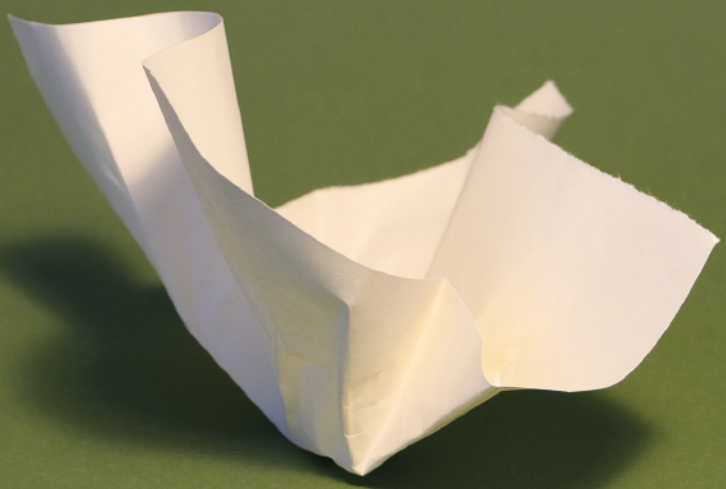
IFILNOVA

ESSAYS ON VALUES

VOLUME 2

Maria João Mayer Branco
João Constâncio (Eds.)



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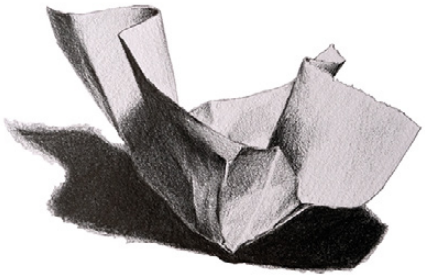

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Editorial Note

These three volumes, entitled *Essays On Values*, bring together forty-one recent articles by researchers at the Nova Institute of Philosophy (IFILNOVA). They are a small sample of everything that, in the last four years, the Institute's researchers have published, in English, in indexed journals and collections of essays with peer review. As a whole, they reflect very well the research work that is done at IFILNOVA.

Section I. of ***Volume 1*** gathers six articles that deal directly with the question "what are values?", the question that guides all the work of the institute's different laboratories and research groups. The first article, by Susana Cadilha and Vítor Guerreiro, results from work developed in the Laboratory of Ethics and Political Philosophy (EPLab); the second, by João Constâncio, from the Lisbon Nietzsche Group; the third, by Alexandra Dias Fortes, from the Lisbon Wittgenstein Group; the third and fifth, by Nuno Fonseca, and Maria Filomena Molder, from the Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Group of the Laboratory of Culture and Value (CultureLab); the last, by Erich H. Rast, from the Philosophy of Language and Argumentation Theory Group and the Lisbon Mind, Cognition & Knowledge Group of the Laboratory of Argumentation, Cognition, and Language (ArgLab).

Section II. brings together three articles by members of the Lisbon Nietzsche Group. Since 2010, the Lisbon Nietzsche Group has completed several funded projects, and has established itself as a leading international research group on Nietzsche's thought. The three articles demonstrate the crucial importance of the question of values in Nietzsche's work, always thought from the perspective of the possibility of a "transvaluation of all values". Maria João Mayer Branco's article focuses on the value of introspection, and how Nietzsche anticipates Wittgenstein's "expressivist" view of the "the Peculiar Grammar of the Word 'I'" and the impossibility of private languages. Marta Faustino's article considers the theme of affirmation and the value of life through the interpretation of Nietzsche's reflection on truthfulness, intellectual honesty and courage in the light of Michel Foucault's work on *parrhesia*. Pietro Gori's article studies how Nietzsche creates a new anthropological

ideal based on his enquiry into the values of the "good European".

The area of Wittgenstein studies has had a strong influence on the institute since the time when it was a philosophy of language institute. The Wittgensteinian distinction between facts and values was decisive in defining the question of values as the central issue of IFILNOVA's research project, replacing the focus on philosophy of language. More recently, the focus of research at the Lisbon Wittgenstein Group has been on epistemic values, in particular in their connection with the question of religious belief. In **Section III.**, Nuno Venturinha's article examines, in the light of an epistemological standpoint, the way Wittgenstein thinks about the possibility of translation. Robert Vinten's article argues that Wittgenstein's thought contains elements for a critique of the concept of justice and of the liberal political visions of both Richard Rorty and Chantal Mouffe, despite the fact that both have drawn inspiration from Wittgenstein. Benedetta Zavatta's article questions the value of mythology by thinking of it as a disease of language — not only in Wittgenstein, but also in a whole philosophical tradition that preceded him.

The existence of a research group in ancient philosophy is a recent but very promising development in the life of IFILNOVA. **Section IV.** includes two articles by members of the group. Paulo Alexandre Lima's article considers the critique of misology and the value of discourse in Plato's *Phaedo*. Hélder Telo's article examines the pedagogical and protreptic value of imperfection in Plato's work.

Section I. of ***Volume 2*** includes seven articles by researchers working on questions of aesthetics at CultureLab. Three of these articles, by Ana Falcato, Bartholomew Ryan and Tatiana Salem Levy, show how important the study of the relationship between philosophy and literature is at the Institute. Several of the CultureLab researchers investigate the possibility that the philosophical concept of "value" implies a transformation of lived values into objects of knowledge and instrumental calculation, and that literature, especially in authors such as Joyce or Coetzee, has always known how to avoid this kind of objectification. Bartholomew Ryan's article is also linked to that of Nélio Conceição. Both resulted from the research work carried out in the funded project OBRA — Fragmentation and Reconfiguration: the experience of the city between art and philosophy, coordinated by Maria

Filomena Molder and Nélio Conceição. The articles by Maile Colbert and Ana Godinho deal with questions concerning aesthetic values from the point of view of sound and drawing, respectively. João Lemos' article is a perfect example of the work that is done on Kant at the Institute, in particular on the relationship between aesthetic values and moral values.

Because film studies is a research area that mobilises a very significant number of researchers at IFILNOVA, it has been separated from the other research areas in Aesthetics for over ten years now, and is explored in an autonomous laboratory, CineLab. The articles in **Section II.** showcase the work that has been done in this area. The articles by Stefanie Baumann, Patrícia Castello-Branco, Paulo Stellino, Susana Nascimento Duarte and Susana Viegas reveal the importance of film studies for the research on fundamental authors in the history of philosophy, such as Kant, Adorno, Wittgenstein, Deleuze, or Foucault, but also the autonomously philosophical character of the works of fundamental authors in the history of cinema, such as Herzog, Straub/Huillet, Faroki or Manoel de Oliveira. The article by Gabriele De Angelis is the result of work carried out in the Ethics and Politics Laboratory (EPLab) but has been included in this section because it is an example of the intersection between laboratories of the institute, as it uses three films to discuss a crucial political issue of our time, the migration and refugee crisis in Europe.

