

Severo Sarduy and the Big Bang: The Poietic Catastrophe

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Abstract By channelling into his poetry the events of the *Big Bang*, Severo Sarduy made his writing break into endless pieces. His critical commentators have tended to conceptualise this fact as a catastrophe which irradiates melancholy into human existence. This article, however, will argue that the *Big Bang* in Sarduy's imaginary works as *poiesis*. Challenging the reasons that have taken Sarduyan criticism to implement such a gloomy outlook on the function of the *Big Bang* in the Cuban's author — mainly the mirroring of the primordial explosion with the other cosmological decentering postulated by Kepler in the 17th century—, it will be argued that Severo Sarduy's poetics, in line with Deleuze, looks at the decentering caused by the explosion not as disenchantment of a wholeness lost but as the questioning of the grand narratives of the metaphysical being and the birth in geometrised space of paroxysm and endless metaphoricity.

Key words Severo Sarduy; Big Bang; catastrophe; poiesis; body without organs.

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Introduction

Bang! And everything got started. This is the way the most reputed cosmological theory to date, the Big Bang, explains the origin of cosmos. It portrays a universe that gives birth to itself in a huge explosion: an ideal whole blows into a million pieces setting the resulting signs-fragments, the reality known to us, to forever drift away. Spermatic and nihilistic at the same time, what, ultimately, does it mean to be born in a blast? Is cosmos the biggest catastrophe ever or, on the contrary, the biggest claim to perfection?

In Latin American letters there has been no bigger literary effort to illustrate and understand the onto-epistemological consequences of springing from a catastrophic primordial explosion than those made by Severo Sarduy in some of his best known pieces of literature. The Cuban author, faithful to the maxim that any form of literature finds its inspiration in scientific discourses, especially cosmology due to its all-inclusive nature (*Barroco* 1197), sets up a “Biunivocal Correspondence” (“Correspondencia biunívoca” [*Big Bang*]) between the Big Bang and his poetry to configure a literary imaginary that, by imitating the rhythms of the universe, expands, broken and protean, along the space-time of the piece of paper¹:

*blowsand
dark light rectangle leathered mercury
Moroccan mirror fossil sun
burnt water*

*(‘arena soplada
luz negra rectángulo azogue tafileteado
espejo marroquí sol fósil
agua quemada’ [174])*

Sarduyan criticism has tended to look at the function of the Big Bang in his poetry from a rather twilight perspective. The most common idea is that the fragmentation and the metamorphosis of the ideal hypermatter resulting from the primordial explosion condemn the world in general, and Sarduy’s *oeuvre* in particular, to exist without a center, forever lost in a haunting void which proliferates without control. In González Echevarría’s words: “In Sarduy there is no continuum; the source is

1 Unless indicated otherwise, all the translations into English hereafter are the authors’ since the works cited have not been translated into English.

always beyond the instant of separation, in a violence which is prior to its duration and which fragmented, in principle hopelessly, the world and its codes ... In Sarduy everything is in shreds" ('En Sarduy no hay continuo; la fuente est   m  s all   del instante de separaci  n en el tiempo, en una violencia anterior a su duraci  n, que fragment  , al parecer irremediablemente, el mundo y sus c  digos ... En Sarduy hay rotos y jirones' [4]).

In clear contrast with the above-mentioned approach, this study will argue that in his poetry, especially in his book *Big Bang*, Sarduy might have integrated the fragmentation and the metamorphosis inherent in the primordial blast for reasons other than the nihilistic invocation. In the first place, we will suggest that the critical twilight outlook on the functioning of the Big Bang in the Cuban author's imaginary would have come from approaching this paradigm from stances more proper to Baroque cosmology than to the 21st century. Later, around an updated, rigorously scientific reading of the Big Bang, we will discuss that the fragmentation and the metamorphosis permeating both the universe and the Sarduyan world after the explosion, far from functioning as death drives, reveal themselves as constructive impetuses which start the world, filling both cosmic matter and Sarduy's verses with an immense *poietic* potential, with *joie de vivre*.

Also from a *poietic* view, but this time from the philosophical perspective put forward by Deleuze and Guattari and Scherer and Hocquenghem, we will finally claim that the Cuban author makes use of fragmentation and metamorphosis to orchestrate an alternative onto-epistemology based on otherness and metaphoricity, whose main aim is to challenge the fixities and constraints of the metaphysical tradition.

