

Molding a Contemporary Soul: The Empty-Full of Lygia Clark

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“Literature (cf. art) thus appears as an undertaking of health: not that the writer (cf. the artist) necessarily has a strong constitution (...), but he enjoys a fragile irresistible health, which comes from the fact of having seen and heard things that are too big for him, too strong, unbreathable, whose passing exhausts him, but nevertheless permits him becoming that fat, dominating health would make impossible. (...) What kind of health would be enough to free life wherever it is imprisoned by man and in man?”

Gilles Deleuze¹

Lygia Clark is the name of an existence convulsed by the eruption of an idea that gradually took shape throughout the totality of a unique oeuvre. Being elaborated step by step from the 1950s to the 1980s, this idea situated itself on the horizon of one of the most insistent issues facing modern art—that of reconnecting art and life—as an original answer with the power to carry this project toward its very limit. This is probably why Brazilian and international culture of that time did not assimilate the artist’s work, not even half of it, especially during the period beginning with *Caminhando* (Walking, 1963). Some eleven years after her death this assimilation is only starting to take shape. From this seminal work emerged a path in which the idea that propelled Clark presented itself in all its radicality and took on a vitality that would remain indefatigable until her final work, *Estruturação do self*, (Structuring the Self) produced through her *Objetos Relacionais* (Relational Objects, 1976-88). The last of the artist’s propositions, this work completed her idea in masterful form, revealing the rigorous coherence of the whole.

Throughout the century, much imagination has been dedicated to working out strategies to effect the utopia of the reconnection of art and life. Some of these strategies form the specific landscape which Clark’s work carried out its dialogue with: liberating the artistic object from its formalist inertia and its mythifying aura by creating “living objects” in which could be glimpsed the forces, the endless process, the vital strength that stirs in everything; mixing materials, images, and even objects taken from daily life with

the supposedly noble materials of art; freeing the spectator from his or her soporific inertia, whether by making possible the spectators, active participation in the reception or in the execution of the work, or by intensifying his or her faculties of perception and cognition; emancipating the system of art from the inertia established by its mundane elitism or its reduction to the commercial logic, by exhibiting or creating in public places or by opening their own spaces to other publics; liberating the aesthetic realm from its confinement in a specialized sphere to convert it into a dimension of everyone's existence by making life itself a work of art. In a nutshell, all those strategies contaminate exhibition spaces, materials, and above all, the fictions of art with the world—and the social milieu and the life of the ordinary citizen with art.

In the 1960s, when Clark's work became radicalized, the project to reconnect art and life, in addition to intensifying artistic practices through experimentation of all kinds, exceeded its boundaries and contaminated social life, becoming a crucial touchstone of the explosive counterculture movement that rocked the period and launched the foundations of an irreversible transformation of the human landscape that even today has not been fully absorbed. Surely we cannot attribute to mere chance the invention of this particular utopia in art, its incorporation by the youth culture in the 1960s, and the resonance between these phenomena. What mobilized these movements, both in art and in society, was the crisis of a certain cartography of human existence that began to make itself known at the end of the nineteenth century and intensified more and more during the next hundred years. A short visit to this landscape will allow us to localize the problematics that Clark worked out in her oeuvre as an unprecedented orientation for the issues of her time.

One of the most interesting aspects of this cartography in this current work is the exile of artistic practice into a specialized domain, which presupposed that a certain plane of the processes of subjectivation would be confined to the experience of the artist. This plane is the “vibrating body,”² in which contact with the other, human and nonhuman, mobilizes affects as changing as the variable multiplicity that constitutes otherness. The constellation of such affects forms a reality of sensations, corporeal reality, which, though invisible, is no less real than visible reality and its maps. It is the world composing itself over and over, uniquely, in the subjectivity of each person. Wherever

the world changes, the sensitive consistency of subjectivity changes as well, inseparably linked: between me and the other, nonparallel becomings of each person are unleashed in an endless process. It is from listening to the vibrating body and its mutations that the artist, disquieted by the conflict between the new reality of sensations and the old references used to orient him or herself in existence, feels compelled to create a map for the future world that takes form in his or her work, from which it then becomes autonomous. Through the practice of art, a semiotic activity of human experience in its becomings, life affirms itself in its creative eroticism, generating new landscapes of existence.

The reverse side of this plane in the process of the subjectivation of the artist is its anaesthetic effects on the rest of social life: the ordinary man, i.e., all human beings, loses control of this activity—that of creating values and sense to the changes that go on ceaselessly around him—, and comes to orient himself with passively consumed *a priori* guidelines. What emerges is the figure of the “individual,” a self-enclosed entity who extracts his or her feeling of self from an image lived as essence and maintains itself identical to itself, immune to otherness and its turbulent effects.³ It is the identity principle governing the construction of subjectivity, under the exclusive regime of representation. The transforming power of estrangement engendered by the collapse of existing cartographies and their accompanying figures of subjectivity is sterilized and replaced by fear provoked by the illusory idea that the collapse is that of subjectivity itself in its supposed essence.

This is the model that entered a state of crisis at the end of the nineteenth century, when significant changes in human existence began to operate—among the most obvious, industrialization and technological development. Subjectivity confronted with many others, variable and unknown, different from the familiarity of the relatively stable world to which one was accustomed. The mutability of the landscape intensified to the point that it became impossible to silence the estrangement that instability produces in the vibrating body. The identity principle could no longer sustain itself: forced to experience these becomings at point-blank range, without being equipped to absorb them, subjectivity was terrified. The consequences of this terror we already know: the manifestations of the vibrating body were experienced pathologically, mobilizing

fantasizing interpretations and the construction of defenses that would constitute a mode of subjectivation that came to be called “neurosis.” It was in this context that psychoanalysis arose, through the need to treat the side effects of this dissociation in subjectivity, which at that time stridently evinced their presence through the corpus of hysteria. The fact is, from the moment that it became dangerous to maintain inactive the plane of individual and collective existence, where the forces operating in the invisible are “seen,” where energies are orchestrated in such a way as to create a shelter in the strange and to find a new equilibrium, the intervention of a specialist became necessary, one whose function would be that of initiating subjectivity into listening to estrangement, in order to interpret it in light of an individual history and reconstitute an identity. Art, as a ghetto of the creative impulse, and psychoanalysis, as a medicine of the affects, are the products of the same process. It is in the depths of this process that modern subjectivity—neurotic, oedipal, personological—is constituted.

Art, however, since the beginning of the bankruptcy of this model at the end of the nineteenth century, rebelled and began to dream of the utopia of reconnecting itself to life, while society invented the strategy of the neurosis that readapted subjectivity in order to keep it in the same place. It would be necessary for this malaise to reach the level of an intolerable paroxysm before reaction occurred in the heart of society. This would happen only in the 1960s, with the force of a collective process, when in the subjectivity of the generation born after the war exploded an inescapable movement of desire against the culture that separated itself from life, in the direction of reclaiming access to the vibrating body as a compass to a permanent reinvention of existence.

In Brazil, this process appeared particularly intense, finding a unique expressiveness in the Tropicalist⁴ movement and touching a significant portion of youth, in comparison to other Latin American countries, where the obstinate political militancy of the period was not accompanied by the same grasp of experimental revolution. Cultural movements of great power and originality emerged in this period. At that moment, Clark moved to Paris, in the very year of 1968, the fulcrum of the counterculture movement, and she stayed until 1976. At the time she wrote: “what I am proposing already exists in numerous groups of young people who integrate the poetic sense into their lives, who live art instead of making it.”⁵ In the artist’s work this was the

decade of disruption, which would result in an oeuvre that even today pulsates in its mystery while crying out for interpretation.

Clark's artistic life began in 1947, in her own words, "to survive the crisis"⁶ after the birth of her third child. Crisis would be a frequent companion to her work, breaking out in the gestation of each new proposition, or following the completion of some work too disconcerting for her to bear, as in the case of *Caminhando*. At these moments, she would write texts of a singular density and turbulent corporeality.⁷

Clark's crises are neither a secondary nor a picturesque piece of information, nor the object of frivolous curiosity about the artist's private life or her "confused personality"; they are, rather, at the very core of her work. It is the experience of that which from early on and until the end of her life she would insistently call the "empty-full," the experience of the vibrating body at the moment in which the exhaustion of a cartography is processed, when the silent incubation of a new reality of feeling is under way, that incubation being the manifestation of the fullness of life in its power of differentiation. The crises were the living of these passages, which in the artist's subjectivity took place like "vulvanic eruptions," as she wrote in one of her manuscripts.⁸

The beginning of Clark's artistic arc is marked, therefore, by rebellion against the dissociating of the experience of the empty-full in subjectivity, which may have led her crisis to a pathological conclusion. It was as an artist that Clark would set in motion the surpassing of this fate. As she wrote, it was a matter of "receiving perceptions raw, living them, elaborating oneself through the processes, regressing and growing outward, toward the world. Earlier in the projection, the artist sublimated his problems through symbols, figures, or constructed objects."⁹ From the start, her work was moved by awareness that the experience of the empty-full must be incorporated for existence to be lived and produced as a work of art. Her inventions in the field of art always overlapped the reinvention of her existence. But this alone would not suffice to distinguish her from several other artists of her time. What sets her apart is that her work was directed toward the incorporation of the empty-full into the subjectivity of the spectator, without whom the plan to connect art with life fails.