IFILNOVA began as an institute for the philosophy of language. The question of values became the institute's central theme at a time when the philosophy of language was still the dominant area of study of the majority of its researchers. It was also at that time – around 2011 _ that the institute created the ArgLab and started to specialise in argumentation theory and mind and reasoning. ArgLab very quickly gained international recognition in this area. The articles in **Section I.** of ***Volume 3*** belong to this context. They all deal with Argumentation and Language. The article by Marcin Lewinski and Pedro Abreu and the article by Dima Mohammed and Maria Grazia Rossi mirror well the work developed by the institute in the area of argumentation and applied logic, in particular regarding the value issues raised by the COVID-19 crisis. The separate article by Maria Grazia Rossi is a case of the practical application of the theory of metaphor to the field of healthcare communication, a theme that has been

heavily funded in projects carried out at the Arglab. The article by Giulia Terzian and Maria Inês Corbalán is emblematic of the intersection between linguistics and philosophy in the conceptual research about language.

The four articles in **Section II.** deal with questions concerning ethical and political values. Although from very different perspectives, the articles by Erik Bordeleau and Giovanbattista Tusa have in common a critique of capitalism and a questioning of its values. The discussion of political correctness in Filipe Nobre Faria's article and that of the concept of a People in Regina Queiroz's are investigations into the values of liberal democracies and how best to defend them.

The emotions, embodiment and agency are three themes of great importance in the work of several researchers at the institute. The link between these themes and the question of values is evident when one considers values as something that, far from being a mere abstraction or mental construct, is constitutive of the individual and collective life of human beings. The three themes are present in all the articles in **Section III.** The articles by Dina Mendonça and Robert W. Clowes have in common that they deal with the question of the depth of the mind. But the former approaches it from the perspective of the philosophy of emotions, the latter from the perspective of the philosophy of cognition. The article by Fabrizio Macagno, Chrysi Rapanta, Elisabeth Mayweg-Paus and Mercè Garcia-Milà deals with the concept of empathy as both an emotion and a value. The articles by António de Castro Caeiro and Luís Aguiar de Sousa reflect on the nature of the emotions, embodiment and agency in the light of the study of key moments in the history of Western philosophy: in the first case, the phenomenology of boredom in the work of Martin Heidegger; in the second, the metaphysics of Arthur Schopenhauer. Alberto Oya's article reflects on the nature and value of the religious experience. This article is published here for the first time, and so is Benedetta Zavatta's in volume one. Most articles in this collection have been originally published in Open Access journals, but some are republished here with the permission of the editors, to whom we are thankful.

Maria João Mayer Branco
João Constâncio

I.
Aesthetics

Sounding the Archives:

Sounding the Past towards a Future Living Archive

Maile Colbert

Colbert, M. (2022, August 30).
Sounding the archives: Sounding the past towards a future living archive.
PHILDOC. https://phildoc.fcsh.unl.pt/sounding-the-archives-sounding-the-past-towards-a-future-living-archive/

Silence and Silent Film, A Voice From the Past, Towards Future Memory:

FIG. 1
Still-frame from *The Motherhood Archives* (2013).
Permission from the filmmaker.

I would like to address the importance of sound and the archive by initially speaking of silence. Our most famous "silence" in the art world could arguably be 4'33" (1947-48) by composer John Cage. 4 minutes and 33 seconds of a pianist at a piano, hands still, keys untouched, piano unsounded…the idea of still, of doing nothing, of a neutral state…"no neutral surface, no neutral discourse, no neutral theme, no neutral form. Something is neutral only with respect to something else. (Sontag, 1969: IV). Nothing is not what happens; the work is not about hearing silence, but about listening actively to your surroundings. Years later from conceiving this work the composer had had a chance to experience the closest earthly (and manmade) thing we have to real silence, in an anechoic chamber on the Harvard University campus in 1951. Cage later stressed when asked about the experience that, "there is no such thing as silence. Something is always happening that makes sound" (Cage, 1967: 117), and describes how in the chamber he heard both his blood circulating as well as his nervous system operating. The concept of silence implies its opposite, demanding its presence within what we perceive as absence. (Sontag, 1969: IV). Even our memories persist an implied soundtrack if we take that time and focus with them; a memory of a childhood forest though biologically silent has a very specific wind heard through its trees, through its soundtrack.

FIG. 2
Still-frame from *The Birdpeople* (2004).
Permission from the filmmaker.

In the Macaulay Library of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, there as a recording of the critically endangered to extinct bird, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, made by Doctor Author Allen in 1935[1]. There is a pause in the beginning of the track, a "silence" where we hear the sound of the recording medium itself…ghostly and crackling through time and wear, the medium, for a moment speaks for itself. Through that trumpets the call of a bird gone, then its bill against a tree. More follow, it is not alone; at the time of the recording it was rare, but still not alone. In that time and technology, sound and image were yet to be married by medium, and there exists in archives bits and pieces of the history of this species…a photo here, and illustration there. I found a film that was shot the same year of this recording[2]. Submerged in a shroud of beautifully aged black and white grain, our ghost bird pecks at a tree silently. Separately. The library's mission statement reads:

> Our mission is to collect and preserve recordings of each species' behavior and natural history, to facilitate the ability of others to collect and preserve such recordings, and to actively promote the use of these recordings for diverse purposes spanning scientific research, education, conservation, and the arts[3].

1 http://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/6784/campephilus-principalis-ivory-billed-woodpecker-united-states-louisiana-arthur-allen

2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Qkc4HSKmJk

3 http://macaulaylibrary.org/about

The arts, listed with the same import as scientific research, education, and conservation. An artist sounding an archive with care, composition, and design can can allow place to speak, giving voice also to images, making those sounds and images together have a presence in our present. Filmmaker Michael Gitlin, in the production of his film "The Bird People", knew a recording would transfer within its experience sensory information to help guide his audience to feel and care for this woodpecker of the past. The Macaulay Library archive not only gave him that recording, but encouraged its use and context, writing:

> This film looks at birds and birders as curiosities—interweaving artistically rendered footage, sounds, and narrative: live birds and the people watching them; live birds and the people engaged in the scientific ritual of capturing and banding them; stuffed birds and the people who glean new knowledge from specimens. The tale of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker surfaces throughout in book passages, voiceovers of modern-day scientists, offbeat third-person commentary, and a foray into the field with a team of top birders looking for ivory-bills in the Pearl River area of Louisiana in 2002[4].

FIG. 3
Still-frame from *The Motherhood Archives* (2013).
Permission from the filmmaker.

4 http://www.birds.cornell.edu/ivory/featurepage/IBWO_movies

We watch Gitlin's closing scene, and regardless of any thought we had prior on collecting and collections, the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker comes to life for us as a voice of the past in contrast to the lifeless bodies also captured, once again, in front of us. The silent film speaks, blood and breath flow through that bird body. This is a voice from the past weaving through its many mausoleums, making a whole, a possible redemption, and a warning to the future. The Ivory-Billed Woodpecker, is for a moment given presence, giving weight to its silence, made more then a statistic. An archive can give a sound, a voice to the past, a call to the present, an advice for the future…the artist can help guide this.