Sarduy and the Big Bang: Critical Perspectives

The echoes of the Big Bang in Sarduy's poetry have received wide critical attention (Fombona Iribarren; Gil and Iturralde; Rivero-Potter). In what comes out as a summary of all these contributions, Gonz  lez Echevarr  a argues that all of the forms of exile at work in Sarduy's literature — exile from the mother at birth, his political exile in Paris, and the exile from absolute knowledge brought about by postmodernity — come from a cosmological exile, that Big Bang which fragmented the stability of the primordial hypermatter condemning us for ever to live without a center, subject to endless metamorphosis and fragmentation processes (4).

Sarduy's exegetes have understood his literature precisely as an attempt to recover the ideal perfection that the universe had before the big explosions in his biography happened, especially that of cosmos. To quote Gonz  lez Echevarr  a:

“Sarduy’s texts, looked at both independently or as a whole, seek to get back to a stable origin; they transmit a great anxiety to get back to a razed plenitude that can only be recovered through common sense” (‘Los textos de Sarduy, ya sea independientemente o vistos en su conjunto, sufren de la nostalgia del origen; ansiedad de regreso a una plenitud asolada, a un conocimiento perdido que se recupera al cobrar el tino’ [3]). But, what does Sarduy’s alleged intention to go back to common sense result in? The critical opinion in this respect is unanimous: all the routes the Cuban would open to go back to the state of perfection prior to the original blast are soaked in accented pessimism (Aponte; Burgos; González Echevarría; López; Méndez Ródenas; Solotorevsky; Valdesueiro). It seems, then, Sarduy could not meet his objective to “go back to common sense,” to overcome the debacle of the origin, since the never ending fragmentation and metamorphosis caused by the Big Bang always transform his anxiety to totality into frustration. These two forces would reveal themselves as death drives: “Leaving behind just the flickering trace of their own absence, the only solution is death—or its equivalent, the disintegration of the object, and hence, of the character chasing after the object” (‘Dejando sólo tras de sí la huella titilante de su ausencia, la única salida es la muerte — o su equivalente, la desintegración — del objeto y, por ende, de los personajes que persiguen al objeto’ [López 93]). In sum, for these critics, Sarduy’s project, on being full of fragmentation and metamorphosis coming from the big explosion, can just portray the ineffability of the world. It would prove that after the Big Bang both mankind and reality cannot be imagined, represented any more, unless as a collection of fragments or dissolution in nothingness.

What comes as a surprise about this critical way of conceiving the onto-epistemological decentering brought about by the Big Bang is its similarity with the other major cosmological decentering Kepler systematized in the 17th century. Hereafter, it will be our contention that, despite the temporal and conceptual difference separating both models, most of Sarduy’s exegetes have equated the functions of the two paradigms, controversially investing Sarduyan fragmentation and metamorphosis with the same melancholy and existential anguish these two forces had in 17th century cosmology. This hypothesis is not negligible, since on proving true, it would provoke a radical change in the understanding of the function of the Big Bang in the Sarduyan imaginary.

The 17th century is the first time in Western history in which mankind does not exist around the idea of the center. Kepler discovers that the universe, the measurement of all that happens on Earth, works around the ellipse and not the only center. As highlighted by Sarduy, the quake is a big one:

The world of certainties granted by an idea of the universe centered around the earth, or even — Copernicus — ordered around the sun, suddenly swings. There were not perfect platonic orbits around the sun anymore, circles dissolved: everything elongated, everything got deformed as if following the elasticity of an anamorphosis so as to comply with the monstrous course of the ellipse — or with the course of its rhetorical double, the ellipsis that was giving way to illegible alembicated poems ... Early Baroque men are witnesses to a world that vacillates: for them, Kepler's model of the universe seems to portray an aberrant, unstable, uselessly decentered reality.

(‘El mundo de certezas que le hab  a garantizado la imagen de un universo centrado en la tierra, o aun —Cop  rnico— ordenado alrededor del Sol, de pronto bascula. Terminaban las   rbitas plat  nicas perfectas alrededor del Sol, se deshac  an los c  rculos: todo se alargaba, se deformaba como siguiendo la elasticidad de una anamorfosis, para conformarse con el trazado monstruoso de la elipse — o con el de su doble ret  rico, la elipsis, que engendraba poemas ilegibles, alambicados ... El hombre del primer barroco es el testigo de un mundo que vacila: el modelo kepleriano del universo le parece dibujar una escena aberrante, inestable, in  tilmente descentrada’ [*Nueva inestabilidad* [1371]).

