

ANNULMENT
OF THE END OF THINGS

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A one-act play by Aleksandra Chaushova

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

The Official Speaker

The Architect

The Lover

The Mortician (Monsieur Michel)

A Reader (Notes on the number of visitors / A dream)

A Group of Children (The oath)

The Concierge

The Passer-by

A Group of Ministers (Council of Ministers)

SCENE:

The Building

THE OFFICIAL SPEAKER:

Ladies and Gentlemen, National Representatives,

The end of things has commonly been considered as a sad or unpleasant occasion. It has been haunting humanity for thousands of years. It could be recognized behind any other kind of fear that humans experience.

The fear of abandonment or the end of affection. The fear of enclosed spaces or the end of air, the coffin. The fear of open spaces or the end of security. The fear of animals or the end of the humane. The fear of sharp objects or the end of integrity. The fear of hair and dirty hands or the end of purity. The fear of the unknown or the end of experience. Actually, all of these represent a fear of death. The end of things makes them meaningless; beyond it there is no-thing.

Ladies and Gentlemen, National Representatives,

The end of things is our most ferocious enemy. Its abstract character makes it subtle; its all-encompassing nature makes it inevitable. Until recently, we thought that the end of things was eternal.

Now we believe that the time to react and resist has come. That is why the Government will fight firmly and consistently to tame decay and to annul the end of things.

Imagine your new life – no more loss.
No more separations.
No more forgotten knowledge.
No more ends of empires.
A static universe.

The time is ours. In several minutes we will stop the future and fix the present. Therefore, as of today, we abolish the end of things.

Ladies and Gentlemen, National Representatives,

THE ARCHITECT:

The Building is designed so that it can keep a constant temperature and level of humidity. Its main functions are to preserve and to display.

It is a building organized around a body. The Body on display forms the inner center of the Building. It is positioned in a hermetic box, repeating its size; every wall is a repetition of the outline of the box. In another anthropomorphic repetition, the colors recall those of skin and flesh: the outer walls are covered with white stone; the inside is faced entirely with red granite. The floor is made of black marble. Lines of white marble, as arteries, lead to the main hall.

The underground level is fully dedicated to the processes of preservation, apart from a small space containing the lifting mechanism for the hermetic box. (The lift is the connection between the visible and the invisible presence of the Body. It permits a moment of apparition or a mechanically sustained miracle.) Even though the Body is absent most of the time, the space is organized for its possible presence. A bath full of chemical fluid as well as a table for draining, among other utilities, is situated in a spacious hall; everything awaits its center.

As in a vortex, the choreography of the Building leads in concentric circles to the Body: the garden, the outer terrace, the stairs, the podium, the corridor, the turn, the main hall, the box. The sources of light are hidden so that, as in an old religious painting, the light seems to be emanating from the Body.

THE LOVER:

My beloved,

I dream that the Building will be finished soon, so I can see you. The work here is very intense; some of us are already falling apart under the pressure. Rows of bricks wait for us every morning and we continue building during the night under the light of projector lamps. The other night we were obliged to work half-immersed in water, as the foundations were flooded. I took off the leather shoes you gave me and went barefoot into the greasy mud. I thought of you even then, in my hardest hours.

Oh, how I wish you could be close to me now! I go as far as to wish you could turn into a piece of furniture. Then you could be here with me. A smooth mahogany table. A tender, tender sofa. I would relax my hips on you and in the hot weather my skin would stick to your surface. I would move you to different corners, take you everywhere I go. The madman you saw the other day, walking around with his rocking chair, is in love, but nobody knows – and so I would be. I would often wipe the dust off your velvet. I would dismantle you and feel the joy of observing your interior.

Once you said you dreamed of eternal love and here it is: in the eternity of matter, whatever didn't start breathing won't ever stop.

Ever thine,
Ever mine,
Ever ours,

THE MORTICIAN (MONSIEUR MICHEL):

Like an object? Ha, I don't know if you have ever touched a dead person, but they are stiff, and they become even stiffer when they are embalmed. Because that precisely is the function of the embalming fluid: it firms the tissues and, being itself pink, adds some color to the body. As a result, skin hardens too, and therefore it's not possible to use regular make-up. In fact, the big trick is the shadows – you are used to seeing that person erect and now you should see them lying down, and the shadows are completely different, so we try to make them seem natural.