I propose to divide Clark's work into two parts, with *Caminhando* being the turning point. The first part (1944–63) unfolds after the end of World War II and the fall

of the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas, which preceded and set the stage for a Brazil of the 1950s geared toward development and dreaming of integration into modernity, under the presidency of Juscelino Kubitschek. This was the time of the construction of Brasília, the new capital and the greatest symbol of this dream, rocking to the sound of bossa nova. In this context, not only in Brazil but in other countries of Latin America undergoing a similar process, constructivist tendencies reactualized themselves through the resonance of the new local landscape with the context in which those tendencies had appeared in Europe at the end of World War I. That is how the Concretist and later the Neoconcretist Movement emerged, with Clark figuring as one of the most vigorous proponents of the latter. These movements were preceded by the creation of museums of modern art in São Paulo in 1948 and in Rio de Janeiro in 1949, the São Paulo Bienal in 1951, and the *Ruptura* (Break) movement in 1952.

Four phases may be identified in this first part. The first phase (1947–53)¹⁰ is that of Clark's initiation into artistic practice. The landscape architect Burle Marx would play a central role in this process with his concept of the “organic garden.” Clark frequented his studio in Rio beginning in 1947. During her first stay in Paris (1950–51), she frequented the studio of Fernand Léger, with his valorization of line in the formulation of space,¹¹ whose atelier she frequented in her first stay in Paris (1950–51). Although this was a time of apprenticeship, her work already presaged the explorations that would unfold in the later phases—for example, in *Escadas*, (Stairs, 1951), which “shed like a set of planes in space,” with their “steps of flat planes.”¹²

A few years later, Clark prematurely gained the autonomy that would mark her oeuvre. In the following three phases (1954–63), her work found resonance in that of contemporary artists with whom she formed a group in 1959: the Neoconcretist Movement, which was dissolved in 1961.¹³ However, from the very beginning, as attested in an imaginary letter that she wrote to Piet Mondrian in 1959,¹⁴ the strong autonomy of Clark's investigation would lead her to question her allegiance to the group. In 1961, she rejected the application of the term nonobject to her work, as proposed by the group's ideologue, Ferreira Gullar, and withdrew. From the group, Clark would conserve her dialogue with Hélio Oiticica, with whom she would maintain a friendship until his untimely death in 1980.¹⁵

Neoconcretism, a renegade faction of the Concretist Movement¹⁶ initiated by the group from Rio, was a reaction to what those artists considered the excessive rationalism of their São Paulo counterparts, who from constructivism had inherited only the outer shell, stripped of its soul, and concentrated on problems of form reduced to formulaic plastic solutions and purely optical explorations. The Rio movement introduced an experimental vein, placing greater emphasis on the existential and affective significance of the work, as well as its expressiveness and uniqueness. The notion of the “organic” was adopted by the group to denote the life that had its revival in their work, in contradistinction to what they saw as the São Paulo group’s lifeless formalism. However, in order to extract all the richness of the Neoconcretist project, we would have to speak of a nonorganicity of the life that these works reveal, for what they propose is not mimesis or an expression of life in its constituted (organic) forms, but the incarnation, within the work, of life as a creating impulse. What we are dealing with here are two distinct concepts of the notion of life, two types of vitalism worth exploring more carefully, for therein lies the central idea that drove the whole of Clark’s work.

The phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Susanne Langer is the philosophy that oriented the thought both of Ferreira Gullar and Oiticica himself, whose work was always accompanied by the artist’s sophisticated theoretical elaboration.¹⁷ A similar influence is equally clear in certain passages from Clark’s texts, although she was never a reader of philosophy.¹⁸ However, the idea of life that permeates her work, and even many of her texts, is difficult to apprehend in all its radicalness if we restrict it to within these perimeters. The concept of vitalism introduced by Gilles Deleuze can help us go further in this reading. Strictly speaking, one can not even talk of vitalism, insofar as phenomenology is concerned, but only of a separation from idealism, in the direction of the world. Phenomenology invokes thought to get close to things (Merleau-Ponty’s “being in the world”) but still remains something like a subject facing the world’s objects or an intentionality, whether of consciousness or of the body. Merleau-Ponty goes beyond the notion of the organic body to develop the idea of the *corps propre* (self body), already suggested by Edmund Husserl and others. For Merleau-Ponty, the contemplation of a ballerina’s dance, for example, is not that of her organic body but of her self body, taken over by the symbolic form of the music. As for Deleuze, in the spectator’s

participation, we must take into account not only the rapture of the self body but also a plane of forces, vibrations, and intensities. He calls these “bodies without organs,” which belong not to the ballerina, or to the person watching her, but rather occur “between” the two, where becomings are unleashed. Deleuze’s notion of life was inspired mostly by Benedict de Spinoza, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Henri Bergson: life as creationism, the permanent genesis of the world, productivity. It is the very plane of absolute immanence. The main idea of this conception of vitalism is that life is the constant resolution of problems in the face of the resistances encountered in its differentiation. This vitalism is distinguished from its evolutionist and mechanistic forms that err in the idea of necessity and finality, thus losing the idea of life’s creativity.¹⁹

Clark’s work was to be an obstinate exploration designed to provoke in the subjectivity of the spectator the power to be contaminated by the art object, not only by discovering the life that pulses internally within itself and in relation to space, but also the life that, in contact with the work, manifests itself as a differentiating force of its own subjectivity. Clark attempted to help the spectator reach the level of difference borne by the work, in order for that person to dig from his or her own soul the new way of perceiving and feeling that the work summons forth. This would launch the spectator into unforeseeable becomings.

In the last three phases of the first part of her oeuvre, which can be identified as Neoconcretist, certain constructivist principles were retained, such as the choice of objects reduced to their material essence, the importance given to the material’s properties, and the perception of structures generated through their action. Such principles, however, were not her goal, but rather the means for a whole constructivism of life itself in its inexhaustible differentiation. Clark’s works in this initial moment may be classified as the creation of “living objects” that migrate from the plane into relief, and from relief into space. Although her works in this period are still very close to the propositions of the art of the time, it is already here that her exploration veers in an original direction.

In the plane,²⁰ several of the artist’s discoveries, including the “organic line” and the “breaking of the frame,” revitalized geometry and revealed its “processuality.” In the first of those discoveries, Clark freed the line from its supposedly inanimate condition to

recover its vitality and transform space. In the second, she dissolved the neutral zone representing the frame, which, in separating the canvas from the exterior world, buffers the disruptive power of art, as Ferreira Gullar stated it.²¹ Clark succeeded in summoning this power, liberating the plane of transcendence and returning it to immanence.²² The plane thus recovers its poetic pulse.

With the “discovery” of the organic line, Clark, at this moment, had already extracted three-dimensionality from the two-dimensional plane. The planes are juxtaposed with lines and gaps that make the surface dynamic, as if irrigating it in life-giving sap, causing the work to spill over and contaminate space. We are now on the frontier between painting and sculpture. Then the next step is outlined: in 1959, the plane, pregnant from its fertilization by space, was inflated to become the *Casulo* (Cocoon, 1959-60). Unfolding in three-dimensional articulations, it reveals in the plane the virtual presence of relief. The work went from the juxtaposed or superimposed planes of *Superfícies moduladas* (Modulated Surfaces, 1956-58) to wall-hung constellations in which the plane stood out concretely.²³

The living work advanced in its reconquest of the world. The next region to reveal itself processually was space. “In reality, what I wanted to do was express space in and of itself, and not compose within it,” Clark wrote.²⁴ This was the birth of the famous *Bichos* (Beasts, 1960-63), which in the artist’s words “fell, like real cocoons, from the wall to the floor.”²⁵ Numerous offspring of these *Bichos* would be born between 1960 and 1963, closing the fourth and final part of the first stage of the artist’s oeuvre.²⁶

The *Bichos* are linked to the constructive project and to the modern tradition in sculpture, which challenged such traditional values as the use of “natural” materials and the solid, immutable volume. But her solutions are unique: the use of precision-cut, polished metal, produced in series, takes us directly to the technological-industrial milieu to produce the strange effect of revealing the life that pulsates in the most artificial of environments, which thereby assume a poetic existence. As for volume, here it is the fleeting effect of the agency of planes, “surface-process.” The movements of the hinged metal plates produce volumes in space that seek an ever-changing equilibrium. In addition, their movements are not mechanical, characteristic of a supposed solipsistic existence of the object, for they require the hand of the spectator, giving us this strange

sensation of being alive. What begins to dissolve here is the separation between subject and object.

