

The Conspiracy of the Zombies

by Alvaro Mutis

Never before in the course of human life on the Earth has man been more alone, more isolated from his fellow man, more vexed by his own inventions which are destined to erase the last traces of humanity in him. It is now, in this time, when the supposed virtues of a communication constitute the gravest, most brutal and efficient attack against the human condition that so moved Malraux. Until not long ago, less than a century, man was accustomed to communicating with his fellow through the direct impact of his living voice, the warmth of his skin, the flash of his eyes, the glow of his humor. None of these tools of communication are inclined toward the lying and institutionalized deceit that characterize the ceaseless and unmeasured electronic media. They don't show the least consideration for the intimacy that each man keeps inside so as to offer it as a proof of love or as an argument to affirm his being in the world, *-sein im der Welt-* of which Heidegger spoke. Justifications in defense of this conspiracy of apparatus that has begun to try to feel and express for us do not seem valid to me in the face of the irreparable damage that it causes us. And all this with the blessing of those naïve inheritors of the nineteenth century, *the idiot century* as Leon Daudet called it, that no longer awaken from the toxic illusion of a "radiant future" which was promised with false conviction and for which we have ended up paying a suicidal price.

I was speaking the other day with a university professor from the United States who made this terrifying confession to me: "Every day," he said, "my students frighten me with their air of empty 'robots' moved by basic instincts that are not even found in animals. In class they are no longer capable of formulating the simplest question. They remain absorbed, looking toward a desolate nothingness, and that look pursues me, even in my dreams." The transcription of this testimony is literal, I assure you. In trying to discover the origin of this hopeless dehumanization of a youth that in short order will hold the reins of the world, we arrived, my friend and I, at the conviction that it resides in great measure in the proliferation of the famous electronic media. They have nothing to communicate other than a mediatized (the word fits like a ring on the finger) surrender to an imposter consumer paradise, that vast "supermarket" in which we founder without recourse. Was that the "radiant future" that the false prophets of the past century promised us? I refuse to believe that they even had the imagination to foresee such a horror. Let us recall the words of the French historian and orientalist René Grousset at the beginning of his *Balance de l'Histoire*. "After Dachau, after Buchenwald, after Auschwitz" -I would add Hiroshima and Vietnam- "we no longer have the right to harbor any illusion about the beast that sleeps in man..." The desolating propagation of electronic media, the so-called informatics, generously feeds that beast.

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(Translated by Timothy Keating. Franklin College Switzerland)