> Out of deep dreamless sleep I was woken, startled by a hollow resonance, a sudden impact of wood on wood. Was the sound an isolated auditory event within my consciousness — a moment of dream without narrative or duration — or was it a real sound from the physical world? The reverberation time was too long for the sound to have emanated from the bedroom. This would imply a sound coming from somewhere else in the house, an echoing space, mysterious and distant. If that was the case, then I could only assume the presence of an intruder, unlikely as a possibility. The sound came from nowhere, belonged nowhere, so had no place in the world except through my description. (Toop, 2010: VII)

Our experience of sound with moving image is both pre-reflective as well as an intentional reflective act towards meaning, utilizing imagination as well as perception. When sounding image from the past, our experience is also one of an artistic inscription, and an author's sensory instruction.

FIG. 4
Photo of the wedding of Moana from the 1926 film *Moana*. 1960, Frances Hubbard Flaherty.
Copyright not renewed.

In 1923 filmmakers Robert and Frances Flaherty brought their children to an island called Savai'I in Samoa to live a year's time while they made their next feature film, after *Nanook*, to be called *Moana*. Similar to their film prior, and the film to come after, there are various staged and embellished elements to the film, leading it to be often called "docufiction", though at the time of its screening the word "documentary" was for the first time applied to cinema in a review. In 1975, Monica Flaherty, who was three at the time of the film's creation, returned to Savai'i with audio recording equipment and worked towards creating a soundtrack to her parents' film, including recording the soundscapes of the very village they lived and shot in, and dubbing in dialogue and singing in Samoan. With the consultation of many anthropologists, linguists, and other filmmakers, as well as her own childhood memories of the place, "Moana with Sound" was finished in 1980. Sadly the original film's negative was gone, and her 16mm copy of a copy of the 35mm print was already degrading. (Close, 2016) It wasn't until the 2014 New York Film Festival that a version that gave both aural and visual justice to the work would be screened, after much time and work from many people. The film opens with a quote from Frances Hubbard Flaherty, "Oh, if we could only take back with us the singing. Not the songs, but the singing".

There are always three tracks of audio present in the film's duration. A track of the soundscape of the island expands, encircles, and immerges us…wind through trees, bird song, rustling in grass, and so

on. Then a track of a scene's main activity focuses us into the narrative, whether talking, an animal passing, or other in-the-frame activity. The third track is reserved for traditional song, here and there throughout the film, giving us an emotional guidance and experience.

> The types of noises heard in this cut of "Moana" are so natural and believable that a layman wouldn't believe they were recorded five decades after the original capture of footage — and by a different person no less. The sounds heard as a few boys jump into the water, or as some women flatten the bark of a mulberry tree to fashion a dress, have been so accurately welded to the visuals -- in positioning and duration -- that the only logical way for Monica to obtain them would have been to recreate those scenes. (…) In general, sound adds immediacy to the images and changes the tone of several scenes completely. The images don't seem like exotic footage captured by a Western filmmaker sent to a faraway land; instead, it's like something is happening near us, and involving people just like us. (…) A famous sequence from the film depicts a snare. As the natives trap a boar, the beast screeches wildly and loudly, cries that are amplified and impossible to ignore in this cut. This is no longer a bemusing peek at a quaint ritual; it's a horrific scene that divides our sympathies. (Maheshwari, 2014)

Sounding the Past Towards a Future

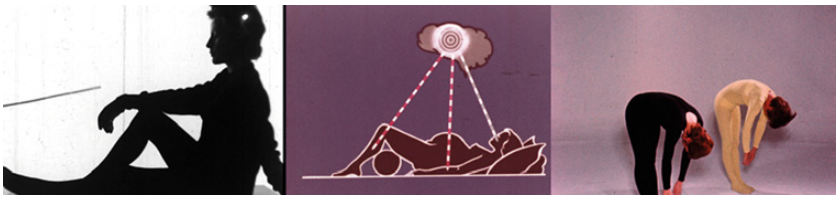

FIG. 5
Still-frames from *The Motherhood Archives* (2013).
Permission from the filmmaker.

The Motherhood Archives is a found footage assemblage of over 100 historic maternal education films that explores hidden histories of institutional motherhood and childbirth in the 20th century. While orphaned / archival visual materials are at the heart of the project, archival sound is equally central; the film's meticulously-assembled soundtrack, combining field recordings with archival and found sounds, was developed over years, intertwined at every stage with the visual assemblage, and is profoundly important to the ways that the film uses old and abandoned materials to generate new meanings, moods, and discourses[5].

A passive form of listening can be a submission to power. In sound design, sound moves you from within the frame to outside the frame, and there is a power in that, a power used often in the design for propaganda films to affect a large group of peoples' attention, perspective, and emotion at the same time. In an early critique on the sound design for *The Motherhood Archives*, the audience felt they were pulled away from the cultered miracle-of-life feeling around pregnancy and motherhood, with the perceived dark place of the sound drawing them into a sterile, medical history instead. This was intended. There was a concern towards

5 Colbert, Maile., & Irene Lusztig, 2014. "Sound Designing Motherhood: Irene Lusztig & Maile Colbert Open the Motherhood Archives". *Sounding Out!* Retrieved February 1, 2016, from http://soundstudiesblog.com/2014/03/17/sound-designing-motherhood/

an exploitation of sense, and a need for a critical aurality, for "current sensory productions always respond to current sensory, social, and political problems."(Heuson, 2015: 91) And this should be considered when using moving-image artifacts of the past. In designing the soundtrack, I worked towards a contrast against the original contexts of the films, which were propaganda. Just the separation from their archive didn't carry the needed information and critique of their origin, the original intent still worked. For their new context, and to problematize their old, they needed the affect, they needed the artist.

Frame and Immersion

> The perceptual 'something' is always in the middle of something else, it always forms a part of a 'field'". (Merleau-Ponty,1962: 4)

When I write of the archives here, and potential approaches of artists, and the potential of sound, I am writing almost exclusively with a concentration on film and video, and specifically in this writing sound's relationship with those mediums and the artists working with those mediums. My reasons have to do with the phenomenological nature of time-based media, and its relationship with time and memory, its ability to jump through time and space, to stitch together new times, new spaces. And it also has to do with our important and complex relationship with the frame, with the image within the frame, and the sound that carries us outside the frame.

We are push and pull from the beginning, in constant and fluid flux with our boundaries and restraints. A young human will test; will push to be pushed back, to know what boundaries surround them. Boundaries and borders are important to us, as much as we fantasize escaping them. A frame, as a structure, separates the inside from the outside. It creates a visible and tangible border that allows this to be visualized without touch, from afar if we rather. It keeps, it emphasizes, and it defines. We can choose to put something in it; it is a slice of the world we can control. It can shrink our world down to a size and state that we can handle, in which we can

investigate, in which we can master. It gives focus to the wandering eye. In language, it does the same for an idea, urging the plan, constructing the shape. In biology, it helps towards an idea of our physical body as a whole, how we see the shape of others and ourselves with our parts united. In film and video, it is the border that encompasses what the maker wants to be seen, and what is transmitted for the audience to see, the line around intention and perception. In film and video, it is also the static image - one of 24 per second, or 30 per second, or 50 per second, and so on – that in collaboration with our eye and mind, the persistence of vision, will create the illusion of movement, of change over time, so of time itself.

