

Pain of distances

You have to be in a desert. Since that whom must be loved is absent.
Simone Weil

The most beautiful world, Heraclitus claimed, is a lot of rubbish left fallen in confusion. This statement must be understood under a *Benjaminian* point of view. The allegoric and elusive physiognomy of Juan Carlos Meana's work, which coincides in so many aspects with that of the nature-history that goes onto the stage of *Trauerspiel* according to Benjamin¹, is actually present in the shape of ruin. With the ruin, Benjamin says, history is reduced to a presence that can be noticed on stage. And under that shape, history is not formed as a process of eternal life, but as the process of decadence that can not be rested². Everything tends to the chaos, according to the second law of thermodynamics. Any process that turns a form of energy into another loses some heat. Perfect efficiency is just a dream: the heroes' dream. Entropy always grows in the universe and in any system, no matter how isolated it is, such is its inevitable rule. Thus, the piece, the fragment, the accumulated rubbish become the most noble materials of creation, that is conceived as the last resistance to postpone the end, desperate facing the elemental forces of destruction; critical legacies that eventually trivialise the waiting for a saving redemption, not natural and therefore miraculous that, nevertheless, always retains its nature of a promise, in its impossible place. The spaces that create Juan Carlos Meana's works are fragmented and dispersed in the middle of a deaf condition of insecurity. A mitigated tragedy, as if it was drowned or differed, or even latent, supplementary to the existence itself of things, that could perfectly be like its natural secretion, is staged. The continuous recurrence to mirrors dilutes and takes away some of their material nature to shapes. The work gets dislocated and becomes elusive in the non-stoppable radiation of its mirror-like nature. The mirror, that never shows its front, summons the work as far as it is ruin or fragment. Mirrors, Meana says, cast oblique glances at us that, rather than build, dilute us in what we see. Then we turn to the experience of what we already know in order to compare it with what we see; from that,

¹ W. Benjamin, *El origen del drama barroco alemán*, Taurus, Madrid, 1990, translated by José Muñoz Millanes, p. 171.

² See Benjamin, *El origen del drama barroco alemán*.

mirrors summon us from memory. Mirrors cover several faces, oriented to different directions as an example of this loss of a centre from which we can watch³.

Memory is, then, the place of the work, as experience and projection: inner journey. That is why, once the ruin is proposed, it appears as a paradoxical anticipation of a *renovatio*. When taking care of a pain, when remaining as the memory of a misfortune, the ruin also becomes the sign of coming happiness and of happiness in the future. The task of the allegory – Benjamin already knew this – is identical to that of the ruin in this aspect: allegories are in the realm of thinking what things are in the realm of things. The fragmentary constellation that Juan Carlos Meana's artistic objects design, draws the tale of survival. The survival of the inhabitant in the middle of the rotting of sense, of their sense itself and of the world, strangled. According to the artist, the temporary nature of the works always leads us back to an experience of dialogue with that who observes. (...) the dispersion characteristic of the elements in the work makes easier this elaboration of a particular and different time in each exhibition of the work⁴. The means of allegory appears just after the defeat of the valences when understanding the human, and of their own constructions, transliterating itself into the phenomenology of the desert, of the dry, of the dismantling and of the precarious immaterial nature, of the blindness and of the exile. Of a decomposing or disordering process, like an illness of the eyes or a negative autopsy where the centre of the presence or of the truth withdraws from the visual understanding.

Because of that, Meana's work, which is assumed as a fragile rescue from the ruin, is soaked in melancholy and humbleness. It sets the stage of an experience of loss, shaped from that condition itself⁵. Because the forming will knows that it is working from an irreparable distance with regard to the ideal, to perfection, as if it was in the middle of an opaque experience that leaves little room for the plenitude or the grace, but it pursues it in an everlasting and correcting obstinacy that keeps on besieging that impossible centre, that overflies it, always dramatising the failure, like an endless chain of plumbs where the experience of the subject marks their yearning and their

³ Juan Carlos Meana, "Después de Narciso", in *Sentidos del mirar*, Universidad de Vigo, Vigo, 2001m p. 75.