In the final stage of the first part of Clark's oeuvre, immediately prior to *Caminhando*, her exploration began to include the spectator in the work, with the vibrating body now more intimately exposed to the body of Clark's vibrating objects. Further, the *Bichos* were originally intended to multiply in number, which would contribute not only to their losing any fetishistic status but also would lead to the propagation of their species in the world, thus contaminating virgin territories of art. We are now in the full beginning of the 1960s, when Clark found resonance in the project to reconnect art and life, not only in the experimentation made by many other artists but also in the movement of desire that was disrupting the social field.

However, her *Bichos* awaited the spectator and could even forego his or her presence, for they maintained the possibility of existing either as inert objects of passive contemplation or as sterile objects resistant to multiplying. They could be stuffed or exhibited in display cases in museums, galleries, or the homes of collectors, without any suspicion that they had once been alive. This was exactly what happened: the manner in which they were appropriated by the art system was such that the dissolution of the boundary between art and life operative in the *Bichos* was interrupted and their proliferation aborted. Taken back to the display case, and therefore to the pedestal, their freedom to live unattached in the world, to benefit from affective intimacy with the largest possible number and variety of others, was pruned away. For this reason, the first part of Clark's work is the best known, with the *Bichos* at its apogee, perhaps because they were the last of her objects capable of being neutralized by the art system in their deterritorializing power and of being consumed as simple, inoffensive objects of art, with their value determined solely by the market. Until the end of Clark's life and even many years after her death, her works from this period, especially the *Bichos*, would be the ones privileged in countless one-person or group exhibitions and would by the same token constitute the focus of the majority of the studies of her work.²⁷ I will not go on at length about this first part of Clark's career, for in addition to there being an excellent bibliography available to evaluate it, the focus of this essay is the challenge in

understanding the second part, both more mysterious and more extensive (1963–88), without which the oeuvre cannot achieve full intelligibility.

Very early, beginning with *Caminhando*, the questions that would present themselves to Clark were these: To what avail is it to bring to presence in the work the “vision” of the invisible effervescence of life that stirs within and transforms all things, if the spectator lacks the key to this vision? To what avail is it to contaminate with art the life of the common citizen if his or her soul lacks the possibility of affirming in his or her own existence the creative power of life? Without the transformation of this character, the modern project, in its eagerness to reconnect art and life, would not be an effective strategy for meaningful intervention in the culture. In fact, the strategies on whose horizon Clark’s work insinuates itself, evoked at the beginning of this text, leave intact on the art scene its characters with their modes of subjectivation, and therefore the relationship with the invisible dynamics of things remain ghettoized in the artist’s subjectivity. The artist continues to be the one who sees life shaking everything, and although he or she makes this vision material, so that his or her perception acquires autonomy, this perception remains inert, inaccessible to a subjectivity dissociated from what would allow it to “see.” Thus the proposition goes unrealized. Only the “clothing” of some pieces changes in the interior of the same cartography.

Beginning with *Caminhando* and continuing until the end of her life, Clark’s exploration would attempt to go beyond this limit, seeking strategies for awakening the spectator’s vibrating body so that, freed from its prison of the visible, it could initiate itself to the experience of the empty-full and accede to the plane of immanence of the world in its mysterious germination. Just as it had moved from the plane to relief and from relief to space, her work would now turn toward the spectator, moving from the act to the body and from the body to the relation between bodies, to finally direct itself to subjectivity by delineating a wholly original trajectory in relation to the propositions of art not only at that time but in our own as well. At the conclusion of seven stages, this provocative journey of initiation will have revealed to us a new landscape.

The first phase was formed from a single proposition: *Caminhando*, strips of paper, twisted 180 degrees, whose ends are glued together in such a way as to transform them into a Moebius strip, in which front and back become indistinguishable. The work

consists simply in offering to the spectator this object and a pair of scissors, with instructions to choose a point at random to begin the cut and avoid hitting the same spot upon each completion of the circuit. The strip simultaneously narrows and lengthens with each successive cycle, until the scissors can no longer avoid the starting point. At this moment, the strip regains its front and back, and the work is concluded.

Here, Clark transfers to the spectator the act of cutting the paper in her preliminary studies for the creation of *Bichos*, especially in the final examples of that series, which have no hinges and are made from a single piece.²⁸ But now the spectator's participation in the work is not limited to reception but achieves realization itself. It is the act of creation that becomes the oeuvre, the work in progress, like life itself. It is in the act that the poetic will be revived. As Clark wrote: "It is no longer the problem of feeling the poetic through a form. The structure exists there only as a support for the expressive gesture, the cut, and after it is finished, it has nothing to do with the traditional work of art. It is the state of 'art without art,' for the important thing is the act of doing that has nothing to do with the artist and everything to do with the spectator. By presenting this type of idea, the artist in reality presents this 'empty-full' in which all potentialities of the option that comes through the act take place. ... The act makes contemporary man aware that the poetic is not outside him but within him and that he had always projected it by means of the object called art."²⁹ The figure of the spectator begins to deterritorialize itself, at the same time as the art object is no longer reducible to visibility, not even having the possibility to exist in inert passivity, isolated from the one who executes it.

Even if this was only the beginning of a process, Clark foresaw the magnitude of the transformation of the art scene that her proposition heralded and underwent a crisis, perhaps the most violent of them all, which would torment her for two years. This was a moment in which Brazil itself was also experiencing intense political and cultural movement, probably overly disruptive for the nation's conservative forces. The denouement was the military coup that imposed a dictatorship on the country that would last until 1984, with one general after another occupying the presidency. During her crisis, and mobilized by it, Clark would feel the need to return to the earlier stage of her work to explore it in light of her new discovery.

The second stage (1963–64)³⁰ was therefore that of Neoconcretism revisited, contaminated by the disturbing presence of *Caminhando*, a retaking of the *Bichos*, which began with *O dentro e o fora* (The Inside and the Outside, 1963), in which the Moebius strip moved from paper to metal. At the same time, Clark rebaptized one of the *Bichos* she had previously created, giving it the name *O antes é o depois*, (The Before Is the After), as if what came after *Caminhando* now signified the before of the *Bicho* that gave rise to it. Soon afterward came the *Trepantes* (Climbers, 1963), first in stainless steel, then later replaced in *Obra mole* (Soft Work, 1964) by rubber like the pieces of rubber found hanging on the walls in mechanical workshops. From *Caminhando* she inherited the use of the cheap, everyday materials that she was never to abandon. Totally malleable, the *Bichos* now supported themselves on any base: a table, the floor, a bookcase, a shoebox, a tree branch—in short, whatever presented itself. And they supported themselves by any means: by twisting, by grasping, by hanging, by spreading about, embracing all within their reach, taking on different shapes as a function of what they embrace and how they embrace it. In the flexibility of the interaction, they sculpt themselves, their manner of becoming dependent on what they encounter. That same year, Clark also did other works, among them *Abrigo poético* (Poetic Shelter, 1964), as if at that moment of disruptive turnabout, the idea motivating her work had been translated into a concept: to overcome the separation between shelter and poetry, to create conditions through which the person who previously had remained in the position of spectator could leave behind various shelters constructed from a priori representations, separated from experience, in order to construct shelters, “at homeness,” incarnating what his or her vibrating body would register as a new reality of sensations.

The works from this period were Clark’s last attempt at creating objects of art, which although they found their completion in the hands of the spectator, could still exist as neutral objects despite their manipulation, or even not be manipulated, lending themselves to passive contemplation.³¹ From this point on, the artist would carry ever further her search to reintegrate life and art, and her objects would have no possible existence out of the experience of those who lived them; abandoned to their own inertia, they lose thought, substance, meaning. That same year (1964), Clark created the *Livro-obra* (Work/Book)³², where she made explicit the perceptions that had led her to her

works until that moment, accomplishing the revision of her oeuvre, and offering the spectator the opportunity to retread that same path, as she had already done with the *Bichos*, through *Caminhando*. This constitutes the definitive closure of the first part of her work.