The frame in social science speaks of a social phenomenon involving a set of concepts and theory on how we organize each other and ourselves in reality. For example, a frame in thought could be an interpretation of reality, and a frame in communication could consist of the communication of that interpretation of reality between two actors. (Drukman, 2001: 225) The frame is postmodern, within all its antiquity. A 'schema of interpretation', collected through time and experience of biological and cultural influences, then utilized in the attempt to make sense of the world. It could it be that a frame actually increases the capacity for immersion, allowing us to focus and go inward and deeper into the visual. A frame can be a window, and if a frame is a window, it is an open window allowing its soundtrack and the soundscape of the interior and exterior to merge and expand, pushing and pulling us with it.

Sound and Immersion

Sound goes to the oldest, pre-reflective parts of our brain, in constant process. Sound design allows us to enter deeper and go outside borders and frames in visual works, playing a crucial role in transmitting an experience from most time-based media.

> In the same mental phenomenon in which the sound is present to our minds we simultaneously apprehend the mental phenomenon itself. What is more, we apprehend it in accordance with its dual nature insofar as it has the sound

> as content within it, and insofar as it has itself as content at the same time. We can say that the sound is the primary object of the act of hearing, and that the act of hearing itself is the secondary object. (Brentano, 1874: 179–180 [1973, 127–128]).

We have a relationship to biologically important sounds that hold information-bearing elements (IBE) within them, and it is theorized that responses to complex sounds and soundscapes (and for example, cinematic sound design) could be explained on the basis of these IBEs. (Suga,1992: 423-428) Most IBEs are generic acoustic patterns and sound elements, deceptively simple, and often even shared across-species, for example signaling danger, or communicating with one's dog. Sound, in all of its complexity between emission, receipt, and auditory percept, can cross many borders. What might create an IBE could also be culturally learned, and we have auditory cinematic expectations that can be used in deepening the narrative immersive experience. For example the crescendo of violins might signal to us that something unexpected, and possibly dark, is about to happen. And if a film scene takes place in an urban setting, part of how we place that is a police siren in the distance. We take this information in, quick and unnoticed, woven into the other cinematic information. Michel Chion speaks of sound in cinema as an added value:

> The expressive and/or informative value with which a sound enriches a given image, so as to create the definite impression (either immediate or remembered) that this meaning emanates "naturally" from the image itself. Added value is what gives the (eminently incorrect) impression that sound is unnecessary, that sound merely duplicates a meaning which in reality it brings about, either all on its own or by discrepancies between it and the image (Chion, 1994: 5)

Deleuze speaks of sound in cinema as a 'heautonomous sonorous image' that is on equal standing with the visual image. If the visual image is lacking in sound, sight and sound "become two autonomous components

of one audio-visual or, still further, two heautonomous sonorous images". (1989: 241) Either perspective holds sound's importance. Sound can extend, place can speak.

> Film sound is rarely appreciated for itself alone but functions largely as an enhancement of the visuals: by means of some mysterious perceptual alchemy, whatever virtues sound brings to film are largely perceived and appreciated by the audience in visual terms. The better the sound, the better the image. (Murch, 2000)

The use of sound design allows us consider outside of the screen, outside of the frame, outside of our usual perception of time and space; allowing the immersion that allows us to site for hours and follow a work. It both expands and immerses, from cinema to post-cinema, and can wrinkle or compress.

> The writer twists language, he makes it vibrate, embraces it and splits it in order to tear the percept out of the perceptions, the affect out of the affections, the sensation out of the opinion, with a view – hopefully- to that people that is still missing (...) this is the task of any art, and it is in the same way that painting and music tear out of colours and sounds the new chords, the plastic or melodic landscapes or the rhythmic characters that lift them up to the song of the earth or the cry of Men: that which constitutes the tone, the health, a visual or sound block. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991: 166-167)

When Rancière writes on this paragraph in his essay, "Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art" (2008: 4), he describes the link to a public artwork and human community as a "transformed sensation".

> What the artist does is weave a new sensory fabric by tearing percepts and affects out the perceptions and affections that

> constitute the fabric of ordinary experience. Weaving this new fabric means creating a form of common expression, or a form of expression of the community, namely 'the song of the earth or the cry of men'. What is common is 'sensation'. The human beings are tied together by a certain sensory fabric, I would say a certain distribution of the sensible, which defines their way of being together and politics is about the transformation of the sensory fabric of the 'being together'. (Rancière, 2008: 3)

Humanity tied together by a network of woven sensation, like a shared soundscape that brings both information as well as experience, that weaves through time and space. Rancière speaks of a vibration "speaking to the ears of the future", transmitting protest, suffering, and struggle. Artists have that ability to pluck those threads in that "sensory fabric" and cause vibrations that ripple through time. "The artists voice of the people is the voice of the people to come". They "superimpose to that sensorium another sensorium organized around that which is specific to their own power, sound, and absence. Staging a conflict between the two sensory worlds" (2008: 4). Bridging and joining and tying and knotting different times and everything a document of time can carry, this is what sounding an archive can do, and what artists can do in an archive.

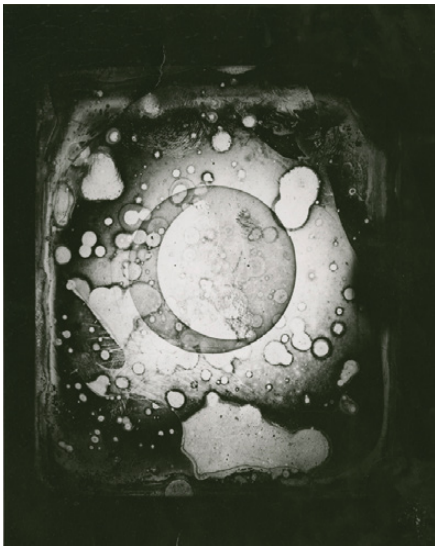

FIG. 6
Oldest photograph (daguerreotype image) of the moon, John William Draper, 1839.

When we look up at the night sky, somewhere distant enough from the bleed of urban lights, we witness a living archive of light splayed out before us. A projection of the past Universe, not the one we share within our actual present in which we are witnessing it, but the receiving end of the rippling event of the image's original emmision. Stars long dead and cold, stars exploded or imploded, stars of different colors in their stages of mortality…the image we are watching has already happened and has already changed drastically. That original moment we think we are witnessing has moved on, and even further from us as the Universe expands away, like the Angel of History, looking back in despair as it continues into the future. (Benjamin, IX).

