schizo-robot of Suzanne Treister. Treister-Brodsky bipolar relationship is based on understanding that "I am the first alien (*xeno*) to myself" = permanent oscillation between self and its social functions, between explicit and tacit, between nature and culture. Treister and her *psychonautic* counterpart Brodsky share one home-page (*oikos* = eco), but each has her own wing. Brodsky was *out-of-body experience* apostolus, Galatea or Pandora of Treister. Ghost Brodsky was not created *ex nihilo* but born out of dividing Treister in halves as same as androgynous Golem Adam was dissected in two = alpha-Adam and beta-Eve. That's why we speak about genders and sexes = from Latin *secare* which means "to cut". Hebrew *Golem* means "raw material". Just to repeat: surname Treister might come from "manufacturer or trader of raw material". Just to underline: Adam was sculpted of mud. This personal name *Adam* the most probably derives from the noun *adamah* meaning "the ground" or "earth". If we follow its other Semite (Afroasian) and Abrahamic—Arabic meaning "made from earth's mud" but also "someone dark-colored like earth's soil", Adam could not be any white boy. And alchemy does not have any Greek etymological root but Egyptian, *kēme* meaning "black earth". Super-heroine Rosalind Brodsky as well as Suzanne Treister is Jewish (as same as it-rebis-Adam was lets-say Semite). Speaking about *xenogenesis* here = this, as well, is one of possible examples of it. Jewish is minority. Jew is universal alien. They are many people who are scared of aliens, xeno-phobiacs or astro-phobiacs. And there are numerous cultures (not only Jews and other Abrahamic believers) which systemically desire for their *Zion*. Alien is gradable: someone from (lets say) other country (foreigner) is alien of the first circle / alien#no.1, and e.t. is alien#no.2, alien *ad magnum*.

I have to mention: that coincidentally yesterday was the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the day of liberation of Oświęcim concentration camp in Poland better known as Auschwitz.

Speaking about it- or better Y-Adam (dilemmatic Ypsilon is a symbol of *rebis* = from Latin *res bina*, meaning "dual or double matter", the end product of the alchemical *magnum opus*, putrefaction, dissection and purification) he was more truly genderless than the divine hermaphrodite. Speaking about his genesis: God is extraterritorial alien *par excellence* and Adam fundamentally artificial. Human kind is construct of alien and keeps creating its secondary aliens too. Civilization is a double-*xenogenesis*. Creation of Adam was from raw clay. This goes hand in hand with Golem mentioned and abiogenetic concept of the origin of life—in other words iron-sulphur world hypothesis of Günter Wächtershäuser already proved by Jeremy England. Iron-sulfur mirrors its history in V.I.T.R.I.O.L. (sulphuric acid) formula which is an acronym of "Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem," which means "Visit the interior of the earth and purifying you will find the hidden stone." It described prophetic journey through searching for your inner self as well as geological and metallurgical ambition turning iron to gold. By the way: sulphur is symbolized by lion in alchemical imagery. But (following also Metzinger's anti-ego egoism / transparency of being no-one module) we can't find any "inner-self", because there is nothing like that there. You have to construct it as same as Treister creates alternative Brodsky and sends her out to the sur-realism of *le grand dehors*. This is something what we can poetically call a *chem-ontological* project following also pharmako-biopolitics of Paul B. Preciado. From artificial to artistic—I have a suggestion to re-name our context here to *xeno-a-bio-genesis*:

"...I am on the rock
 And then I check a stock
 I had to run like a fugitive
 To save the life I live
 I'm gonna be iron
 Like a lion in *Zion*..."

Demiurgic Brodsky simulated permanent *xeno* travelling in multiple diasporas via fractalic fords of spaces and times. You can re-visit (back-to-the-future) web of the past of her pilgrimage via her part of internet-site (and autonomous cd-roms and floppy-discs) which leads you to research documents, texts, interviews, diaries and other publications, scrying drawings or graphites, water-colours, diagrams, photographs, videos and video-games, performances, tv-shows and lots of source material, memorabilia, paraphernalia

and referential and analogical associations which are interconnected as part of generative, permanently growing internet of everything, *holos*. We can say transhuman Brodsky atomized (in Whitmanian sense) the context and then puts it back not necessarily in the same composition. That's a sorcery of her quantum mission = to repair, to make few things better. And yes, as xenofeminists Laboria Cuboniks (and many others) declared: "If nature is unjust, change nature!". Brodsky's activities bridged conversation with conversion. Also holocaust comes from Greek *holos* and *kaustos* = "to burn everything". Hebrew *Shoah* means "catastrophe". *Pogrom* (from Slavic languages, the initial territory of massive massacres of Jews) means "after thunder" which (*grom*) has relation to English "grim". In the vocabulary of Hitler's eugenic alchemy—holocaust was *Die Endlösung* = "The Final Solution", the end.