As Francisco Jarauta highlights, one of the ways Baroque men have to deal with the sense of disorientation brought about by the loss of the fixed center is to put matter into movement, either by fragmenting it or by making it proliferate without control. In historic Baroque, then, fragmentation and metamorphosis are desperate attempts to fill in the *horror vacui* into which a suddenly off-center human existence had fallen (70). In historic Baroque, therefore, fragmentation and metamorphosis would enact a failure — the impossibility of recovering the lost center and the immense feeling of existential void that would trigger. The similarities between what baroque men felt after Kepler's turn, at least as Jarauta and Sarduy himself put it, and the way Sarduyan criticism interpreted the function of the Big Bang in his literary imaginary share such a similar sense of nihilistic disorientation that it seems there has been a transposition of functions that obviates, as will be suggested next, the divergent specificity of both systems.

It is Sarduy himself who in two of his best essays, *Barroco* and *Nueva Inestabilidad*, warns about the danger of setting up too superficial analogies

between the cosmological decentering of baroque times and that caused by the Big Bang, which he calls neobaroque. The latter is revolutionary and does not regret losing the center. On the contrary, it is cause for celebration: “Neobaroque: necessarily crushed-to-pieces reflection of a knowledge which is aware of not being placidly folded onto itself. Art of the overthroning and the challenge” (‘Neobarroco: reflejo necesariamente pulverizado de un saber que se sabe que ya no está apaciblemente cerrado sobre sí mismo. Arte del destronamiento y la discusión’ [Barroco [1253]). The neobaroque ethos, as pointed out later by the Cuban author, is quite special: “Baroque that on swinging, on falling, on implementing a flowery language that sometimes is strident and chaotic, metaphorizes the impugnation of the logocentric entity which until that time structured us from its distant position and authority; Baroque that challenges any form of founding, which metaphorizes the discussed order, the judged God, the transgressed law. Baroque of the revolution” (‘Barroco que en su acción de bascular, en su caída, en su lenguaje pinturero, a veces estridente, abigarrado y caótico, metaforiza la impugnación de la entidad logocéntrica que hasta entonces lo y nos estructuraba desde su lejanía y su autoridad; barroco que recusa toda instauración, que metaforiza al orden discutido, al dios juzgado, a la ley transgredida. Barroco de la Revolución’ [Barroco [1253]).

In *Nueva inestabilidad* Sarduy argues that “The mission of nowadays’ curious people, the mission of the spectator of the baroque ethos, is to detect in art the *retombée* or the reflection of a cosmology for which the origin is almost a certainty but the forms which followed it are an unconceivable hiatus” (‘La misión del curioso de hoy, la del espectador del barroco, es detectar en el arte la *retombée* o el reflejo de una cosmología para la cual el origen es casi una certeza pero las formas que lo sucedieron un hiato inconcebible’ [1370]). Later he suggests being can exist without a fixed origin, without a center, always projecting itself towards metaphoricity: “the fortuitous gathering of a set of small variants was necessary for a spectacular result to happen: the origin known to us has always been *about not to happen*, always about to swing” (‘la reunión fortuita de toda una serie de pequeñas variantes fue necesaria para que un resultado espectacular se produjera: el origen que conocemos ha estado siempre *a punto de no producirse*, siempre a punto de bascular’ [1370]).

The Big Bang as Paroxysm

In light of the arguments put forward in the previous section, it seems Sarduy advises not undertaking a twilight reading of the Big Bang in his poetics. Why does he, then, invoke the primordial explosion into his verses? What alternative reading

to the nihilistic stance can be undertaken and what is it based on? Post Big Bang fragmentation and metamorphosis, this study will claim, have two main productive functions in Sarduy's poetics: on the one hand, the impulse of both paroxysm and the material sensuality of reality, and, on the other, the challenge of the form of being promoted by the metaphysical tradition, aspects that cannot be studied if the Big Bang and its results are interpreted from 17th century cosmological principles. For these two ideas to defy the customary way the Big Bang has been understood in Sarduy, for the *poietic* turn to happen, first it will be necessary to go straight to the very center of the explosion from a scientific-philosophical perspective.