The third stage (1966–69) Clark would call *Nostalgia do Corpo* (Longing for the Body).³³ It began with *Pedra e ar* (Stone and Air), a transmutation that Clark executed on a small plastic bag sealed with a rubber band that she had been advised to affix to her wrist after breaking it in a car accident in the midst of her great crisis. It was from this object used to treat her trauma that she would extract the power to surmount the crisis and return to creativity. The work consisted of a common plastic bag, filled with air and sealed with an ordinary rubber band, on one of whose ends, pointing upward, was placed a pebble. The accompanying instructions were to hold the bag in the palm of one's hand, pressing it with systolic and diastolic movements to make the pebble rise and fall, like the very inhalation-exhalation motions of the life pulse.

In this stage, participation by the spectator took on a new dimension: the work began to move from the act to the sensation that it evoked in the one who touched it. In addition to no longer being reducible to its visibility and possessing no existence in isolation, the work was only achieved in the sensation mobilized in the relationship between it and the person manipulating it. Oiticica proposed translating *Nostalgia do Corpo* as Longing for the Body, for it deals more with the longing for the body than with melancholy nostalgia. One more step was taken toward the dissolution of the figure of the spectator: the evocation of the vibrating body is sketched here, though still not essential to the works of this period. Attention is still directed toward the object, which in this proposal continues to be, in Clark's words, "an indispensable means between sensation and the participant."³⁴ It was necessary to go further. The moment was propitious for such an approach: at this time the counterculture was at its apogee internationally, creating a social landscape that authorized and encouraged Clark's experimental exploration. The subsequent stages would be elaborated while Clark was living in Paris, after 1968, as well as when she took part with Oiticica in the First International Tactile Sculpture Symposium in California, high temple of the counterculture, which reechoed in the artist's soul the resonance of the events of 1968 in Paris.

The fourth stage (1967–69)³⁵ Clark called *A casa é o corpo* (The House Is the Body). The inaugural work of this period is the *Série roupa-corpo-roupa: O eu e o tu* [Clothing-Body-Clothing Series: The I and the You]. Two overalls made of thick plastic, joined at the navel by a rubber tube of the type used for underwater breathing, the same as used in her work *Respire comigo* (Breathe with Me), from the earlier phase, with a hood covering the eyes, were to be worn by a man and a woman. The lining was made of varying materials (a plastic bag filled with water, loofah, rubber, steel wool, etc.), different in each of the overalls, in order to allow the man a sensation of femininity and the woman a sensation of masculinity (for example, the chest of the woman’s overall was lined with steel wool, suggesting the hairy texture of this area of the male body). Six zippers on different parts of the overalls opened to allow access for each person to touch the inside of the other’s body.

The object completely loses its visibility and comes to “dress” the body and integrate itself into it. Blindfolded and with those strange textures covering them, it becomes impossible for the spectators to orient themselves starting from an image of either the object or their own body, dissociated from the sensations mobilized by the exploratory gestures. Any identifying classification, such as gender in the specific case of this work, is dissolved. The spectator discovers him or herself as a vibrating body whose consistency varies in accordance with the constellation of sensations evoked by the pieces of the world that affect him or her. It is from these sensations that the spectator will situate him or herself in the world, making successive shelters. The feeling of being “at home” as a familiarity with the world ceases to stem from a supposed identity, in order to be built and rebuilt in the experience itself: the house is the body. Here, it is the body, in its relation to objects, that becomes poetic again.

The territorialization by the spectator and the work in isolation became irreversible.³⁶ Attention moved entirely away from the object to concentrate on the vibrating body of its wearer. However, even here we have an object and a subject, for “people reencounter their own bodies through the tactile sensations operating in objects external to themselves,” Clark wrote.³⁷

The following stage (1968–79),³⁸ which developed in part parallel to the previous one, Clark called *A casa é o corpo* (The House is the body). It began with the *Arquitetura*

biológica: Ovo-mortalha (Biological Architecture: Egg-shroud, 1968), a large rectangular piece of transparent plastic with nylon or jute bags sewn to its ends, in which two people stick their hands or feet and improvise movements in which each wraps the other in plastic. Later architectures were variations of the first; they would have more plastic, be sewn in different ways, and have additional nylon or jute bags at their ends, permitting participation by a larger number of people.

In the “visible,” the work is a flexible structure made from the gestures of the participants in their interaction, aided by minimal materials “completely void of meaning and with no possibility of regaining life except by human support,”³⁹ which is a major step. But the work goes beyond this: in the invisible it is “an experience so biological and cellular that it can only be communicated by means equally biological and cellular. From one to two, to three or more, something always emerges out of the other, and it is an extremely intimate communication, from pore to pore, from hair to hair, from sweat to sweat.”⁴⁰ The work achieves its realization in the pure sensation of the experience captured by the vibrating body of the participants. The “colorless transparent plastic is almost like ectoplasm that links the bodies in a nonmaterial way,” Clark commented in a letter to Oiticica.⁴¹ It materializes the nonmaterial presence of the vital energy that emanates from the bodies in their encounter, which links everything in a single moving continuum, the immanence. Here it is the interaction between the bodies that becomes poetic again.

No longer do subject and object exist: “the people become the support of the ‘work’ and the object is incorporated: it disappears”⁴², “man becomes the object of his own sensation,”⁴³ Clark wrote at this time. Each one is the support of “the living structure of a biological and cellular architecture” in which people and things form “the mesh of an infinite cloth,”⁴⁴ agitated by a dynamic of constant differentiation. The work is this biological and cellular architecture between bodies, produced by desire. They are true collective rituals of initiation into the vibrating body.

The participants, already quite distant from the position of spectators, discover themselves as the effect of a collective disposition, from which is defined, in the vibrating body, the consistency of their subjectivity in process.⁴⁵ The identity principle has completely dissolved: if in the previous stage creating a sensation of familiarity in the

world, an “at-homeness,” depended on the effects of things on the vibrating body, an experience lived individually, now creating such a shelter depended on what happened between the bodies in their encounter and of the becomings that this experience mobilized uniquely in the vibrating body of each of them. The body is the house. “It is a poetic shelter where dwelling is equivalent to communication. People’s movements construct this habitable cellular shelter, starting from a nucleus that mixes with the others.”⁴⁶ The reconnecting of shelter and poetry was a qualitative leap forward: “the erotic experienced as ‘profane’ and art as ‘sacred’ fuse into a unique experience.”⁴⁷ Art and life mingled to the point that Clark entered a new crisis.

The year 1971 was an interval of silence in the work that Clark called “without formulation.” In reality she was formulating the idea of *Pensamento mudo* (Mute Thought), which had occurred to her countless times during this period. It referred to the fact of experiencing the poetic through life rather than through works of art, which provoked in her a mixture of euphoria and fear. Mute thought is the concept of freeing the act of thought from its yoke of representation, to place it fully at the service of the vibrating body and create the bridge to the visible existence: the germination of new states of sensation no longer needs works of art, for now the maps are produced directly from life. It is toward mute thought that Clark’s work aims and would reach fruition in the two stages that followed: *Fantasmática do corpo* (Phantasmatic of the Body) and *Estruturação do self* (Structuring of the Self), the latter produced with the help of her *Objetos relacionais*, which bring to a close the initial course suggested by the artist.

That same year, Clark fell ill, quite a common occurrence during her crises, and in January she traveled to Rio to treat a kidney problem. In February she returned to Paris, then back to Brazil in November for an exhibition in São Paulo. In October 1972 she was invited to give a course in gestural communication at the Sorbonne. It was in this context that she would emerge from her crisis, to begin her sixth post-*Caminhando* stage, which she called *Fantasmática do corpo* or *Corpo-coletivo* (Collective-body).⁴⁸

The inaugural work in this stage is *Baba antropofágica* (Anthropophagic Slobber), in which a group of people each received a spool of colored thread which they were instructed to place in their mouths. They sat on the floor around one member of the group who agreed to lie down with a blindfold over his eyes, then pulled the thread,

setting it on the reclining body until the spool was empty. They then stuck their hands into the tangle of saliva-moistened thread, which by then completely covered the body of the person lying down, and tore it until the web was completely undone. At this point, the blindfold was removed and the members of the group shared their experience verbally. This concluded the work.