It is an image of the past that fuels us with the desire to create narratives of gods and angels, the power to shrink us down to nothing and make us question existence itself, that allows us to project our own humanity upon it. An image from the past, now no longer. But living and present in our own experience of it, that is how we perceive and feel it, that power and that narrative coming from within us. This is a living archive. And as we travel further into it with both our imaginations and technology, we are beginning to have more and more the ability to even listen to it, and for it to be heard.[6]

6 The sonification of the stars through NASA's Kepler project, a building living archive: http://kepler.nasa.gov/multimedia/Audio/sonification/

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The City as *Spielraum*: Play, Aesthetic Experience and Politics in Urban Space

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Outlining a framework

How can a city be understood and experienced as a space with "room-for-play" or a "space for free play" (*Spielraum*)? In what way does this space involve aesthetic experiences? Given that cities are shared and collective spaces, what is the political significance of "free play"? These are some of the questions that will guide the following chapter. Considering urban design's tendency toward functionalism and homogeneity, thinking about "spaces for free play" becomes all the more pertinent: it allows us to envisage ways of breaking this logic while furthering the heterogeneity of the social fabric and strengthening democratic life. Understood as the participation of citizens in the discussions and decisions that determine individual and collective life, the latter can be said to complement – or consolidate – the formal mechanisms of representation in democratic regimes. "Space for free play" can positively influence democratic life by prioritising inhabitants' use of space over idealised urban design and by counteracting the negative effects of capitalism and other power relations on city life. Its disruptive strength may involve artistic practices and aesthetic experiences that allow for the transfiguration of space.

In the context of my proposal, aesthetics should be taken in a broad sense, i.e., as the study of perception and sensitivity (closer to the meaning of the Greek word *aesthesis*), and therefore as irreducible to art theory. Against this background, play emerges from the outset as a complex intersection of aesthetic, social and political issues. The polysemic German notion of *Spielraum* provides a rich theoretical model for investigating this intersection, since it implies a relationship between rules and free movement within rules, which is also a defining feature of playing and games in general. My main goal is thus to present a theoretical framework around the notions of play and *Spielraum* by delving into the works of key urban philosophers: Walter Benjamin, Guy Debord and the Situationists, Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. Following on from this, I will present two case studies from architecture and art, the first concerning Aldo van Eyck's Amsterdam playgrounds and the second the work of the Belgian artist Francis Alÿs. In different ways, they are perfect

examples of the intersection between aesthetic, social and political issues in urban "room-for-play", and together they allow us to inquire into the connection between aesthetics and democratic life.

Walter Benjamin and the urban *Spielraum*

One early writer who worked on this intersection was Walter Benjamin.[1] One need only recall *The Arcades Project* (1999) and *Berlin Childhood around 1900* (2002a), which focus on Paris and Berlin respectively, to recognise how deeply modern metropolises influenced his thinking and writing.[2] Like Siegfried Kracauer and Ernst Bloch, he belongs to a generation of thinkers who engaged theoretically with the urban experience, exploring forms of writing capable of integrating and expressing the rhythm and the fragmentation of their contemporary cities. Georg Simmel's work and teaching had a strong influence on all three thinkers, providing them with the tools to combine philosophy with attention to everyday life, the material elements of the urban environment, the "surface phenomena" – Kracauer's (1995) expression for the ephemeral, marginal and inconspicuous phenomena, often part of mass culture, that allow fundamental aspects of modern life to be deciphered. On the other hand, Simmel's (1950) description of the conflicting elements of modern metropolises that affect the individual's fundamental psychological makeup, grounded in an "*intensification of nervous stimulation* [*life*] [Steigerung des Nervenlebens] which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli" (Simmel, 1950, p. 410, emphasis original), is also important for our understanding of aesthetic experience in the broad sense mentioned above. This means that changes to the spiritual or mental lives of individuals and communities are inextricably linked to changes in the sensory experience and conditions of perception of metropolitan life.

1 Andreotti (2011) gathers a series of contributions both on Benjamin's – implicit and explicit – use of *Spielraum* and on its relation to other authors and cultural contexts.

2 On the various approaches to these two cities, see Gilloch (1996, pp. 1–20) and Simay (2005).

Benjamin's understanding of the city takes this into account, and both his descriptions of the urban landscape and his reflections on art and aesthetics are connected to perceptual and physiological dimensions. Several of his texts are sprinkled with his own urban experience and with brief remarks that reveal a willingness to let everyday life be food for thought. Clearly speaking to the modern understanding of the city as a fragmented place (Frisby, 1986), his "thought images" develop an imagistic and discontinuous approach. But this discontinuity doesn't entail the complete segregation of these elements, since they can be said to belong to "an archaeological excavation of the city to salvage its fragments so that they can be refunctioned. Each element recovered is monadological, containing within it the totality whence it came, and is also illuminating as part of the new montage in which it is assembled" (Gilloch, 1996, p. 18). Thus, the city can be seen as constituted by elementary, unique, individual substances that at the same time reflect a certain order and the totality of the world (containing the traces of past properties and the virtual properties of the future). Beyond – or rather within – fragmentation and differentiation, the city is a place where the essential traces of modernity can be deciphered, playing a role in the generation of images that couple history with utopia.

This approach is also related to the new techniques of representation that form part of the sensorial and perceptual transformation of aesthetic experience, such as photography and cinema. The latter in particular is able to capture flux and movement, the rhythms of the urban environment, and in this sense is a precise tool with which to study its most hidden traits, its optical unconscious:

> On the one hand, film furthers insight into the necessities governing our lives by its use of close-ups, by its accentuation of hidden details in familiar objects, and by its exploration of commonplace milieu through the ingenious guidance of the camera; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of a vast and unsuspected field of action [room-for-play] [*Spielraum*]. Our bars and city streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories seemed to close relentlessly around us. Then came film and

> exploded this prison-world with the dynamite of the split second, so that now we can set off calmly on journeys of adventure among its far-flung debris.
>
> Benjamin, 2002b, p. 117[3]

Besides giving us access to the optical unconscious, cinema also created new technological conditions for a transfiguration of the world. Explosion and journeys, fragmentation and montage, destruction and utopian goals go hand in hand in this process. The term *Spielraum* and the rich conceptual framework around play are at the core of these various transformations, which are described in more detail in the second version of the "Work of Art" essay (Benjamin, 2002b, pp. 101–133). It is worth mentioning that Benjamin not only shows particular interest in games and childhood play but, in this context, is also addressing a longstanding German tradition on the philosophical dimension of play, linking it with new technologies and with "an alternative mode of aesthetics on a par with modern, collective experience" (Hansen, 2012, p. 183). Aesthetically and technologically, these forms of play also aim to establish a relationship between the individual and the collective in which neither of the two poles is suppressed and urban space becomes a privileged stage for the rehearsal of their potentialities.