In this case though, the lying position of the Body is its constant one.

Every 18 months our team performs an embalming. The Body is undressed and then put into a bath filled with 300 liters of embalming fluid. We add some weight to it, in the form of small bags full of glass beads, so that it doesn't rise to the surface. After having stayed there for 40 days, the Body is dried and we put tampons soaked with the fluid inside the abdominal cavity. We use a first layer of garments made out of latex so that it doesn't evaporate. Afterwards – cotton underwear, and finally a new suit, made especially by the Body's personal tailor.

NOTES ON THE NUMBER OF VISITORS:

By the 25th of August a total number of 7,689,012 persons had visited the Building.

Friday, 30th August:

Today the Building was open for regular visits between 15 and 18h. A total number of 1,846 persons visited. On duty (signature).

Sunday, 1st September:

Today the Building was open for regular visits between 15 and 18h. A total number of 2,055 persons visited. On duty (signature).

Wednesday, 4th September:

Today the Building was open for regular visits between 15 and 18h. A total number of 1,753 persons visited. On duty (signature).

Note: today a child had a bowel movement in front of the exit of the Building. I made a remark to his parents (foreigners), but they just went away, waving their hands.

A DREAM:

I'm looking at a dead man's naked body lying on a table. I know that he is looking at me too, observing his body. "I can see your body, but you can't see me."

THE ARCHITECT:

The classical order relates to the proportions of a human body. It undoubtedly left beautiful ruins. However, here the Body will exist eternally and in proportion; the Building would never collapse.

THE OATH:

In the dearest memory of our wise leader, teacher, and father, we swear a sacred youth oath: the Body's cause shall live forever in our hearts. [...] We shall serve our heroic people valiantly and loyally as the Body served it. We shall be staunchly loyal to the great Party of the Building, we shall tenaciously learn from it. [...] We swear that with the Body's will and zeal, with the Party of the Building in the lead, we shall build a mighty country. We swear to cultivate within us the Body's virtues, to grow up as a fearless and firm, honest and truthful, brisk and modest, strong and cultured new generation worthy of the Body.

THE CONCIERGE:

I would never have doubts, but some happen to say that there is no Body at all, that actually only a real head and hands are displayed, and the body is wooden or made out of plaster with a skin color. That it works like this: they only change the costume for a new one every now and then, and it covers everything else. Others claim that in fact a plastic torso exists only for the sake of regulating the invisible light in the hall.

But who knows?

THE PASSER-BY:

The other day I heard that a woman became part of a wall for fear of passing time. According to her, as time is space and movement, by stopping movement she would stop time. Consequently, she took up less and less space, first using only the kitchen and the bathroom in her apartment, then a single room, then only a chair, until ultimately she limited herself to the side wall, to the point of merging with it. When time passed by, there were only a few wrinkles on the wall but no other visible signs of decay.

A DREAM:

Someone is lying in a bed. I lift the bedcover abruptly, only to find that the body is missing. Only the head and the legs are showing beneath it, cut at the edges. Only the necessary is to be seen.

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS:

Decision number 148

From the 17th of July XXXX

Upon the demand of the son and other relatives of the Body, and having in mind the recommendations of the Public Commission for the Building,

THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS DECIDED:

1. The remains of the Body are to be conceded to the family for inhumation. The inhumation will be organized by the Executive Committee of the Municipal Council and the National Security Service related to the Ministry of Defense.
2. The Executive Committee of the Municipal Council must submit to the Council of Ministers a proposal concerning the further use of the Building.
3. The end of things is to be re-established for lack of other sources of creation.

Chairman of the Council of Ministers: (signature)

Secretary in Chief of the Council of Ministers: (signature)

Published on the occasion of the Faber-Castell International Drawing Award 2015 at
the Neues Museum – State Museum for Art and Design in Nuremberg

English translation edited by Jacqueline Todd