In this ritual, bodies affect other bodies until their intertwined emanations form a mold about the affected body. While still damp, the mold is removed, like a placenta from some collective womb from which a new body is born, sculpted by all. Anthropophagically incorporated by the affected body, the emanations acquire autonomy from the bodies in which they originated. A becoming both by the affecter and the affected unleashes itself in this process, which does not happen through identification (each one “becoming like the other,”) but through contamination (each one “becoming another,”) without any parallelism between the two). If the tangle is yanked away aggressively, it is because this is the fate of each one’s emanations on the body of the other, where the emanations lose themselves, tearing apart in individuality that which was believed to exist. It becomes impossible to remain indifferent to what links the bodies nonmaterially and produces their constant differentiation.⁴⁹

This was the continuation of her works of collective initiation to the vibrating body, in which each participant discovers him or herself as a “living structure of a biological and cellular architecture.” But here, in addition to the work involving an average of sixty people, Clark created two new formulas to realize her project of reconnecting life and art in the spectator’s subjectivity: the statements the participants made at the end of the session, should they have chosen to do so, and the regularity of the sessions, which took place twice a week, three hours a session.

Clark discovered at this time that in order for the vibrating body to consolidate itself in a subjectivity marked by the trauma of this experience, engendering its own repression, the ritual required this continuity in time and the expression of the fantasies produced by the trauma. This occurred because this type of subjectivity constructed its “at homeness” with solid neurotic defenses based on a generous production of fantasies—veritable ghosts that haunt the experience of the vibrating body and keep it lethargic. Clark called the assemblage of these ghosts the “phantasmatic of the body.”⁵⁰ To extract

the body from its torpor, it is necessary to create the conditions under which, little by little, the fantasies/ghosts along with their poison would be “vomited,” she insisted, and the defensive construct crumble. This depends on an atmosphere of trust established over time, for, as the artist wrote, “To get there, one must deinstitutionalize both the body and every concrete relation.”⁵¹ Pore-to-pore work, one person at a time, carefully accompanied by his or her confrontation with the empty-full, is an indispensable imperative for the realization of this project. The next step was already delineated: in 1976, when Clark returned to Brazil, she began her sessions of *Estruturação do self* with the *Objetos relacionais*, the last stage of her work.⁵²

The collective ritual in regular sessions for as long as necessary, capped by the final testimony in which the phantasmatic is expelled from the body, here transformed itself into a solitary ritual in which the spectator’s initiation is completed through the settling of the vibrating body into his or her subjectivity. Working each time with a single “spectator” created a more protected space that afforded greater intimacy and a more radical journey. What was to be structured was a mode of subjectivation in which “at-homeness” was no longer the neurotic ego of the modern subject but a living structure in a process of becoming, engendering itself through impregnation by the world, which Clark called “self.” “At the moment in which the subject manipulates the *Objeto relacional* (Relational Object), creating relations of “fulls and empties” through the masses that flow in an unceasing process, identity with his psychotic nucleus unchains itself in the processual identity of molding itself.”⁵³

Strictly speaking, it would no longer be possible here to speak of identity, for this idea is incompatible with a subjectivity composed of the processual dynamic of molding oneself. It was surely to accommodate this new conception that Clark created the concepts of “relational object” for objective reality and of “structuring of the self” for subjective reality, each of which involves the other: the object reveals itself to be relational, and no longer neutral or indifferent, toward a subjectivity structured as self and no longer as identity, individuality enclosed in itself, anesthetized to the murmurs of life in its constructivism, to time, to the other, to death. It is the definitive deterritorializing of the subject spectator, of the object of art, and of its de-eroticized relation.

The *Objetos relacionais* are in part new creations that Clark had been making for two years, in which she practiced her *Estruturação do self* and in part earlier works that, since 1966, had been moving from stage to stage, integrating themselves into new propositions until emerging in a final work, either retaining the same function or reinventing themselves for other uses.⁵⁴ One example of the object that retained the same function is the stone that the person holds in his closed hand throughout the ritual; it functioned, according to Clark, as “proof of reality.” It permitted going to the vibrating body and experiencing the empty-full, preventing the fear of disintegrating by the certainty that there would be a return, without which the experience would become too risky and would succumb to the resistance controlled by fantasies/ghosts. Proof of reality had been used in *Relaxação* (Relaxation, 1974–75), the proposition immediately before *Estruturação do self*, and reappeared as *Objeto relacional*. The banality of the materials in these objects acquired the sense of making this experience an encounter of another order with the things of daily life, contaminated by this familiarity with the vital process.

Clark insisted that what these works proposed was a “ritual without myth.” In fact, what was ritualized and inscribed on the body during the “sessions” was not an image or sense of the world, of which the artist, since the death of God, would be the demiurge. It is not this transference of myths, exterior to man, that would be recorded but the power of permanent creation in the sensing of self and of the world, which every person, as a living being, possesses virtually: it is this power that would be reactivated—tuning of energies to constitute an “at-homeness” within deterritorialization itself, and not in its illusory evasion. A ritual for the end of the millennium, when surfing in deterritorialization became indispensable for the construction of a shelter in the new landscape in which we live, with its rapid technological changes and its globalization that expose the vibrating body to every kind of other and that mixes everything into the subjectivity of every inhabitant of the planet. In Clark’s words, “The work creates a kind of exercise to develop this expressive sense inside him/her [the spectator]. It would be a kind of prayer added to his full participation in the religious ritual itself. ... We are the new primitives of a new era and are beginning to revive ritual, the expressive gesture, but now within a concept totally different from all other eras.”⁵⁵

The *Estruturação do self* was, and continues to be, the object of an unfortunate misunderstanding in which Clark's final work was displaced from the field of art into that of therapy. Clark was in part responsible for this. With this last work, Clark termed herself a therapist, but countless times she vehemently denied it, insisting that she had always been on the frontier. She also frequently used psychoanalytic concepts to interpret the experiences of the "clients" who submitted to her proposition of the structuring of the self, or to explain this proposition. This tendency to explain and interpret through the precepts of psychoanalysis was due not only to the strong presence of psychoanalysis in the life of Clark, who went through various analytical processes throughout her career, but also to the strong presence of psychoanalysis at that time in culture itself, especially in France in the 1970s where Clark lived for much of the period in which she developed the second part of her work. This phenomenon was replicated in Brazil in the 1980s, when Clark developed part of her *Estruturação do self*. Her proposition being very much in the vanguard, there existed no other theory capable of apprehending it in its radicality; thus she used psychoanalysis, at that time the legitimate theory to refer to work with subjectivity. But psychoanalysts took no interest in the matter, and critics at the time did not follow this turn in Clark's work—and still do not today. Interpreted in the best light, it was accepted that what was being dealt with was therapy and not art, and thus it was accorded no further thought.

When, in 1978, Clark asked me to choose as my thesis the final part of her work,⁵⁶ her expectation was probably that I would find a way of putting it into theory. Actually, it was the artist herself who best found words to conceptualize her work, who intermingled her psychoanalytic reading with moments of lucidity that left very clear the uniqueness of her invention, as well as its consequences. In any case, the psychoanalism of her comments delayed a greater understanding not only of this final part but also of the totality of her oeuvre, which achieved its full intelligibility only when conceived as part of the proposition to which it led at the end.

My own research into Clark's work, motivated by her request, oriented itself along the lines of the same interpretation. Some years later, when I resumed the research,⁵⁷ this reading struck me as not only mistaken but also deleterious to the understanding of the strength and originality of her work. At the time, my perspective

was that the issue driving her oeuvre from the outset had been the boundary between art and therapy in her final work, which brought about disruptive effects in both fields. However, my present resumption of the research for the third time leads me to an even more radical point of view: in reestablishing the link between art and life in the spectator's subjectivity, Clark's proposition surmounts in the work itself the separation between the artistic domain and psychotherapy. She creates a territory, situated neither in the sphere of art as a department of social life specializing in semiotic activities, where access to the creative power of life is confined; nor in the sphere of therapy, specialized in treating a subjectivity separated from this power; nor in the border between the two—an entirely new territory. As I mentioned at the beginning, the origin of these two phenomena dates historically to the decline of a certain cartography at the end of the nineteenth century. At that time, the cleaving of the aesthetic plane within the subjectivity of the ordinary individual became inoperative, while originating alongside the institutionalization of art as a separate sphere. In the same process, and concomitantly, therapy was born to treat the pathological effects of this dissociation, and art began to dream of being reconnected to life, a utopia that runs through all the modern art. In inventing a user who ceases to be a spectator, Clark provoked the dissolution of the disjunction of the aesthetic plane in its process of subjectivation and at the same time the liberation of this plane from its confinement in the artist's subjectivity. Art effectively reconnects itself to life, and the existence of psychotherapeutic treatment loses any meaning. From this follows the conclusion that it is impossible to consider that in this work we are on the border between the two domains, for here they cease to exist as such. Nor can it be said that it was a territory that implied the abandonment of art and its replacement by therapy or a fusion of the two.