In order to truly understand the functions of fragmentation and metamorphosis in the orchestration of cosmos as portrayed by the Big Bang, it is necessary first to reflect upon the slippery, almost inapprehensible, nature of its and our origin. As Hawking and Mlodinov, Livio, Longhair or Singh point out, cosmos has not always been as human beings experience it now — a flow of bodies-planets. It stems, however, from another state which is much more difficult to conceptualize. Provided that in the universe everything runs away from everything else, in a prior state, the galaxies needed to be closer to each other than now and at a much higher temperature. The more remote in time, the greater the proximity and the heat would be, to the point it is easy to imagine an instant when all the galaxies would be concentrated in a very small and extremely hot volume. In this sort of ubiquitous cosmic “jam” matter, space, and time would be so comprised and at such high temperature that the universe would be a point of infinite density and, therefore, extremely difficult to imagine. Given its special characteristics, that first moment of cosmos could not be but ideal and impossible, a sheer paradox. The mathematician Alexander Friedmann, whom Malcom Longhair quotes in his book *Origins of the Universe*, describes it as a “singularity of infinite density and physically paradoxical” (‘singularidad de densidad infinita y f  sicamente parad  jica’ [7]). Ineffable and inapprehensible, the best way to define the primordial dimension of the origin is through the literary metaphor: what are Friedmann's words and the concept of mathematical singularity it leads to but one of those jewel-like metaphors so abundant in Baroque literature?

Sarduy, a master in metaphors, is not far behind Friedmann and also uses this trope to imagine such a dimension. In the manner of G  ngora, he writes that “in the beginning —    *ceci pr  s*: that there is no beginning — it was the white color: slow and milky spiral, knot of snowed dwarfs, helix of semen” (‘al principio —    *ceci pr  s*: que no hay principio — era el blanco: lenta espiral l  ctea, nudo de enanos nevados, h  lice de semen’ [*Autorretratos* [19]]). This symbolic stage of the origin

metaphorically comprised all of the imaginable realizations of what later would become the attributes of cosmos: space, time, and matter, even in its realizations to come, since the universe is still expanding and most of the energy that was liberated in the blast is still to incarnate in new spaces, times, and matters. But at this stage it was impossible to talk about matter, time and space, since these concepts were not themselves yet. Instead, they were potentially inscribed in an energetic medium that, did not look like a thing at all: it was just sheer signification devoid of representation, as Sarduy himself admits, borrowing an idea by Ernst Cassirer (*Barroco* 1243).

Let it be, therefore, a universe that finds its origin in an ideal state, a sheer paradox. How does the universe evolve from its paradoxical state of ideality to its real stage? How does the universe that human beings experience spring? Because of a Big Bang that sets in motion, that actualizes, the potentiality inherent in the ideal state making the universe. Sarduy imagines the process as follows:

Galaxies seem to move away from each other at a considerable speed.

The most distant ones run away at two hundred three thousand kilometers per second, nearly the speed of light.

The universe swells.

We are witness to the result of a great explosion.

(‘Las galaxias parecen alejarse unas de otras a velocidades considerables.

Las más lejanas huyen con la aceleración de doscientos treinta mil kilómetros por segundo, próxima a la de la luz.

El universo se hincha.

Asistimos al resultado de una gigantesca explosión’ [*Big Bang* [165]].

The ideal dimension of cosmos that until that moment has sweetly been dormant in the stability of its infinite potentiality blows into a million pieces. It becomes aware of itself in the great explosion-expansion of the origin, the result being cosmos, that is not anything else but the actualization of part of the infinite potentiality it contained. In Sarduy’s own words, the universe is “another metaphor of the energy, what abruptly unfolds from the breaking of the primordial egg, *ylem* or potentiality state” (‘una metáfora más de la energía, lo que abruptamente se despliega en la ruptura del huevo primitivo, *ylem* o estado puntual’ [*Barroco* [243]]).