These notions take shape in Benjamin's reflections on Naples, as he developed them in a text written with Asja Lacis.[4] The notion of porosity is of great importance in the text's depiction of the material characteristics of the city, the grey colour of the stone, the caves and the architecture, but also the life and actions of its inhabitants: "Building and action interpenetrate in the courtyards, arcades and stairways. In everything, they preserve the scope [*Spielraum*] to become [room-for-

3 The German word *Spielraum*, capturing the rich semantic fields of play (*Spiel*) and space (*Raum*), is not easily translated into English: it can mean room-for-play, free play, freedom of movement, and room for manoeuvre (in a military, social and mechanical sense). In this quotation and in the next from Benjamin, the English translation has been changed: "room-for-play" seems more appropriate than "field of action" or "scope".

4 Different but concomitant readings of the *Spielraum* of this passage can be found in Conceição (2016) and Conceição (2017): in the first case, focusing on the gesture of making room and its photographic equivalents; in the second, focusing on the concepts of repetition and experimentation.

play, enabling it to become] a theatre of new, unforeseen constellations. The stamp of the definitive is avoided" (Benjamin, 1996, p. 416). Porosity likewise designates those features of the city that enable unpredictable uses of space, as well as the permeability of private and collective life (see Benjamin, 2010, pp. 39–50). As a materialisation of the plastic characteristics of city (life), the "unforeseen constellations" are intrinsically linked to the architectural room-for-play, with the free movement within the physical limits of the constructed elements. We may consider these Neapolitan scenes part of a "collective" type of play. This notion of "collective play", while suitably characterising Constant Nieuwenhuys' architectural projects, and in general the Situationist International's use of playful elements so as to contribute to a utopian ideal of collective participation, is also applicable to Benjamin's thinking about cities, architecture and the political consequences of play (see Elliott, 2011, pp. 122–132).

One can read his description of Neapolitan everyday life in the 1920s as a way of relating to urban space – both architecturally and socially – that can contribute positively to the functioning of democratic life: regarding both the active participation of citizens in individual and collective life and the possibilities that built space holds for the expression of social diversity. "Unpredictable uses of space" are often regarded as dangerously chaotic from the point of view of urban regulations and the power relations they entail. And it is precisely within – or against – these restrictions that *porosity*, *plasticity* and *unpredictability* can increase the social fabric's capacity to deal with the conflictual elements of contemporary democracies.

While retaining an association with both play and space, the notion of *Spielraum* transforms them and becomes a rich metaphor for freedom of movement within rules and regulations. Bearing in mind Werner Stegmaier's (2019) philosophy of orientation, which combines spatial and technological, social and political dimensions, one may circumscribe the conceptual dynamics of *Spielraum* within "a 'space' that limits movement by means of regulations, a space within which [there is] a 'playful' movement that does not follow these regulations – in this sense it is 'play' free from regulations. In short, *a Spielraum is a regulated limit of an unregulated behaviour*" (Stegmaier, 2019, p. 53, emphasis

original). In this sense, it contains the seeds of a profoundly disruptive force: when regulations are destroyed or contradicted, either slowly or abruptly, the *Spielraum* can change in radical ways. Nevertheless, when understood as "urban free play", this notion becomes not only a rich metaphor but also a tangible reference with which to understand certain contemporary critical approaches to our relationship with cities.

The collective play of the Situationist International

One of these critical approaches was developed by Guy Debord and the Situationist International throughout the 1950s and up to the 1970s, since they set in motion an urban form of "room-for-play", and thus the complex conceptual dynamics of *Spielraum* (even if they do not use the German word), in their theories and practices. Ludic elements are part of their revolutionary projects, which aim at the deep transformation of urban space, the latter becoming a stage not only for their critique of contemporary capitalist societies but also for a rehearsal of new sensorial and cognitive experiences. In this context, it is worth recalling Debord's description of the "society of the spectacle", which was written in 1967 but remains relevant today: social relations are increasingly commodified by means of representations and mediations that alienate peoples' lives (Debord, 2014). Modern urbanism, which tends to erase the history of places in favour of rational and functional organisation, is part of this process of alienation. Debord's critical remarks on the "new cities" built during the 1960s, cities charged with the forces of "historical absence", go hand in hand with his critique of human geography (here broadly understood as the study of the processes of individual and social life in their interaction with places and the environment) and his confrontation with "spectacle":

> Proletarian revolution is this *critique of human geography* through which individuals and communities will be able to create places and events commensurate with the appropriation no longer just of their work, but of their

> entire history. The ever-changing playing field of this new world and the freely chosen variations in the rules of the game will regenerate a diversity of local scenes that are independent without being insular, thereby reviving the possibility of authentic *journeys* – journeys within an authentic life that is itself understood as a journey containing its whole meaning within itself.
>
> Debord, 2014, p. 95, emphasis original

Besides being intricate, this quotation is thought-provoking, suggesting that any deep transformation of society should tackle the following questions: does the way cities are built and inhabited encourage having a good life? Does urban space allow for "authentic *journeys*"?

Critically discussing the terms of this "revolution of the proletariat" would require a more detailed analysis. For now, it suffices to note that the knots between "spectacle" and urbanism can only be untied by giving room both to the heterogeneity of individual life in urban space (the "diversity of local scenes") and to a collective that is able to be an active part of its own history ("without being insular"). Furthermore, and according to the framework outlined here, the urban "variations in the rules of the game" belong to the vocabulary of *Spielraum*, and thus to the porosity, plasticity and unpredictability that can be beneficial to democratic life.

Debord's proposal can likewise be said to suggest an urbanism of "collective play". The word "play" has a rich background in his writings, and ludic elements were part of the Situationist International's theories and practices related to urban space. From the outset, these elements demand that one reconsiders everyday life by renouncing, more or less permanently, the relationships, habits, work and pleasures that are bound to it. This should lead, for instance, to the creation of ludic trajectories such as the *dérive* (drifting), a situationist method "that entails playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects, which completely distinguishes it from the classical notions of the journey and the stroll" (Debord, 2006, p. 62). Related to the *dérive*, psychogeography studies the affective bonds, the atmospheres, that allow one to draw alternative maps of cities (and thus alternative

forms of *human geography*). Independently of the cultural precedents of these practices, which date back to the Dadaist and surrealist excursions organised by André Breton, or even to Romanticism, this urban roaming was characteristic of Parisian "Left Bank bohemianism, where the art of drifting was a favourite way of cultivating that feeling of being 'apart together' that Huizinga described as characteristic of play" (Andreotti, 2000, p. 39).[5] Unitarian Urbanism, designating the movement's criticism of and proposed alternatives to modern functional and technocratic urbanism and architecture, is also a "playful-constructive" form. In particular, Constant's experimentations and utopian projects, such as New Babylon, are a good example of an architecture of "collective play" that leaves room for "unpredictable constellations".