Why was this not a matter of the “death of art” or “antiart”? Various artists throughout the twentieth century aired these ideas in their eagerness to surmount the limits of the art of their time in the direction of life. Clark insisted many times on her disagreement with this outlook.⁵⁸ Her proposition retains the artist's privilege to incarnate in the work the perception of life that pulsates in things, autonomous from the person. However, this autonomy goes much further in Clark's proposition, insofar as her work has no possible existence outside the experience of the erstwhile spectator. To achieve

this intimacy, the artist had to remove herself completely from the art milieu—its institutions, its market, its mode of exhibition and reception—for whoever becomes a part of that milieu can only divest him or herself of it with great difficulty. In removing the spectator from this milieu, Clark facilitated his or her willingness vis-à-vis the work of transmutation of his or her subjectivity, which begins to operate in *Estruturação do self*. It was for this reason that she opted to show her work not in galleries, museums, and so on, but in universities, in the streets, and finally in her own apartment, where she held the *Objetos relacionais* sessions. For the same reason, the few times that she was given the opportunity to exhibit the second part of her work or speak about it, Clark stipulated the condition that it not be in an art space.

Why was this also not a matter of replacing art with therapy, or using therapy as a form of opposition to art? Because therapy as practiced, as we have seen, was merely the corollary of art as a separate sphere: it created the conditions for listening to the vibrating body which had become necessary since the end of the nineteenth century, but so as to integrate them into the experience of the psyche, through the interpretation of fantasies/ghosts, looking toward constructing an individual history in order to reconstitute an identity, with this reconstitution as the goal of treatment. In Clark's proposition, however, the emphasis was not on the fantasies/ghosts or on their interpretation—in this case, practically nonexistent—much less on the reconstruction of an identity. As we have seen, if there is a story of fantasies/ghosts to be brought to the surface, it is the story of the strategies for obstructing the vibrating body that was constructed in that existence and must by the same token be dismantled and expelled from the scene. The singularity of Clark's proposition lies in creating the conditions for listening to this plane, already linked to the discovery of the life in all things, through the experience of her objects, which reacquire the status of “relational.” Thus are overcome both the neutrality to which works of art are submitted and the identity principle that kept subjectivity blind to the pulsation of the life that stirs in all things, and consequently its sterility.

Why was it also not a matter of a boundary or fusion between art and therapy in a kind of conciliatory “holistic” totality? Because the existence of each of these spheres cannot be dissociated from the division of functions that have as their basis the de-eroticizing of human life in its creative force. The re-eroticizing of life at work in Clark's

oeuvre establishes the bases for construction of a new territory, with another cartography, other characters, having nothing more to do with the universe in which such spheres have their *raison d'être*. To remove oneself from that universe is to remove oneself from any possibility of pacifying the disquiet that life, in its differential quivering, mobilizes in subjectivity, calling it to the permanent task of reinventing itself and its mode of existence, a task that is finished only at death.

With her last work, Clark did not begin making objects for therapeutic ends but, as she explored the therapeutic potential of her proposition, she revealed the vital power of art itself as a semiotic activity when it reintegrates itself with the subjectivity of any person. “Until our era, the artist was only a thermometer in which the new spiritual reality of the future was indicated. There will come a time when everyone will be that thermometer and bring within themselves that future-present.”⁵⁹ Clark made this future happen in her work.

Rereading from the end to the beginning, Clark’s oeuvre in its totality reveals itself as motivated by a single idea that develops rigorously, stage by stage, and to which she sought to provide consistency throughout her trajectory as artist: to awaken the perception of the creative vitality in different areas of human experience. Initially, this perception was mobilized in relation to the plane, to relief, and to space; later, in relation to the act, to the body, and to the encounter of bodies; and, finally, to reach the stage of creating conditions for this perception in the spectator’s subjectivity to be possible. To do so, she created specific objects for each of these areas, which after a certain time were accompanied by a ritual. Little by little, it was the world that was illuminated in its process of differentiation, in the “vision” of all and of each one, and not merely the vision of the artist.

With Clark’s work was created a territory that did not exist until that moment, in which the modern project to reconnect art and life reached its limit. The proposition to “make living objects, reveal the life in things, their incessant state of process, allow a glimpse of the forces” goes beyond space and touches existence as a whole, giving it a new body, a new universe, a new cartography, new characters. The proposition to “produce an intensification of the faculties of the spectator” is realized concretely by Clark in the very core of the spectator’s subjectivity, bringing about its transmutation. In

Clark's proposition, the artist effectively abandons his or her condition of dweller in the ghetto of the poetic plane in the processes of subjectivation and makes a contribution toward activating it in the collective by freeing the user from his or her condition as spectator (of the work of art, but also of life), to initiate him or her to what Mário Pedrosa defined as the "experimental exercise of freedom." Aesthetics is reintroduced to ethics. Life in its creative power thanks.

If we examine the whole of Clark's trajectory, the idea permeating her work reveals itself in all its complexity and all its power to intervene in the culture, as a unique map for contemporary experience. It is a powerful reply—incarnate and not merely formal or theoretical—to the impasses confronting subjectivity today, where the construction of territories in which one can feel "at home" is no longer sustainable when it obeys an identity principle. As Clark wrote, "Previously, man had a discovery, a language. He could use it his entire life and thus feel alive. Today, if we crystallize into a language we stop, inexorably. We totally stop expressing. It's necessary to be always catching."⁶⁰ In evoking this power in the spectator "to be attracting" the mutations of time that manifest themselves in his or her vibrating body, Clark's work turns him or her into the missing contemporary people, to replace the modern people, those spectators of art and life, who run the risk of succumbing to the impasses of contemporary experience if they persisted in the way they organized their subjectivity. Or worse, the risk of producing irreparable damage such as the carnage we have witnessed in the name of perpetuation of supposed ethnic, religious, and national identities in a world irreversibly invaded by hybridization.

In realizing the modern utopia in her work, Clark exhausted this cartography and prepared the ground for a new dream. To ask whether it makes sense in the present to reactivate her post-*Caminhando* propositions, whether they are still living objects or only documents from the past, means wondering whether the question that this oeuvre introduces is still valid. Although thirty-six years have passed since the disruptive turning point in the artist's trajectory in 1963, we are far from having incorporated into subjectivity the experience of the empty-full, through which poetry and shelter merge in a permanent creation of existence, far from a heterogeneous subjectivity with its structured self, the axis of its unending transmutation.

We are still too modern. When will we join Clark in her visionary proposition?

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Critique et Clinique*. Paris: Minuit, 1993; p.14.

² The “vibrating body” is a notion that I have created in my book “*Cartografia Sentimental. Transformações contemporâneas do desejo* (Estação Liberdade, São Paulo, 1989) and which I have been working on since then. It refers to the power of the body to vibrate the music of universe, composition of affects that plays “live” in our subjectivity. Our consistency is made of these compositions creating themselves over and over, inspired by the pieces of world that affect us. The vibrating body is therefore that what, within us, is the inside and the outside at the same time. The inside is nothing more than a fleeting combination of the outside.

³About this, Lygia Clark wrote: “... individuality is the brick with its name written on it. We need urgently to tear down that plaque just as we tore down others with the name of god, love, so that everything in reality can be process and totality.” (Letter to Oiticica, October 26, 1968, in Luciano Figueiredo, org., *Lygia Clark. Hélio Oiticica. Cartas 1964–1974*. Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ, 1996, pp. 59–60. This is an indispensable book for any researcher of the works of these artists.)

⁴“Tropicália” is a term invented by Oiticica and adopted by the poetic-musical movement led by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, which imparted, more than an aesthetics, an attitude that greatly influenced counterculture thought in its Brazilian version.