The universe after the great explosion incarnates in matter: “May it be a material radiation, the archaeological trace of its initial blast, beginning of the

expansion of signs, a phonetic vibration which is constant and isotropic, murmur of language: steady friction of consonants, open undulation of vowels” (“Sea una radiaci  n material, el vestigio arqueol  gico de su estallido inicial, comienzo de la expansi  n de signos, vibraci  n fon  tica constante e isotr  pica, rumor de lengua de fondo: frote uniforme de consonantes, ondulaci  n abierta de vocales” [*Nueva inestabilidad* [1246])). But the expansion of cosmic *physis* in itself cannot explain the structuring of reality which obviously does not just show as a continuous flow of matter projecting towards infinity, but also as discrete units — protons to quasars have a body.

It seems, thus, that cosmic matter simultaneously comprises opposing drives: its tendency to expand beyond itself co-exists with its opposite, its self, whose most dramatic form would be the breaking, the fragmentation, of the material continuum. Shaped after the great explosion as a dance between fragmentation and metamorphosis, it can be stated that these two impetuses are the clearest proof that reality has started its journey. Here it is the main function of fragmentation and metamorphosis in the Big Bang: they inaugurate reality and, in doing so, they move cosmos away from the realm of the paradox by locating human beings before the vast and metaphorical horizon of being.

Would it be improper to imagine Sarduy approaching the fragmentation and the metamorphosis of his poetics from the onto-epistemological richness these two drives have in the above-referred cosmological context, or, on the contrary, are they nihilistic forces filling Sarduy’s imaginary with indecibility as suggested by that critical line which interprets the facts of the Big Bang from the pessimism of 17th century Kepler’s decentering? If, as discussed earlier on, Sarduy already warned in his essayistic work about the dangers of implementing this second exegetic path, in his poetry this aim is even clearer. Let his texts speak.

Sarduy designs most of his poetics as a mini-cosmos where texts seek to set parallels between cosmic facts like dark holes, nebulae, red giants or blue dwarfs — that he represents in italics in his texts — and terrestrial bodies, most of the times parts of the human anatomy. In “Crab” (“Cangrejo” [*Big Bang*]), for instance, Sarduy links the energy emitted by the homonymous nebula, scientifically explained in the first part of the poem, with the sparkles of the jewels that ornate the body of desire in the second part of the poem. There is a complete transfer of attributes and, in the end, the body and its jewels are portrayed as if they were the Crab nebula:

The astronomer [Friedmann] discovered that nine percent of the X flow was emitted in the form of pulsations. The energy of each pulsation is equivalent to

what the whole of our civilisation could produce, in the form of electricity, in ten million years.

Walls of amulets, lit lamps: slow ellipsis.

Through the parallel glasses open up, covered in bangles, among brutal stones, prised green bands, silver of a cloth.

A turban, burnt untidy hair; before his eyes two gold rings: the smoke from a cup of tea steams them.

(‘El astrónomo [Friedmann] encontró que un nueve por ciento del flujo X de la nebulosa se emitía en forma de pulsaciones. La energía de cada pulsación es equivalente a la que nuestra civilización pudiera producir, en forma de electricidad, durante diez millones de años.

Muros de amuletos, lámparas encendidas: elipses lentas.

A través de los cristales paralelos, cubiertos de pulseras, entre piedras brutales, Se abren prismadas franjas verdes, plata de un paño.

Turbante, greñas quemadas; ante los ojos dos aros de oro: el humo del té los empaña’ [168])

In a similar way, in “Fossil Light” (“Luz fósil” [*Big Bang*]) Sarduy finds the replica of the cosmic microwave background radiation in earthly objects. Its reflections can be measured “in the edge of a fish, / in the eye of fireflies, / in the sura of a date’s shadow” (‘en la arista de un pez, / en el ojo del cocuyo, / en la sura de la sombra del dátil’ [174]). This is the same pattern Sarduy uses in “Sun” (“Sol” [*Big Bang*]), a poem in which he reciprocates qualities of this star and aspects of the material reality: the power of the sun lives in the “white pheasant,” in the “lemon” in the “dry saffron dust.” Its reflection “inside out” can be found in “the bare feet” which “the water” projects onto the “wall.” The shape of the sun is the measurement and the origin of all “circle,” and the energy of its radiation of all “buzz.” As the poem’s layout seems to suggest, reality stems from and goes back to the sun, it is inscribed between the “sun” which opens the poem and the “sun” which closes it:

SUN

lemon	white pheasant	
bare feet		dry saffron dust
in the water	inside out	the wall
	buzz	

circle
sun)