⁴ See Juan Carlos Meana, "Después de Narciso", p. 80.

⁵ Once the set is fallen, we are only left with its remains as the only material over which to project. (Text by the artist for the exhibition *Ruinas y proyectos*).

declination, their aspiration and fall. Everything develops into a paradoxical construction of a subjectivity going through a permanent crisis and displacement. The fragmented or split conscience of the subject involved in the labyrinth of estrangement (when facing both things and the subject themselves) establishes the allegory as the foundational act of its obtaining, of its pursuing an absent constancy. This allegory lives because it is immersed in the estrangement of the fragmentation and metamorphosis, and, at the same time, it penalises the interference of the *spleen*, of the semi-idle and imprecise spying of the *flânerie* about which Baudelaire talked, when roving about the objects is conceived as the final aim of the artist⁶, that Juan Carlos Meana likes to put on the same level with a personal interpretation of the laziness – under an ontological point of view – which is close to the concept of restless, expecting *quietness* of the existing *thrown* in Heidegger⁷. The figure of the lazy person that the artist assembles is that which corresponds to the subject unable to bear the situations of conscience by themselves⁸. From that, it is not laziness regarding the daily, of the habits, of the bustle; it is the laziness that produces estrangement, a certain fear, the laziness to find our own look in the mirror, the laziness that alters the stages in order to enter the enigmatic, it is the laziness that, by itself, activated and impossible to control, produces tiredness by itself⁹. Laziness is the antithetical response that the body and the conscience activate as opposed to the distance that continuously emerges, that grows with the anxious imposition of all projects, of any inquisitive intention. As Benjamin pointed out, allegory is mournful because it means that we are thrown to the desert of the sense, it watches the pain of estrangement, it evokes the irreparable distance of a never fully lived life, in any case artificially signed, coded, fragmentarily followed by the events of a previous erased, disappeared text. Somehow, it becomes a nostalgic dreamy activity, as conceited as phantasmagoric, because it lives in the interval, in the border between the subject and the world, and in that of the ego with itself. In the middle of this

⁶ See Juan Carlos Meana, “Después de Narciso”, p. 36.

⁷ As it is known, Heidegger’s quiet man is a *left* man, somebody who gets free with regard to representing, in an action that therefore surpasses the horizon that limits it as a mere projecting conscience. Being left is the first step to quietness, next to the porosity of tiredness and the assumption of the condition of the existing as thrown, lacking home, inhabitant in the open and the threat of the inhospitality, as opposed to the desire of being at home that philosophy expresses. But, in another way, it is resting-in-itself: things have a rest when they go back home, to the essence. (See Martin Heidegger, *Serenidad*, Ediciones del Serbal, Barcelona, 1989).

⁸ Preparatory text by the artist for the exhibition *Yaceres*.

⁹ See preparatory text by the artist for the exhibition *Yaceres*.

interval, the artist tries to mnemonically reorganise unstable and contradictory things and experiences that those objects have projected. The task of art – it is said in *El espacio entre las cosas* – is continuously reinventing and feeding the energy that circulates between things¹⁰, a fight, then, against the entropic principle of the universe. In the manner of Baudelaire, nature has become a huge fragile dictionary where the inputs merge and join without either continuity or a logical disposition. But the trivial nature of this porous and changing capture must be saved by a fertilising look, by the vitality of the poetic resonance, of the experiential reorganisation that can be projected in the subject. The dialogue with things is slow, but if we keep an open mind, it is effective, inasmuch as we discover the possibility of the work and the work discovers us in our actions¹¹. Here, artistic action is not circularly reflexive, idealistic; it is being awake, alert, against something and taking care of that something, because the self knows that he is not his foundation, that he did not build the grounds on which his state of being thrown is determined, but he is absorbed in it, anxiously thrown in it. Juan Carlos Meana's symbolic universe always arises from the productive crossings between customary, almost neutral and anaesthetised, perception of things and memory, precisely founded by a patient and hopeful life together that can feed a generative approach that is constituted, first and foremost, as a learning in the alienation, a detachment from our common beliefs and representation. In this detachment, there is a rest, repose of the existing. *A cure of the being*¹². Therefore, that experience is neither a product of the objects (Juan Carlos Meana's art is not objectual) nor their property, but the result coming from some pressure beams, of some emotional, psychic, perceptual and conceptual correspondences that allow us to momentarily see the echo, the radiation, the heat transmitted by the power of that absent centre that has so enigmatically ordered the experience¹³.