But *holos* is a bit weird ambition. Why we, with our limited capacities (even with the help of potentially unlimited machines reaching complexity of so-called *general-intellect*—according to Karl Marx), think we will be ever able to embrace everything? What machines will be able to self-reproduce themselves autonomously we will be not able to comprehend personally physically. "Technology is no longer finite even if we remain so." as David Roden concludes in his *Technological Anti-Holism and the Thinking of the Outside*. Our holistic demand (galactic consumerism of power) can bring us individually (and might be also civilization-wise) to other form of *holos-kaustos*—the absolute occupational burn-out. Nature already burns.

To collection of *xeno* lets add also the antonym of *xeno-phobia* and that is *xeno-philia*. *Xeno-philia* (to love alien, stranger, foreigner) is one of the first moral dogmas of *Transmodernism*. One of philosophical leaders of its secular wing, Fernando Zalamea (in his concept of *Decay Modernism*), identifies the process of decay as an expression of a profound continuity in nature through which "creativity expands without brake". Decay is monumental subject of alchemy—*nigredo* ("blackness") means putrefaction, decomposition. Many alchemists believed that it is a first step in the pathway to the philosopher's stone. In analytical psychology, the term became a metaphor for (necromantic) "the dark night of the soul, when an individual confronts the shadow within" (that V.I.T.R.I.O.L.ic descensus mentioned).

Holos or *kat-holikos* or internet of everything is cosmology. Cosmology (*kosmos* and *logos*) evolves from desire to understand how things work on universal level (Benjamin Bratton's planetary-sapience), to control and/or to establish some new arrangements. Cosmos means order, system. It is not only up there. It is right here and everywhere. Earth is a cosmic particle itself as well as a single atom too. To control order means power—in other words (of Keller Easterling) *extrastatecraft*. Also cosmetics comes from *kosmos* which originally meant all processes, forms and items of embellishment. To shine or at least glitter like stars up there. Also exponential (somehow mycorrhizal) and *oikoumenic* activity of Brodsky—the wanderer was cosmological and her costumes carry delicate cosmetic features as well. She was doing something what we can call engineering of *kabbalistic* (or better *zoharian*) tree of life, hyper-ontology / genealogy (based on etymology of names and dna-fantasia). *Kabbalah* is a method and means "tradition" (in terms of skill) and *Zohar* is a set of books and means "splendor" or "radiance". Brodsky was occupied with struggle and survival of her own family, but also of the life of the creator of Golem = mystical rabbi Judah Löw Bezalel. Löw comes from lion (in German and Yiddish) and lion in alchemy (and elsewhere) is also sun, daytime and gold. Brodsky researched also Slavic deity named Vesna which means (in our languages) "spring", which means the death of winter (Morena) and new life / rebirth. Sculptures of Morena are burned and thrown to rivers on March. Both Löw and Vesna are related to warmth, light, enlightenment, positivity, better times. Bezalel means "in the shadow (understand protection) of God". And then Brodsky addressed all of that to all *anthropos* and non-human entities. We can say it's a gematric language-oriented anthropology which makes a balance between qualitative and quantitative features of one thing. It is synchronization, syncretisation of technological and symbolical and spiritual orders, singularist mineral-vegetable-animal-machine conglomerate. It is (in words of Erik Davis) *techgnosis*. Löw, Lviv, lion a law...

By the way: golems were activated by an ecstatic experience induced by the ritualistic use of various letters (which are numbers in the same time) of the Hebrew alphabet forming a word *shem* ("name" in Hebrew as well as of one of sons of Noah). The *shem* was written on a piece of

paper which was modelled to small ball and inserted in the mouth (or in the forehead) of the golem. *Shem*, scheme, charm, formula, incantation, diagram, matrix, matrice, interface.

Just to mention: the word *Semite* comes from *Shem*. We have to add also that Löw created Golem-robot to protect and defend local Jewish minority from obvious anti-Semitic attacks of Germans and Czechs.