('SOL
limón faisán blanco
los pies desnudos polvo de azafrán seco
en el agua al revés la muralla
zumbido
círculo
sol' [168])

After the analysis of these poems, and in clear contrast with the most habitual critical perception, it is easy to conclude that neither in the process of metamorphosis at work in “Crab” nor in the fragmentation articulating “Sun,” does the Big Bang work as nihilism. On the contrary, the primordial blast laid the foundations of Sarduy’s poetics just like they had founded cosmos. This idea of the foundation is reinforced by a comment from Sarduy himself when, in an interview, he states that: “the page and especially the poem, for me, are bodies in space. They stem from an initial explosion, from the explosion of a primitive verbal atom [...] Hence, the importance of the geometrical figures, of the explosion” (‘la página y sobre todo el poema son, para mí, cuerpos en el espacio. Parten de una explosión inicial, de la explosión de un átomo primitivo verbal ... De ahí, en este libro, la importancia de las figuras geométricas, de las explosiones’ [Fossey [21]]). The explosion both in cosmos as in Sarduy’s verses is filled with a great *poietic* longing, since, without it, the world would keep on being dormant in a state of ideality and would not have any productivity, simply because it would not exist. Fragmentation and metamorphosis stand out as the starting signal for both reality and the Sarduyan imaginary, since they are the impetuses shaping them.

Another aspect which advises against a nihilistic reading of the Big Bang is the content of the poems themselves that, far from having an elegiac tone, drip sensuality. In fact, both “Crab” and “Sun” portray the poet’s object of desire, an object of desire in which all the material paroxysm of a Baroque universe throbs in its hunger to exist: “brutal stones,” “prismed green stripes,” “silver of a cloth” or “dry saffron dust.” In sum, in Sarduy’s poetics blowing into a million pieces does not constitute an existential debacle. Rather, it is the platform from which to fill in his imaginary with paroxysm and sensuality.

Once the possibility for a constructive reading of the protean and heteroclite

nature that the Big Bang gives Sarduyan verses has been eviscerated — to which Sarduy's warning against mirroring Big Bang and Baroque cosmologies should be added — the conclusion to draw is that the nihilistic approach implemented by Sarduyan criticism regarding the function of the original blast in his imaginary comes from an anachronistic reading of this event, at least in the light of how contemporary science explains it. The consequences of this omission are significant, since analyzing the function of the primordial blast from the gloominess of the baroque reading, does not only close the door to a paroxystic and foundational view of it, but it also impedes the exploration of its most important philosophical consequence: what the Big Bang blows into a million pieces is the rigidity of the metaphysical being, a turn that, as discussed in the next section, Sarduy does also imbricate into his poetic imaginary.

The Big Bang and the Crisis of the Metaphysical Being

Throughout its history Western philosophy, which Derrida refers to as metaphysical, has claimed that the meaning and truth of things and beings happen from a luring center exterior to being itself. Being, therefore, would always stem from an original presence determined by the capacity to reason and its forms—especially language. From this paradigm, the mind, thinking, and language are prior to being itself and control it to suit from its transcendent position. For Derrida, in the end, the modality of being which the metaphysical tradition promotes goes against the idea of being as free play, a free play that “has always being neutralized, reduced by means of a conscious interest in anchoring it down onto a center, in referring it to a point of presence, to a fixed origin” (321). If, from a cosmological point of view, the Big Bang with its processes of fragmentation and metamorphosis revealed itself as a foundational and paroxystic drive, from a philosophical point of view, rather than in order to signify existential uneasiness, Sarduy uses it to question grand narratives, the monolithic certainties inherent in the metaphysical being.

The philosophical possibilities of the Big Bang have been widely addressed by French ontological materialist thinkers such as Deleuze and Guattari and Scherer and Hocquenghem. These thinkers, just like Sarduy, conceive of the Big Bang as a platform of ontological openness aimed at challenging the fixities of the metaphysical being. These four philosophers, the former two in *One Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* and the latter two in *The Atomic Heart: Defining the Aesthetics of the Nuclear Age* (*L'Âme atomique: Pour une esthétique d'ère nucléaire*) conclude that, if after the Big Bang and the resulting fragmentation and metamorphosis processes, contemporary reality stops being thought of as