We said that Meana's work involves a certain *critical* phenomenology of the subject: lazy, melancholic, blind, a victim of uneasiness, ill, defeated, withdrawn,

¹⁰ Juan Carlos Meana, *El espacio entre las cosas*, p. 43.

¹¹ See Juan Carlos Meana, *El espacio entre las cosas*, p. 63.

¹² Martin Heidegger, *El Ser y el Tiempo*, F.C.E., México, 1993 (9th ed.), translated by José Gaos, p. 60.

¹³The spaces that the work shelters are spaces with a concentrated meaning; they shelter a kind of intensity that is created by the acting of the forces of relation between the elements and the parts that appear in the work. (*El espacio entre las cosas*, p. 45).

tired¹⁴. It is as if life, beginning with our own, constituted an enigma of conscience, that is only revealed, uncertain, in a look, in a hue, in the immaterial pressure of a friction between targets. Daily life (not to mention epic life, that of the heroes, those who plan the common projects) frequently disguises this presence that unifies things, erases that look by means of diluting it in time, making it opaque in a dumbness of oblivion, embalming all possibilities of birth, burying the image (that is its salvation when it is shown) in the blackness of inverted mirrors.

The artistic determination is centred on glimpsing, on the destitution of that mask, on recovering, from that phenomenological veil, the expressiveness of things in their relational flight. A verse by Saint Paul (I Corinthians XIII: 12) that tired Bloy and Borges¹⁵ seems to inspire a great deal of Meana's symbolic game: Now, we see by means of the mirror, in the dark; but then we will see face to face. Now I know in part; but then I will know in the manner that I am known. The distance from which the verse talks, that can be referring to both our vision of divinity and our general vision or knowledge, seems to redouble in negative in the case of our artist, for whom, meaningfully, mirrors show themselves either, as we said, as surfaces that destroy any possibility of vision (black out of the inverted mirror), or as reflecting areas that divert any promise of self-knowledge, when they run away from the front part and display themselves as oblique and refractory screens that project reality in irreparably zigzagging forks. *Per speculum in aenigmate*: in enigma by means of a mirror: however, the impenetrable is held up in its black waters or it gets muddied in hirsute dryness when there is not a point of stability from which to direct mirrors, when there is not a reference that turns perception shrewd, that turns watching into vision, and, thus, sights repose their uselessness on shelves, and the poles that sign apexes, that sign looks and deeds become poles of abandonment, in the manner that preachers' platforms are perforated; all that as a sign of the fall of old ideals into disrepute, of maybe secret, non-confessed aspirations. The fragmentation of the mirror is the impossibility that the subject has got to be the centre of its own existence, it is the recognition of an impossibility, the existence of an emptiness¹⁶.

¹⁴ Ignacio Castro has said about this: Laziness, fragments of organs hanging, linked: dry the member as if we were a-tripe-and-offal shop. (In "El envés de los héroes", in Juan Carlos Meana, *Yaceres. Las miradas pendientes*, 1997, p. 8).

¹⁵ J. L. Borges, "El espejo de los enigmas", in *Otras Inquisiciones*.

¹⁶ Preparatory text by Juan Carlos Meana for the piece "Después de Narciso".