These ideas have an explicit connection to the elements of play adopted from Huizinga, whose work was greatly esteemed and referenced by the Situationists. For instance, the capacity of immersion in play – a basic quality of playing and games in general, according to Huizinga – is also the ludic trait of the situationist endeavour: the penetration of life in its entirety. In the first issue of the *Situationist International*, published in 1958, the short article "Contribution to a Situationist Definition of Play" develops this connection while establishing that the predominant element of competition "must vanish in favour of a truly collective concept of play: the communal creation of selected ludic ambiences" (Internationale Situationniste, 1958, p. 10) (although the Situationists' attitude toward bourgeois society is confrontational, the competitive element should be eliminated). Besides, more than an exception to daily life, play must invade life, which is why it not only plays a historical role but also has an ethical and vital dimension; it is a form of experimentation that is capable of expanding the field of action and life, and thus the work of the Situationists can be seen as *Spielraum*, as a precise preparation of the ludic possibilities yet to come.

Huizinga influenced the Situationist International's playfulness in many ways (see Andreotti, 2000), but instead of straightforwardly applying his ideas, they naturally adapted them, both conceptually and in practice. On the other hand, these ludic elements cannot be understood

5 For a more detailed analysis of these and other ludic elements of the Situationist International, such as *détournement* and myth-making, see Andreotti (2000).

in isolation from a post-war critique of consumer culture and all the other cultural and political contexts that shaped the movement. The latter is thus an unavoidable reference on the relationship between play and urban space, since it left a strong mark – not only theoretically, but also on other movements and artistic practices. If urban space is collective and social, play in urban space can no longer be understood in purely individualistic terms; it is part of the political existence of individuals.

Henri Lefebvre: Play and differential space

The political and social existence of individuals in urban space is also at the heart of Henri Lefebvre's philosophical work, which in recent decades has gained a prominent place among various disciplines and practices dealing with the city. As a reflection on capitalism along a line that intersects, among many others, with Karl Marx's analyses and Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of values, Lefebvre's work encompasses a study of the historical development of the city, its contradictions and the perspectives of its transformation. It also gives play, or playful space, a central role. Although it is not my aim to develop an exhaustive analysis of Lefebvre's conception of play, it is still possible to describe some of its traces in two of his main works, *The Right to the City* (1996) and *The Production of Space* (1991).

In general, Lefebvre's writings allow for a reformulation of the classic distinction between work and play (where play is, in its broadest sense, equivalent to leisure), since they avoid rigid polarisation and instead emphasise the importance of play in the social whole as a mechanism of sociability. The ludic space is likewise of central importance for rethinking the value of culture in consumer societies, a value so often reduced to profit and linked to the formal, bureaucratic and infertile features of culture. Play, on the other hand, is seen as a form of aggregation, a possibility of bringing together the fragmented cultural elements under educational, formative and informational aspects. To restore the "centrality of play" is to bring together elements of culture without having them cancel each

other out, thus keeping them alive and fertile (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 171).

Since "the space of play has coexisted and still coexists with spaces of exchange and circulation, political space and cultural space" (*Ibid.*), giving room to play also means better urban planning – avoiding the excessive rationalisation and homogenisation that characterise an important part of modern urbanism, particularly from the second half of the twentieth century onwards. Lefebvre's considerations result from his criticism of the way architecture and urbanism have subjugated city dwellers either to a functional life or to consumerism (e.g., emptying urban centres and handing them over to the exploitation of tourism; effacing the traditional uses of space; in Marxian terms, superimposing exchange value over use value). Play, on the other hand, in order to maintain its emancipatory status and contribute to the "right to the city", must be integrated into everyday life as an area for creative and meaningful encounters, as a space where freedom of action and thought are possible. Playing with words, Lefebvre goes further and states that "there will be *play* between the parts of the social whole (plasticity) – to the extent that *play* is proclaimed as supreme value, eminently solemn, if not serious, overtaking use and exchange by gathering them together" (1996, p. 172).

These remarks appeal to a sense of community that can help us to rethink the relationship between play and democracy. The "right to the city" contains within itself a utopian element, a promise of democracy that Lefebvre enunciates in his critical analysis of Georges-Eugène Haussmann's urban planning programme in Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century. By expelling the workers from the city centre, Haussmann weakened this "urban democracy" in the making. The latter would include not only the rights acquired by the ruling class, but also the rights and demands of those who threatened its privileges (Lefebvre, 1996, pp. 75–76). Controlling and "cleaning" urban space, as history repeatedly shows us, is an effective way to nip political promises in the bud. While the historical context has changed substantially, this seminal promise still challenges the capacity of present-day democracies to grant urban space what is proper to it: "meetings, the confrontation of differences, reciprocal knowledge and acknowledgement (including ideological and political confrontation), ways of living, 'patterns'

which coexist in the city" (1996, p. 75). Beyond the formal elements of democratic regimes, the active participation of citizens in everyday life and lived space remains an unfulfilled task, generally speaking, and Lefebvre's remarks on play should also be read in this vein. This idea is even more pressing in an epoch in which the functioning of several democracies is being threatened by phenomena such as populism and xenophobia, which increase with our incapacity to deal with the "confrontation of differences".

Whereas Huizinga describes the importance of play in culture without consistently considering inherent material (economic) factors,[6] Lefebvre addresses them directly, thinking not only about the coexistence of various power structures that determine the conflicting forces in the cultural and social whole, but also about the way play can introduce qualitative and differentiating elements, which aim at a complex form of collectivity. Lefebvre does not fail to take into account the contradictions inherent in "spaces of play", however, especially when these are seen from the perspective of leisure. These contradictions are examined in *The Production of Space* (1991), where he describes "abstract space" as a formal and quantitative type of space that tends to erase the particularities of living subjects and their history. In fact, it is from the contradictions of abstract space, which also take part in the contradictions of capitalism, that the new relations of social production can grow, producing a new and "differential space" which, by highlighting differences and particularities, can counteract the tendency to homogeneity that characterises abstract space (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 49–52). Leisure culture is part of the capitalist production processes that establish rules in a closed framework, but there is still the possibility of breaking it down and creating differential spaces:

> This space [of leisure] further reveals where the vulnerable areas and potential breaking-points are: everyday life, the urban sphere, the body, and the differences that

6 For Caillois, who criticises Huizinga's definition of play as "an activity connected with no material interest", play is not a productive activity, but it can nevertheless imply the exchange of property, as games of chance illustrate (Caillois, 2001, pp. 3–6).

> emerge within the body from repetitions (from gestures, rhythms or cycles). The space of leisure bridges the gap between traditional spaces with their monumentality and their localizations based on work and its demands, and potential spaces of enjoyment and joy; in consequence this space is the very epitome of contradictory space.
>
> Lefebvre, 1991, p. 385

These contradictions of the "production of space" are important in several respects. In capitalist societies, play and spaces of play are easily absorbed by the logic of exchange value (thus becoming part of the "society of the spectacle"). One need only recall the world of sports, and particularly soccer, which has been completely taken over by capital; the "play of art" itself is dependent on the art market; the construction of sites of play, whether playgrounds or adult leisure places, is anything but immune to real estate interests and the many different ways of obtaining value through urban design. After all, who establishes the rules of these spaces, and on what grounds? In any case, "differential space", while integrating and overcoming tensions and contradictions, can be considered a *Spielraum* that expands the field of action and life. In keeping with the Marxian concepts adopted by Lefebvre, it counters exchange value and allows use value – the true impetus of urban civic participation – to be relocated at the "centre".