⁵“1969: O corpo é a casa,” in *Lygia Clark* (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 1980), p. 27. Text reprinted under the title “The body is the house: sexuality, invasion of individual ‘territory’” in the catalog published by the Antoni Tàpies Foundation (p. 248) for the retrospective of the artist’s work given by that institution (Barcelona, 1997) in collaboration with the MAC de Marseille (Marseille, 1998), the Serralves Foundation (Oporto, 1998), and the Palais des Beaux Arts (Brussels, 1998), concluding at the Paço Imperial (Rio de Janeiro, 1998-99). The publication, edited by the Catalanian curator of the exhibition, Manuel J. Borja-Villel, is a privileged source for anyone studying the work of Clark because of its primary research, which includes hitherto unpublished and inaccessible manuscripts, the reading of which is crucial for an understanding of her oeuvre.

⁶“Pensamento mudo” [Mute Thought], undated manuscript, in Tàpies catalog, pp. 270–271.

⁷In a lecture on the writing profession of women, Virginia Woolf spoke of two indispensable tasks for a woman to liberate her power of creation: to kill the angel in the house, for the shadow of its wings clogs the investment of desire in the work with guilt, and to tell the truth about one’s own experiences as a body of a woman, truth about her passions, for the awareness of what men in their conventionality would say has the power to interrupt this trance and dry up the imagination. Woolf felt that this second task was still to be realized, even in her own work (cf. “Killing the Angel in the house”, 1931). Lygia Clark certainly succeeded in overcoming the second obstacle, less evident and more dangerous. The same can be said of Clark’s contemporary, Clarice Lispector, in the field of literature.

⁸In the manuscript found in the Lygia Clark’s Archives of the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, the word “vulvanic” was crossed out and replaced by “obsessive,” probably by the artist herself, and it was with this revision that the text was included in the Tàpies catalog (pp. 289–290). Often, Clark “corrected” in her manuscripts expressions of convulsive intensity from her experience, probably for fear of being looked upon with disfavor by the academic superego embodied by a certain Brazilian intelligentsia, which at moments of fragility had the effect of inhibiting her. It is curious how the revised or deleted passages from her originals are precisely those in which she affirms most resoundingly the becoming woman of writing, to which Woolf refers (see note 7). These passages are generally eliminated or replaced by a rationalistic discourse that denies and sidesteps the presence of the body motivating the writing. But the creative force in Clark was always stronger than the inhibitory power of the superego of empty obsequious rhetoric.

⁹“Da supressão do objeto (anotações),” in the Tàpies catalog, p. 264.

¹⁰From this initial phase, among other works, are: *Óleos* [Oils] (series, 1950–51), *Desenhos* [Drawings] (1950–51), *Escada* [Stairs] (series, 1950), *Guaches* [Gouaches] (1950–51), *Sem título* [Untitled] (series,

1952), *Composição* [Composition] (series, 1952–53), and the portraits of her children (series in pencil and charcoal).

¹¹Paulo Herkenhoff, “A aventura planar de Lygia Clark—de caracóis, escadas e Caminhando,” in the presentation text of the exhibition *Lygia Clark*, a retrospective of the artist held under the curatorship of the author, at the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo, from June 1, 1999, to August 1, 1999, pp. 10-13.

¹²Paulo Herkenhoff (cf. [note 11](#)), pp. 9–10.

¹³The first Neoconcretist Exhibition was held in March 1959 at the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro and was followed by an exhibition with the same name, held two years later at the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo.

¹⁴See “Letter to Mondrian,” May 1959, in the Tapiés [catalog](#), p. 116.

¹⁵About this fecund exchange, see *Lygia Clark. Hélio Oiticica. Cartas 1964–1974* (op.cit.).

¹⁶The National Exhibition of Concrete Art took place in 1956, followed the same year by the *Atelier Abstração*.

¹⁷Cf. Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao grande labirinto*, selection of texts by Luciano Figueiredo, Lygia Pape and Wally Salomão. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986.

¹⁸In an undated manuscript, Clark writes: “I never had any culture nor did I read anything; any culture I got was from spending time with Mário Pedrosa and Mário Schemberg. They impregnated my ears with all that was interesting and good.” (Lygia Clark Archive.)

¹⁹Regarding this issue I would like to thank Luis B. L. Orlandi for his collaboration. As regards the notions of life and vitalism in Gilles Deleuze, in addition to the author’s texts dedicated to Nietzsche, Spinoza, and Bergson, [see also, among](#) others: *Pourparlers* (Paris: Minuit, 1990), p. 196, and, in collaboration with Félix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), p. 512.

²⁰From this second stage (1954-58): *Quebra da moldura* [breaking the Frame] (1954), *Descoberta da linha orgânica* [Discovery of the Organic Line] (series, 1954), *Interior* (series of plans, including a scale model, 1955), *Construa você mesmo o seu espaço a viver* [Construct Yourself Your Own Living Space] (1955), *Superfície modulada* [Modulated Surface] (series, 1955-58), *Plano em superfície modulada* [Plane in Modulated Surface] (series, 1956-58), *Espaço modulado* [Modulated Space] (series, 1958), *Unidades* [Unities] (series, 1958), and *Ovo linear* [Linear Egg] (1958).

²¹“Lygia Clark, uma experiência radical (1954-58)” in *Lygia Clark*, op. cit. pp.8-9.

²²About this, cf. Lygia Clark, “A morte do plano,” in the Tapiés [catalog](#), p. 117.

²³From this third stage (1959-60): *Ovo contra-relevo* [Counter-relief Egg], 1959), *Contra-relevo* [Counter-relief] (series, 1959), and *Casulo* [Cocoon] (series, 1959-60).

²⁴Undated and unpublished manuscript in the Lygia Clark Archives.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶The Bichos is generic denomination of this family of [sculptures](#) that received various names. For example: *Bicho* (series, 1960-63), *Bicho flor* [Flower Beast] (series, 1960-63), *Relógio de Sol* [Sundial] (series, 1960-63), *Caranguejo* [Crab] (series, 1960-63), *Ponta* [End] (1960), *Disfolhado* [Stripped] (1960), *Articulado* [Jointed] (1960), *Articulado duplo* [Double Jointed] (1960), *Invertebrado* [Invertebrate] (1960), *Metamorfose I e II* [Metamorphoses I and II] (1960), *Contrário I e II* [Contrary I and II] (1960), *Vazado I e II* [Emptied I and II] (1960), *Prisma* (1960), *Vegetal* (1960), *Constelação* [Constellation] (1960), *Cidade* [City] (1960), *Bicho planta* [Plant Beast] (1960), *Sobre o redondo* [About the Round] (1960), *Máquina* [Machine] (1962), *Em si* [In Itself] (1962), *Projeto para um planeta* [Plan for a Planet] (1963), *Pancubismo* [pancubism] (1963), *Arquiteturas fantásticas* [Fantastic [Architectures](#)] (series, 1963), *Monumento em todas as situações* [Monument in All Situations] (1964), *Crescente gigante* [Gigantic [Growing](#)] (1964), *Bicho de Bolso* [Pocket Beast] (1964), as well as *Parafuso sem fim* [Endless Screw], *Pássaro no Espaço* [Bird in Space], *Monumento a Descartes* [Monument to Descartes], *Linear*, *Bachiana*, etc.

²⁷A bibliography of excellent quality is available about this period, beginning with the work of the critics of the time, Ferreira Gullar and Mário Pedrosa, whose interpretation even today preserves all its vitality.

Notable among the authors who have dedicated themselves to Clark’s work, posthumously, are the Brazilians Ronaldo Brito, Maria Alice Milliet, Ricardo [Fabbrini](#), Paulo Herkenhoff and the foreigners Guy Brett, Yve-alain Bois, and Manuel Borja-Villel.

²⁸In creating the *Bichos*, Clark first explored them on paper.

²⁹Undated manuscript, probably from 1963–64, in the L.Clark archives.

³⁰From this stage are: *O dentro e o fora* (1963), *O antes é o depois* [The Before Is the After] (1963), *Trepante* [Climber] (series, 1963–65), *Trepante (Obra mole)* [Climber, Soft Work] (series, 1964), *Abrigo*

poético [Poetic Shelter (1964), *Estruturas de caixas de fósforos* [Matchbox Structures] (series, 1964), and *A casa do poeta* [The Poet's House] (1964).

³¹About this stage, Clark wrote: "From 1959 to 1964, including the *Trepantes* in stainless steel and the *Trepantes* in rubber (Soft Work), I extended their structure to the point of exhaustion. I experienced in that period the end of the work of art, of the base on which it expressed itself, the death of metaphysics and of transcendence, discovering the here and now in immanence." (Undated manuscript in the L.Clark archives.)

³²The *Livro-obra* was written in 1964 and published in 1983 by Luciano Figueiredo and Ana Maria Araújo, in a edition limited to 24 unites.