As we noted, it is, nevertheless, about recovering that deviation, about trans-putting our customary way of knowledge/ignorance through our eyes. The artist makes us discipline our look, his look, in order to purify the daily toils, the perceptive habits that have polluted the experience of seeing things. And that purge begins with the restoration of the daily things to their most humble state, to their purest presence, to their least derived presence, we could say. Looks are humble in the manner that everyday things are, in the manner of life. Earthenware amphorae, washbasins, cups, materials and blank canvases, humble everyday vases: they contain the experience of those instants without history, lacking of epic effusiveness. In the middle of the destroyed scenery, on a conventual table besieged by the accumulation of rubbish, one of those containers keeps the lively embryo that breathes, what holds survival: a fish. Perhaps – Meana wrote – we should take fish as an example of a light shifting among the fragments of a more and more unattainable reality. Then, the struggle between movement and emptiness resolves itself into the symbol of the fish moving, which, as it goes along following its instant drives, dislodges emptiness. This fish does not feel the presence of the emptiness as anguish or understanding; it resolves, as Lezama wrote, the Nietzschean happiness in the fear as its scales go by and, in the end, it feels the endless dead points as smooth as silk. Disciplining the look on the things should mean rescuing them from the utilitarian system where they are immersed, rescuing them from their emptiness, separating them from the economic and communicative circuit where they move to look at their immediate reifying nature again, their patent being in the obedience and the modesty and joy of its mundane dwelling. Free from the grammar, from the ideological syntax of the participation in the discourse of the instrumental reason, or from the identifying or purely selfish passion, the eluded thing becomes allusive, clear of impurities and restored its ontological whiteness. It is as if it went to another emptiness; this time this emptiness is affirmative, productive, fertilising. Deprived of determination or anxiety, it declares an unknown experience, defined by the reverberation of an emotional background that makes its way with difficulty, dislodging dead material, dodging and avoiding as a fish between alternating currents. This seeing means being born, coming out from the world of extinction¹⁷. The awakening of this emotion is the proof that must validate the authenticity and the quality of experience.

¹⁷ This is precisely the interpretation that Valente gives to the myth of Narcissus in “Pasma de Narciso”,

Juan Carlos Meana's artistic proposal is not aimed to reason, as it neither is rationally created nor can be received; it does not increase the rational understanding of the world, but the experiential dimension that lies asleep at the bottom of our conscience. Here, art is not a technique but an experience. A remembering experience, in the platonic manner, that of unveiling that which rests in potentiality, ancestrally forgotten in us, that of awakening asleep emotions. We can only understand what we already are, what lies in us as an unconscious larva; that is why under Meana's point of view the world and the self are irreparably interconnected, the former is a projection of the conscience of the latter that the subject must try to understand all along their lives. In the goal (that is the beginning), *the self is the world*. The extension of our sensitivity, the artist points out, is an extension of the place itself¹⁸. As if, by the fact of being observed, things ended up being part of ourselves. We are familiar with objects because they are full of looks¹⁹.

What often reveals the moment of that transcendental recovery, the principle of transposition of the look, is, precisely, the dryness of the non-reflex, the inhospitable presence of the obscure, the dryness itself of the desert sand, that design a destroyed landscape where the senses have become blind, where the word and its reason can not work, and things themselves reach their extreme, their final exhaustion, again: their hollowing out; and then that opaque hermeticism, dramatic in its deafening silence, in its blinding whiteness, allows the emotion of a precarious sensitivity to spring, whose wound obliges it to make the most of the hue, the *minus*, the light resonance, the almost dauntless crack, where the daily reverberates and transfigures itself. A part of the material must have an empty space where it finds its echo²⁰. Once the empirical material and the phenomenological flesh are dead, from its extinction the image – a myth of resurrection like that of Narcissus and Echo – is created. It is a passage from the imposed to the unexpected, from the perception to the visionary look, there where things design different paths and allow disturbing energies to move about. In order to get this, they had to undo themselves, going, like Narcissus did, through the epiphany of

in *Variaciones sobre el pájaro y la red. Precedido de La piedra y el centro*, Tusquets, Barcelona, 1991, p. 23.

¹⁸ Juan Carlos Meana, *El espacio entre las cosas*, Diputación de Pontevedra, within the collection *Arte y Estética*, Pontevedra, 2001, p. 14.