Löw could easily met with Treister-Brodsky's most loving John Dee in 16th century Mannerist Prague at the court of manio-depressive collector, *the Emperor of esotericists, alchemists and astrologists*—Rudolf II.. Rosicrucian Rudolf (they even called him *Hermes Trismegistos*), protector of local Jewish community, opened a residency for artists and scientists at his Hradcin Castle. There he invited Giordano Bruno, Tycho Brahe, Johannes Kepler, Nostradamus, or Arcimboldo and fraudulent assistant of Dee—tragic Edward Kelly as well. *Hermes Trismegistos* is one of names of god *Thoth*—the inventor of writing and the patron of all arts dependent on writing. *Hermetica* comes from Hermes—the herald of gods, protector of travellers, *psychopomp* conductor of souls into the afterlife. Rudolf liked to call himself also *Künstler* = "artist". Art (as a superlative) in that context included alchemy as well.

Some drawings and paintings of Brodsky are mimetic, reproducing its prefaces (obviously photographs and prints), some are creative, appropriative, interpretational and manipulative and other automatic, artificially generated, hallucinatory, "delusional" (as she called them), psychographic, telepathic (or *techlepathic*, in words of Georg Dvorsky, a portmanteau of technology and telepathy) or para-, noetic- but better *psychotronic* (term popularised by the main protagonist of the laboratory of experimental energetics at Charles University Prague, Czechoslovakia in that time, early 1970s, Zdeněk Rejčák, a portmanteau of psychic and electronic) which was linked to military experiments with extrasensory perception, telekinesis and mind-control. When seeing their apparatuses (shown at the beginning of my visual presentation) they do not look too different from Brodsky's prototypes. Other and bit larger term used for this field is *bionics* (a portmanteau of bio- and electronics) coined by US Air Force medical doctor Jack E. Steele to refer to the "flow of concepts from biology to engineering and vice versa".

By the way: John Dee was shortly teaching at Charles University too.

Brodsky's travelling was virtual. It went dia- / meta- / mezzo- / medi- through that void of wireless memory. Brodsky has drawn cartography of transmissions to remember. She clearly understood that to divide world to materiality and immateriality is just a matter of economizing abstraction which reflects our limited cognitive capacity of comprehension and communication and not the natural unity. There is always some physical substrate behind any emanation, hardware behind software. She knew that word is a breath and breath is a virus. Just to repeat, one of concepts of *pharmakon* (the gift of Thoth) is the "art of writing". With writing (and drawing, shooting photos and films) we externalize our memory and remembering weakens, transforming itself to reminding. These distant lithium storages of our neuroplastic selves are not only matter of alien intervention, manipulation, they are owned by cryptical *xenos*.

Brodsky's narrative was a science-fiction but lets say in the same time it produces something what we can rotate to fiction-science from which we can learn something = decoding the enigma of myth. The hyper-text of her (upside-down-Forest-Gump-like) journey connects times, spaces of the death of her ancestors (she was calling herself "necrophiliac invader") "through the privileged violence of technology", events and infotainment sets, military settlements and black Sabbath sites, personalities and institutions, obscure politics, cross-referential aesthetics and phenomenons on associative, metaphorical principle, symbols of same *soma* but completely different *psyche*, Jekylls-and-Hydes...

These are all metaphors and metaphor carries you to spaces beyond explicit language on the basis of "something (not named yet) like something else (already named)". We can understand these destinations as alien territories. Metaphor can avoid criminalization of what you are saying. Metaphor is an alibi vehicle or a mask, camouflage, chrysalis, Brodsky's electronic time travelling costume and attaché case. Metaphors can also banalize and sometimes it is very devastating—like to equalize Fascism and

Communism just because they are both tyrannies in real application. Truth and usefulness are trivial enemies. Metaphor is aesthetically / emotionally charged which means the cognitive (neuroaesthetic) absorption of its message towards inside is rapid. Metaphor is a lubricant of acceptance, Brodsky's vibrator. Collective understanding of metaphor (or joke) appears with no words, confidentially, conspirationally, *sub rosa*.