³³From this stage are: *Pedra e ar* (1966); *Natureza (Estrutura cega)* [Nature (Blind Structure)] (1966–67); *Livro sensorial* [Sensory Book] (1966); *Ping-pong* (1966); *Desenhe com o dedo* [Draw with Your Finger] (1966); *Água e conchas* [Water and Shells] (1966); *Respire comigo* [Breathe with Me] (1966); *Diálogo de mãos* [Dialogue of Hands] (1966); *Diálogo de pés (Estrutura viva)* [Dialogue of Feet (Living Structure)] (1966); and *Proposições Existenciais: Campo de Minas, Cintos-diálogos* [Existential Propositions: Campo de Minas, Dialogue Belts] and the films *Convite à viagem* [Invitation to the Journey], *Filme sensorial* [Sensorial Film], *Western*, and *O homem no centro dos acontecimentos* [Man at the Center of Events] (1967–68).

³⁴Cf. "L'art c'est le corps," *Preuves*, no. 13 (Paris, 1973), in the Tapiès catalog, op.cit., p. 232.

³⁵From this stage are: *Série roupa-corpo-roupa* [Clothing-Body-Clothing Series] (1967), among which are *O eu e o tu* [The I and the You], *Cesariana* [Caesarian], *Máscara abismo* [Abyss Mask] (series, 1968), *Máscara sensorial* [Sensorial Mask] (series, 1968), *Óculos* [Eyeglasses] (1968), *Diálogo: Óculos* [Dialog: Eyeglasses] (1968), *A casa é o corpo: penetração, ovulação, germinação, expulsão* [The House Is the Body: Penetration, Ovulation, Germination, Expulsion] (1968), *Luvas sensoriais* [Sensorial Gloves] (series, 1968), *Casal* [Couple] (1969), and *Camisa-de-força* [Straitjacket] (1969).

³⁶About a work from this stage Clark wrote: "When he [the man] puts on his head a sensory helmet he isolates himself from the world, after having already situated himself in an entire earlier process in the development of art; in that turning inward he loses contact with reality and finds within himself the whole spectrum of fantastic experiences. It is a way of bringing to him the breath of experience. ... The man-helmet has the tendency to fall into parts at the moment of the experience. Longing for the body, to behold it and live it in parts in order to later reintegrate it as a living and total organism." (Undated manuscript, probably from 1967, in the Tapiès catalog, pp. 219-220.)

³⁷"L'art c'est le corps" (cf. note 34), in the Tapiès catalog, op.cit., p. 232.

³⁸From this stage are: *Arquiteturas biológicas* [Biological Architectures] (series, 1968–70), among them: *Ovo mortalha* [Egg Shroud] (1968), *Nascimento I e II* [Birth] (1969), *Estruturas Vivas* [Living Structures] (series, 1969), among them the *Diálogos* [Dialogues] (1969).

³⁹L. Clark, "A casa é o corpo. Penetração, ovulação, germinação, expulsão, 1968," in the Tapiès catalog, op.cit., pp. 232-233. Even in these conditions they are those who insist on returning these objects to the status of work of art, independent of the experience in which they take on their meaning. For example, when *Arquiteturas biológicas* is exhibited without the possibility of experiment, what is shown is the piece of plastic with its jute bags tossed on a table, devoid of life, like the mortal remains of some unrecognizable body.

⁴⁰Letter to Mário Pedrosa dated May 22, 1969, in the Tapiès catalog, op.cit., p. 250.

⁴¹Letter dated May 20, 1970, in *Lygia Clark. Hélio Oiticica. Cartas 1964–1974* (op.cit., p. 154).

⁴²"L'art c'est le corps" (cf. note 34), in the Tapiès catalog, op.cit., p. 232.

⁴³Undated, unpublished manuscript in the L.Clark archives.

⁴⁴L. Clark, "A casa é o corpo. Penetração, ovulação, germinação, expulsão, 1968," in the Tapiès catalog, op.cit., pp. 232-233.

⁴⁵About this, Clark wrote: "In my so-called 'cheap' works, where each one could make his own object from materials given to him or her, could be found in embryonic form the same characteristic of my new works. But each experience was individual and ran the risk of closing itself whereas it is now simultaneously individual and collective, as it is not executed without the others' experience, in the heart of the same polynuclear structure." ("1969: O corpo é a casa," in *Lygia Clark*, op. cit., p. 37.)

⁴⁶Op. cit. p. 36.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸From this stage (1972–75) are: *Baba Antropofágica* [Anthropophagic Slobber] (1973), *Canibalismo* [Cannibalism], (1973), *Túnel* [Tunnel] (1973), *Viagem* [Journey] (1973), *Rede de Elásticos* [Network of Rubber Bands] (1974), *Relaxação* [Relaxation] (1974–75), and *Cabeça coletiva* [Collective Head] (1975).

⁴⁹For a detailed analysis of *Baba Antropofágica* see Suely Rolnik, “For a state of art: the actuality of Lygia Clark” in *Núcleo Histórico: Antropofagia e Histórias de Canibalismo*. Catalog of XXIV Bienal de São Paulo (São Paulo, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 1998: pp.462-467).

⁵⁰“Fantasma”, that means ghost, is the Portuguese translation for the Freudian concept Phantasie: the unconscious fantasy which substitutes a repressed memory and becomes a veritable ghost. This information can help us apprehend the meaning of Clark’s concept of “Fantasmática do corpo”, as the bunch of fantasies/ghosts mobilized by the body experience.

⁵¹Undated manuscript in the Tapiès catalog, op.cit., p. 301.

⁵²Clark started her work *Estruturação do self*, done with the *Objetos relacionais*, beginning in 1976. In 1981, she reduced the number of “clients” and began to transmit the experience so that others could carry it on. In 1984 she partially abandoned the experiment, stopping totally in February of 1988. In April of that year the artist died suddenly from a myocardial infarction, at the age of 67.

⁵³“Objetos relacionais,” text written by Lygia Clark in collaboration with Suely Rolnik, in *Lygia Clark*, op. cit, p. 49.

⁵⁴The Relational Objects were many and varied over time. The artist herself described them as follows: “light, light-heavy, and heavy cushions ... I also work with a large and very thick mattress filled with foam rubber into which the body sinks as if in a mold. I also made another foam-rubber mattress covered with a voile to revitalize the client’s body at the end of the session. Besides these objects I use many others: a plastic bag filled with air, a plastic bag filled with water; “breathe with me”; onion bags with stones inside them; a breathing tube; a flashlight to shine in the eyes and mouth when their eyes are blindfolded, a piece of plastic filled with seeds; loofah; oakum; large seashells to place over the ears, stones at the bottom of a small, empty bag tied with a rubber band at the end, which I manipulate above the patient’s body; marbles; tails of rabbits; nylon stockings with shells at one end and stones at the other; nylon stockings with Ping-Pong balls at one end and tennis balls at the other.” (“A propósito do instante,” in *Memórias do corpo. O dentro e o fora*, unpublished and undated manuscript in the L.Clark archives.)

⁵⁵“Do ritual,” manuscript, 1960, in the Tapiès catalog, op.cit., p. 122.

⁵⁶*Mémoire du corps*, thesis defended in the U.E.R. de Sciences Humaines Cliniques, Université de Paris VII, in 1978.

⁵⁷The resumption took place in 1994, at the time of the retrospective of the artist at the 22nd São Paulo Biennale, stemming from an invitation from the curator, Nelson Aguilar, to consider Clark’s oeuvre starting from her final propositions.

⁵⁸To cite only one example of text in which Clark deals with this theme: “Art or antiart? The elaboration of the work of art continues to be very important to my way of thinking. Not only for the artist but also for the spectator. In my proposition is the thought (the element given by me) and the expression (the moment in which the spectator expresses this given thought). There continues, then, to be that which was always important in an artistic expression, except that now those elements are apparently separated because the work of art has lost its uniqueness. ... To me, the poetical in the communication of the work of art ceased to be achieved through transcendence and comes to be achieved in immanence, which results from the act itself.” (Undated manuscript, probably from 1969, for in the same text Clark refers to the plastic pieces in the *Arquiteturas biológicas*.)

⁵⁹Undated manuscript in the Tapiès catalog, op.cit., pp. 156–157.

⁶⁰“Lygia Clark: o homem é o centro,” interview with Vera Pedrosa, *Correio da Manhã* (Rio de Janeiro), April 30, 1968, Segundo Caderno, in the Tapiès catalog, op.cit., pp. 227–228.