ordered and integral to manifest itself as multidimensional and ever changing, this is not, by any means, a symptom of melancholy. On the contrary, as Hocquenghem and Scherer point out, after the primordial blast our soul might find itself trapped in a vortex that aims to dissolve it, but, instead of being scared, it fully opens, restless and vital (17-18). For these two philosophers, the fragmentary and ever changing nature of our reality as portrayed by the Big Bang reveals itself as “appetitus,” “tireless tensions, which living in the absence of rest, affirm the creation of the world in all its points” (‘infatigables tensions, vivant dans l’absence de repos affirmant la cr  ation du monde en tous ses points’ [72]). This “appetitus,” they continue later, “affirms existence against the negative simplicity of nothingness. The circle of cosmos is broken, there is no center anymore, it [‘appetitus’] dares divinity appear everywhere as everything is decentered, and for it any appearance is divine. ‘Here’, centers of proliferation, are everywhere: such is modern divinity” (‘affirme le plus de l’existence contre la simplicit   n  gative du rien. Il cercle du cosmos est bris  , qu’il n’y a plus de centre, il d  fie le divin d’appara  tre en tout lieu, puisque tout est d  centr  , et du coup traite toute apparition comme divine. Partout des «ici», des centres de prolif  ration: tel est le divin moderne’ [72]).

It is easy to find in Sarduy’s poems this restless and vital onto-epistemology, this modern form of divinity, around which Scherer and Hocquenghem understand a post Big Bang world. “Farruca” will suffice to illustrate my claim. The poem manifests itself as a textual reflection of cosmos’ longing for otherness which, ultimately, aims to break that hypothetical filial doubt that being would have with a presence extrinsic to itself, with an original center around which being would hierarchically organize its existence:

WITHIN A WHITE CUBE	the body is a volume
SUPERIMPOSED EDGES	
THE BODY	opaque dimensions
ANAMORPHOSIS OF SPACE	
IT DISPLAYS ITS BOXES	the body is a system
THE BODY IS A MACHINE	
THE BODY IS A VOLUME	fixed by a scaffold
VOLUMES OF OCHRE	
OPAQUE DIMENSIONS	the body is a machine
GREY SURFACES	
THE BODY IS A SYSTEM	within a white cube
WITHIN A WHITE CUBE	

FIXED BY A SCAFFOLD	superimposed edges
THE BODY	
THE BODY IS A MACHINE	anamorphosis of space
IT DISPLAYS ITS BOXES	
WITHIN A WHITE CUBE	volumes of ochre
A FICTICIOUS VOLUME	
THE PAGE IS A CUBE	grey surfaces
THE LOOK IS ITS ACCOMPLICE	
ANY BODY IS A CUBE	within a white cube
VOLUMES OF OCHER	
ANY CUBE A SPHERE	the body
GREY SURFACES	
ANY BODY TRANSFORMS	within a white cube
WITHIN A WHITE CUBE	
ITS EDGES INTO ANOTHER BODY	the body displays its boxes
(‘DENTRO DE UN CUBO BLANCO	el cuerpo es un volumen
ARISTAS SUPERPUESTAS	
EL CUERPO	dimensiones opacas
ANAMORFOSIS DEL ESPACIO	
ENARBOLA SUS CAJAS	el cuerpo es un sistema
EL CUERPO ES UNA MÁQUINA	
EL CUERPO ES UN VOLUMEN	que un andamiaje fija
VOLÚMENES DE OCRE	
DIMENSIONES OPACAS	el cuerpo es una máquina
SUPERFÍCIES GRISÁCEAS	
EL CUERPO ES UN SISTEMA	dentro de un cubo blanco
DENTRO DE UN CUBO BLANCO	
QUE UN ANDAMIAJE FIJA	aristas superpuestas
EL CUERPO	
EL CUERPO ES UNA MÁQUINA	anamorfosis del espacio
ENARBOLA SUS CAJAS	
DENTRO DE UN CUBO BLANCO	volúmenes de ocre
UN VOLUMEN FICTICIO	
LA PÁGINA ES UN CUBO	superficies grisáceas
CÓMPLICE LA MIRADA	

TODO CUERPO ES UN CUBO	dentro de un cubo blanco
VOL��MENES DE OCRE	
TODO CUBO UNA ESFERA	el cuerpo
SUPERFICIES GRIS��CEAS	
TODO CUERPO CONVIERTE	dentro de un cubo blanco
DENTRO DE UN CUBO BLANCO	
SUS ARISTAS EN OTRO el cuerpo	el cuerpo
enarbola sus cajas' [<i>Big Bang</i> [145]]	