¹⁹ In Juan Carlos Meana, *El espacio entre las cosas*, p. 32.

²⁰ In Juan Carlos Meana, *El espacio entre las cosas*, p. 45.

the other in the image of the self²¹ and, in spite of this, the unity is not broken. Because if it is true that things make us, it is also true that we have the power to unmake them. In Juan Carlos Meana there is a purification that gives back the things to themselves; it is as if they lost their instrumental quality, even its natural quality, to reach their essential being, the smoothness and presence of an unusual growth and power and, however, they are still there, they are there – almost not being dealt with, but intractable –, separated from themselves, slipped to the other of them, and unified (gloriously and smoothly) in a vision, in a kind of vibration of the material. The vision has made the image, which is hinge where everything is created, from the empirical to the dreamt, and allows the fluctuation from the needy need to the levitating extension, from the gravity to the grace.

To this way of communication of everything with everything, a true communion with the Whole, the achievement of a sensitive meaning of the world, he called *quietness*, contemplative passage, from which, no doubt, Juan Carlos Meana's sensitivity is not far. Contemplative passage that also means desertion of epic maximalisms, first of all that of the self, then that which has to do with the present and its deeds with their huge adventurous rumour. Therefore, the more we forget and the earlier we learn the renunciation to the love for ourselves and to the value of things, the farther we reach²². Painful discipline in the *apatheia* (aspiration to the perfect impassive nature that some Meana's works shape so well), severe quietness, humbleness and detachment. Joy and trembling of the void, of the detachment. Since in the image as well, pleasure and pain go hand in hand; when we look at it, we feel the anguish of non-being, or of being another, and the delight of the improvement, of a renaissance. Oddly enough, the work is, therefore, shelter and tempest, temple and *zulo* (hole, hiding-place), it fixes us to a kind of still and unique pain, and it makes it bigger as a framing of an inner landscape, but, at the same time, it clamours for the light, for the dawn of the vision; by means of the work, that wound which is living deepens, it becomes figure

²¹ In J.A. Valente, "Pasma de Narciso", in *Variaciones sobre el pájaro y la red. Precedido de La piedra y el centro*, Tusquets, Barcelona, 1991, p. 22.

²² Thus, we read in the *Guía Espiritual* by Miguel de Molinos: That one who does not try the total negation of himself will not be truly withdrawn and will never be part of the truth and of the lights of the spirit. (Miguel de Molinos, *Guía Espiritual*, Alianza, Madrid, 1989, prologue and notes by J.A. Valente, chapter XVIII, paragraph 171, p. 165).

and, on doing so, it heals its injures, it cleanses its wounds²³. Thus, the work is cloth and *shroud*, white shroud, and canvas that purifies. Robe of light and embalming crêpe. Other ruins above the ruin itself keep a puzzled memory from that atavistic pain, alien to any causality: remains of the ill body, blind appendixes that hang denoting the plumb of the misfortune²⁴, pointing to some mysterious meaning in space, in a balance and silence close to the fluency of dreams, extending its way towards the inaccessible place par excellence: the centre. Nevertheless, it shows its yearning to stay in its remain, in its lying dislocated with regard to a fixed and definite centre. When searching for that place that turns into centre, things get paralysed as if in ecstasy; there is an echo of the memory of what they were and of the embryo of what they are about to be; they become traces that sort out the enigma; they exude memory and become an echo in us, silenced music as if it was an imminent evocation (or a millenary remembrance) of the impossible, the absolute retired, of that secret centre like the muddy bottom of a well or of a tank. Or, just, with the unrealisable transparency – because it is concentrated – of the water in a vase. Figure of perfection.