According to Max Black: "metaphor is the dominant interface of all perception, cognition, conceptualising, semiotics... and the other way around expression, conversation according to interaction between senses and brains". Because it is aesthetically charged it irritates decisive amygdala (the cerebral almond of attention and further rationalization and memorizing) much more than any dry data. Reuven Tsur (the author of *Cognitive Poetics* critical method) declares that "the entire universe of communication is made in 2/3 of metaphors" which mirrors the dimension of Michael Polanyi's concept of *tacit knowledge* perfectly. *Tacit* is something what we can learn practically but there is no explicit language, theoretical method, functional recipe available. Like for example it will not help you if I explain you how to ride a bicycle. You just have to do it. Harold Skulsky calls this dominant language beyond standard language a *metaphorese*. Gordon Pask has described cybernetics in general as "the science or the art of manipulating defensible metaphors". Dedre Gentner considers digital languages as made by *conceptual metaphors* in her *kind-world-theory* where "a metaphor is investigated as a medium of structure-mapping". George Lakoff (for whom "we do not use metaphors—but we live by them, live them") following Trump's Twitter posts analytically through all his presidency long daily, proved—that his speeches were made by allusive metaphors in minimum 75%. And the last not not least: Julian Jaynes (in his theory of *bicameralism*) proposes that "we hallucinate the world through the word of God".

Speaking about metaphor and cybernetics also usual terms like "memory" or "intelligence" are just metaphorically appropriated as same as we have personified animal and human forms and cultural characters to principle natural elements to be understood, to be more human, us to be less afraid of their monstrosity, to be conquered and manipulated. Metaphor is a dark matter, a transparent occult of perception / a ground of deciphering hermetic languages of clandestine societies and secret services. Metaphor is the lock and an interpretation is the key (*clavis*). But metaphor is a very dangerous vehicle as well because it is one-directional so it brings you somewhere—but if you do not understand its punch-line, if you do not understand that it is a metaphor and not explicit information—you might not return back from that traveling. It needs a poetic driver who differentiates between virtual and real as a basal method of self-defence against histrionism, lunacy. One-directionness of metaphor is slightly paradoxical phenomenon because huge part of history is accessible only thanks to deeds of material culture (products of us, artists and craftsmen) which is in gigantic segment purely metaphorical. We can't understand us without understanding our past which means one just has to understand arts. Brodsky-artist did.

Metaphor does not only bring the light but also darkens—like in terms of *hermetica* which is coded to be accessible for chosen-ones only. One of the most complex cases as such is *Atalanta Fugiens* of Michael Maier (famous magnum opus *Emblema XXI* was shown as one of the first references to Treister-Brodsky's work). *Atalanta Fugiens* consists of combinatorics of images, lyrics and musical notations (emblemata-epigramata-fuga). It depicts narrative scenes but behind them is a complex alchemical recipe on production of *Lapis philosophorum* it means gold and as I said: gold is light, sun and lion—Löw. Together with *Orbis Pictus* of Jan Amos Comenius we consider *Atalanta Fugiens* as the very first pieces of multi-media. They both lived in Prague in the same era as Löw and Dee.

It all means that the lyrical point of departure of recognition of the world is tremendously significant. If this is like that and we (people of arts) are competent in understanding it—it means we have specific forensic erudition to anatomize the allegory, to decode the enigmatic myth, to reveal its possibly malign nucleus. We operate with particular interpretational methods as forms of decoding, as kinds of *tacit* cybernetics of digitalized world and (in words of Marisa Olson) fully *networked nature*.

Real-politics produces fiction and not any factuality for its electorates. Fact and fict are not separated, vice-versa they are like signifier and significant (*soma* and *psyche*) with permanently exchanging positions.

At least 1/3 of hybrid-warfare strategy (in huge part cyber) influences via words and images. It means we (art-experts) should contribute to its apocalypse. Apocalypse is not any cataclysm or catastrophe yet. Apocalypse means to reveal the Pandorean hochstapler-emptiness of real-politics (Populism of any polarisation) at the first to destroy it—later by filling the whirlpool of its vacuum with new (non-exploitative) narratives. We should reveal that on the bottom of that Pandorean pithos is no hope. It's bottomless. It's abyss.

Brodsky was tech-oriented artist. Brodsky was apocalypsing the doom of her ongoing past as an intimate or (if you want) esoteric or even acid messiah or at least ecstatic dervish in the loop of trance of happenings. Yes, messianism is an eschatological movement.

Eccentric Brodsky was an artist/film-maker, Mata-Hari-like-double-agent or medium and shaman (*technoshaman* in Treister's words)—*curandeiro* in the language of Ayahuasca tribes = the curator which means someone who cares, the witch / *Hexe*. And last but not least, speaking about confidentiality, secrecy: Brodsky was tailored as the secretary of Treister.

Rosalind Brodsky sends her greetings: "Shabbat Shalom". And speaking about witches: "Schwarz Shabbat".