"Farruca" shows as a collaboration between the drives that come after the primordial blast: fragmentation —understood as a tendency to shape, as the interruption of the material flux in bodies, may they be "a machine," "grey surfaces," "a system" or "a white cube" — and the metamorphosis which the continuous change of skin of matter points to. The formal impossibility that impregnates the poem is, no doubt, due to the operating capacity of metamorphosis, to the fact that this dynamic makes matter enter into an endless chain of proliferations whose very expression annihilates any possible stable shape. Because of this metamorphosis, the signifiers leave behind a form that is too brief to be able to take a fixed position — how would this be possible? If, for an instant, the matter of "Farruca" sets in "volumes of ochre," "grey surfaces," "machines," or "opaque dimensions," this formal illusion lasts very little. Since everybody is, in turn, another body, ultimately the body could just manifest itself as a continuous flow of material "soup" whose main commitment is to structure and dis-structure itself endlessly just to show its flesh. Fragmentation and metamorphosis cause the material continuum never to focus, since its limits are always active. In a nutshell, "Farruca" is a carnal open-ended flow made of a mix of material and movement realizations that affirm and deny themselves at the same time.

The concept of the universe and the onto-epistemological model "Farruca" points to, on being based on an endless play of presences and absences, of modulations of otherness, challenge the fixities of the metaphysical being, offering as an onto-epistemological alternative the BwO (body without organs). Arriving at similar conclusions to those of the restless and vital ethos of Scherer and Hocquengem's, Deleuze and Guattari use this idea to argue that the Big Bang, far from making human beings fall into indecibility and nihilism, puts forward "an intensive non-differentiated reality in which things, organs, differ from each other just by gradients, migrations, range zones." For them, cosmos after the Big Bang would be the BwO par excellence. Does "Farruca" not show as well, using an idea

Deleuze and Guattari apply to the universe, as a BwO, as a “block of becomings, a map of compared densities and intensities, and all the variations in that map” (168)?

It seems so. Being in “Farruca” clearly promotes its maximum existential openness. In doing so, unlike in the metaphysical tradition, it is not forced to choose an always-imposed-a priori identity. Instead, being just shows its becomings: “the body / the body / displays its boxes.” “Farruca,” in the end, proves again that the Big Bang in Sarduy’s poetry is eligible to be read constructively. If in “Sun” and “Crab” the Big Bang filled everything with paroxysm, in “Farruca” it aims to liberate being from the metaphysical constraints of the center and transcendence, promoting, in contrast, a restless and vital BwO that projects itself towards the realm of the endless possibility, sheer *poiesis*.

Conclusion

The processes of fragmentation and metamorphosis that so distinctively permeate Sarduy’s work have been associated by criticism with the ineffability into which human beings and cosmos would fall after the Big Bang. From this approach, the primordial explosion would shape a reality that can just be imagined as a death drive that leads to nihilism. This article, in contrast, has argued, by analyzing Sarduy’s book of poems *Big Bang*, that these two impetuses are also eligible to work constructively. There are two main reasons to sustain such claim. Firstly, if the explosions at the heart of Sarduy’s poetry are looked at from contemporary, properly scientific, perspectives — something Sarduy suggests in two of his best essays *Barroco* and *Nueva inestabilidad* — and not from 17th century stances as his critical commentators have tended to do, fragmentation and metamorphosis show as unstoppable paroxysm, as the drives making Sarduyan cosmos.

Secondly, Sarduy creates a poetic world made of shreds and ever changing skin to undertake a crusade against the monolithic being of the metaphysical tradition, to demonstrate that the belief in a centered and harmonious reality upon which, until recently, modern societies had been built proves to be a clear way to frustrate the access of life towards otherness. In this light, Sarduy, just like Deleuze or Hocquengem, uses the Big Bang to go beyond the 17th century cosmological decentering: this contemporary decentering is not a symptom of disenchantment and anguish anymore. On the contrary, its drives — fragmentation and metamorphosis — would transform Baroque melancholy into an off-center form of being whose ultimate aim is to present itself as infinite metaphoricity in its hunger to exist. Bang!, Sarduy reminds his readers, never was a catastrophe so *poietic*!

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