This perfection always rests before the dawn, beyond the last canvas or veil; it is like the path or the location through which things transmigrate and it is within them like the image at the bottom of the mirror, which can not be separated, that is, exhibited as an effigy, as a figure, but maybe known by intuition under the shape of something that is about to come, guessed among the sparkles of a conscience that glows in super-nature, or, on the contrary, mournfully evoked, in the manner of a space that perfection adorned, touched and left, like memory does when evoking images of distance. In a sort of cyclical emotion (and of vision) that cleanses all images and things, that changes their order, that charges objects and their space with intensity aspiring to that impossible quietness which is turning each place into the centre of a perfect circle, the imposing concentration of the deep bottom of a humble cup made of white earthenware. When experience was closed in that supreme container, it and the world itself, that is, what is related to that container, would remain polarised, motionless, magnetised in the beatitude of a perfect, round time. The artist aspires to this quiet and joyful vision. The

²³Then, we could state that looking for the clarity of spaces is looking for a determined and concrete relation between things, a space sincerity that creates and put us in the place, our place, the centre from which we can observe the objects and the world. (Juan Carlos Meana, *El espacio entre las cosas*, p. 48).

²⁴ Ignacio Castro, “El envés de los héroes”, in Juan Carlos Meana, *Yaceres*, Galería Trayecto, Vitoria, 1997, p. 7.

fact that the work exist may only be nothing but the testimony that it is remembered, and that each work represents nothing but the failed attempt on clearness, an imperishable attempt to close this circle, copying it, drawing the warnings that things send us through the look, the tracks that come from the heart. The work is the presence of that longing; in its mirror, it feeds the remembrance (and the remorse) of a reborn life whose geometrical measure has been lost.

Because it does not seem to be likely that we ever feel completely at home in this world, Juan Carlos Meana points out; the distance between the things and the look, when our eyes are blinded by the ground or by the sand, and certainties decrease. And always hoping for the possibility of the sphere, the brightness of the magic mirror, the miracle of the stability as an endless possibility that shines at every turn of the sight, in every window or privacy of the container; always emotionally watching the same image from different spots, in the humble sequence of instants and their looks, dimmed until it is wiped out in the shroud woven by the tyrannical plot of the game between knowledge and the unknown, the unveiling and the opacity, the ascending curve and the fall, the gathering light and the avoiding shadow, the remembrance and the void , the destruction and the sparkle. Meana fills in this game with responsibility and mystery, creating a translucent landscape where things bathe in eternity by means of a light and whiteness never used before, immaterial, almost supernatural; an emanation of silence where omens, predictions and punishments are accompanied by the quietness of the images that disappeared in the mirrors without destination. No doubt, it is a refined landscape, embalmed by the very light waving of white robes and uncertain spotlights, and the motionless suspension of the remains like memories of useless, dry, fragmented intrahistories, turned into ground by a fire in torment, by damp and deep remembrances that do not renew. That desolation is crossed by a diffuse, penitent conscience that draws a strictly spiritual, almost empirical, logic, by non-uttered rumours that hardly tell stories that look at us from the bottom of a sleepless well. Broken actions, and innocent and blind stories that keep the rumour of the tragic, the resonance of a mythic voice that talks from the birth of crying and the bow of the original like a scar, or a seed, or the ecstatic grain where the desert of the instants begins.

This work loves its enigma, loves the solar inspiration that destroys it, it recognises itself in the mud and in the failed metamorphoses. Captive in the look and in

the guess, in the impossible image of the background of the mirror; immutable in the hard search for its eluded unity, absent; called everlastingly, allusively, allegorically, even abusively in its weak precariousness, in its changing transhumance of slight appearances and tremendous disappearances, in its vane happening, and in its hermetic and cleansing joy, in its sands of thirst and in the silo of its desires.

But even in the pain and in the voice of the mud, due to the embrace of emptiness, Meana's work exudes a kind of redemption. His solar influence is greater than his dark tension. We could even talk a will to change: the author turns his work into a laboratory to design a *method* – in the ancient, classical sense of the word –: a way of mental and vital transformation at the end of which there should have to be produced something similar to a purification. The second law of thermodynamics, entropy, becomes a moral reading for Meana. As Simone Weil highlighted, by virtue of gravity all the objects and yearnings go to pieces, weaken. That is the law of nature. As opposed to this force of destruction, it seems as if, miraculously, some bodies, some objects were able to resist from the total precariousness. Precisely, embracing that emptiness, that destruction. Emptying from the world – the French thinker wrote. Assuming the status of slave. Reducing ourselves to the point that we fill in time and space. To nothing. Getting rid of the imaginary rule of the world. Absolute loneliness. It is then that we possess the truth of the world²⁵. As opposed to a millenary tradition that identifies the being with the good and the evil with the void, in Juan Carlos Meana's (and in Simone Weil's or Miguel de Molinos') opinion, illness is in the heroes; it is necessary to recover from that. The evil seems to be related to the strength and to the being, while the good belongs to the family of the weakness and of the void: We search ourselves whenever we go out from the void, and that is why we never reach but the quiet and perfect contemplation. Enter the truth of your void and you will worry about nothing; on the contrary, you will humble and confuse yourself, and you will lose sight of your own reputation and esteem. (Miguel de Molinos²⁶). From the fall and the crisis, we expect and we long for the re-balance, for the restitution of the damage caused by the misfortune or by the pain that afflicts us and in which we are. The work tells this compensation in the dimension of the imagery, but when showing it in the imagery, it

²⁵ Simone Weil, "Desapego", in *La gravedad y la gracia*, Trotta, Madrid, 1994, translated by Carlos Ortega, p. 63.

²⁶ *Guía espiritual*, paragraph 189, p. 169.

carries it out (as if it was the Aristotelian catharsis): the work literally *bears* the crisis in order to undertake its recovery or, at least, the promise of its overcoming. The work is the space where this desolation spreads and reaches its *clinamen*, its culminating point, that of the greatest painful stress. That of the greatest generosity, as well. As Nietzsche wanted, the work is there so that the knowledge of truth does not annihilate us, so that this deep truth does not destroy us. Art does not have to constitute a consolation or an illusion that would protect us from the mortal truth or from not knowing what we are. On the contrary, all bottoms – even sinking in the truth of our enigma – should belong to art so that what makes us touch bottom does not totally belong to the realm of the mundane truth. Simone Weil would correctly say that it is precisely owing to art that we are allowed to love the absolute through destruction²⁷. That is its law, and its ethics. Its silence makes our screams more bearable: its smoothness calls, attracts, tragically links, reconciles and harmonises the impossible in a difficult situation (as a request, then). It begins the cure of the indomitable wound, when giving it space, its space, its empty place, its *for-itself*: its echo. It does not provide the ruin with consolation, but with flight, spotlight, light. The work is a white crêpe of life. A method of cleansing healing, a point to raise over the wells and the daily wounds and, at the same time, and likewise because of that, it is only created from an asceticism where emptiness and blindness are accepted, from conforming to *less* and swallowing the sand of the deserts. As Simone Weil said, grace – a necessary principle in order to lose gravity – is only possible there where there is an emptiness to receive it. An aimless waiting and desire, free from beliefs, without heroes, almost without contents, pure emptiness: Separating our desire from all goods, and wait. Experiences teaches that such a waiting is fruitful. Then, the absolute good is acquired. For everything, and beyond a particular aim – no matter what purpose it is –, wanting in emptiness, wanting emptiness. Because an emptiness is, for us, that good that we can neither represent nor define. But that emptiness is fuller than all the full²⁸. The work draws and shelters this emptiness, that destruction, ruin or wound, in the same way that Rosalía de Castro's nail (or Machado's thorn) exist (and they know that they exist) by means of the crisis, by means of pain. The work is from its suffering. Beautiful bowl of sorrow. Meana knows that it is not a question of either denying pain or shaping its regret; it is a question of making the most of it. The miseries

²⁷ In *La gravedad y la gracia*, p. 64.

of the body and soul become opportunities, recondite and strange vantage points of psychic and moral elevation: Simone Weil, that tenacious and helpless creature, wrote that boredom is one of the most precious miseries granted to men, as a stair to climb up.

This same calligraphy of dislocated beauty arranges the features of Juan Carlos Meana's work.

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²⁸ In *La gravedad y la gracia*, p. 64.