Despite obvious differences, there was certainly mutual contamination between Lefebvre's analyses and certain of the Situationist International's proposals, since they had a complex personal and theoretical relationship (see Ross and Lefebvre, 1997). Even so, Lefebvre's work departs from theirs insofar as it sets the urban element against the backdrop of an intricate web of social relations, covering a wider field of analysis. Also important is the fact that the aesthetic dimension – the senses, the body, bodily gestures and rhythms – lies at the core of his theses on the production of space, particularly those dealing with playful practices.

Michel de Certeau: Habitability and childhood experiences

Let us now turn to our last main theoretical reference, Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, for it too gives an important role – in this case explicitly – to the conceptual framework of *Spielraum*. The chapter "Walking in the City" expands on an initial distinction between the panoptic view of the city, New York seen from the top of the World Trade Centre, and the on-the-ground experience of the walker who in fact inhabits it (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 91–94). For de Certeau, walkers are part of the living fabric of the city, their immersed body and awakened senses having nothing to do with the panoptic and distanced gaze of power. This also means that pedestrians' paths can redesign space and imprint their unpredictable movements in ways that do not necessarily follow the planner's intentions. Walking belongs to those "microbe-like, singular and plural" (*Ibid.*, p. 96) urban practices which are part of city life but can subvert its mere functional and rational organisation, thus creating mobile room-for-play within the constraints imposed by regulations.

It is easy to see how this relates to our previous readings – for instance, Lefebvre's critique of the rationalisation and homogeneity of abstract space – but two other aspects of de Certeau's proposal, in its blending of urban and discourse analysis, add new and important elements. The first concerns a notion of habitability which is in a direct relationship with a discourse that creates an empty space, with something yet to fulfil:

> Far from expressing a void or describing a lack, it creates such. It makes room for a void. In that way, it opens up clearings, it "allows" a certain play within a system of defined places. It "authorizes" the production of an area of free play (*Spielraum*) on a checkerboard that analyzes and classifies identities. It makes places habitable.
>
> de Certeau, 1984, pp. 105–106

Habitability understood as *Spielraum* also implies giving the practices enough leeway to endure and flourish. It points not to a utopian space in the strictest sense of the word but to an understanding of "credible things" – things that make you believe – and "memorable things" – the extraordinary, often mythic and haunted things that connect you to a place (see *Ibid.*, pp. 105–108): things that run through the discourses of those who inhabit the city and that are in constant threat of being annihilated or effaced by the predominant functionalist perspective. From this we can conclude that the logic of play is able not only to serve creative and emancipatory goals but also to save our intimate relationship with places.

Building on this, a second and noteworthy aspect of de Certeau's chapter concerns Sigmund Freud's description of the *fort-da* play in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1975). While in his cot, Freud's 18-month-old grandson would repeatedly throw objects away, forcing his mother to retrieve them for him. Later, he used a cotton reel to control the movements himself. Freud interpreted the playful gesture as a way to deal with the absence of the mother. For de Certeau (1984), this gesture of differentiation from the mother's body also represents a passage toward the other that entails the law of being and the law of space, a joyful manipulation that is an "original spatial structure" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 109). This childhood experience of determining spatial practices later proliferates throughout our lives, developing its effects, transforming private and public spaces, "creating within the planned city a 'metaphorical' or mobile" one (*Ibid.*, p. 110). In this sense, the *Spielraum* of habitability is in itself a repetition, although in a different manner, of childhood play experiences. Making "room for a void" would seem to be a non-productive gesture that goes against the grain of present-day demands in many ways; the promises of this emptiness, however – its capacity to interrupt seemingly inexorable processes, to stimulate the imagination and to allow us to handle the disappearance of our loved ones and spaces – are countless.

Aesthetics, politics – Aldo van Eyck and Francis Alÿs

The previous sections delve into the importance of urban room-for-play and provide a valuable theoretical framework against which to examine various urban phenomena at the intersection of aesthetic, social and political issues. Let us revisit the main ideas of this framework. Benjamin integrated play into his reading of the aesthetic and artistic transformations brought about by metropolitan life and new technologies, and his use of the German word *Spielraum* in urban and spatial contexts is highly relevant: it describes freedom of movement within regulations and the expansion of the scope of action. For Debord and the Situationists, the revolutionary transformation of society implies urban experiences in which playful elements have a vital place – aiming at a form of collective play. Lefebvre's thought reminds us of the importance of spaces of play in capitalist societies and shows that their production is not immune to the contradictions of abstract space – thus the need to attentively make room for differential space. According to de Certeau, the conceptual dynamic of habitability and *Spielraum* points to the importance of these discourses in keeping us connected to places. This also relates to childhood and childhood play, to the seminal spatial processes that can unfold at different stages of our lives.

All of these authors and concepts, while giving us a sense of the manifold approaches to theorising urban space and play, speak directly to our present time and raise questions related to the use of public space. This is particularly important for contemporary cities, in which power relations tend to be "resolved" to the benefit of economic interests. One should avoid a simple opposition between capitalism and democratic life, however; the focus should instead be those features of urban capitalism that can negatively affect civic participation.

These authors and concepts also raise questions about democracy's capacity to encompass dissensus, to recall Rancière's terms and his critique of the commonplace equation of democracy and consensus. In this regard, dissensus allows one to discuss urban heterogeneity and social diversity in the context of a broader debate on aesthetics: according to

Rancière, there is a distribution of the sensible that determines the modes of perception common to a given world and, at the same time, the parts that are shared or exclusive to this world. Aesthetics, in this context, is to be understood as a "delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience" (Rancière, 2004, p. 13). Thus, the incorporation of conflict and dissensus within an established framework of perception, thought and action is also a way of creating *Spielraum* within a closed system of regulations, making room for alternative ways of sharing or distributing politically and aesthetically. In any case, inside or outside Rancière's theoretical scheme (perhaps a well-balanced follow-up would be to confront/combine his emancipatory approach, which is more focused on subjectivation, with Lefebvre's materialistic approach), urban space plays a fundamental role in current debates on the relation between aesthetics and politics. Moreover, the urban *Spielraum* – as a threshold where established rules are played or subverted, where new uses of space and new forms of time are experienced, where the manifold relations between space, bodies and senses are rehearsed – puts the concept of play at the core of these debates. This does not imply a return to the utopian promises of avant-garde and post-war cultural movements. The goal of this text is less nostalgic: while considering key theoretical moments, it aims to explore the scope of the concept of *Spielraum* in urban settings and to reveal its relevance to the relationship between play and democracy. If one wishes to go further, it is essential to pay attention to urban practices and how they perform the conceptual framework outlined above.

In the case of the architect Aldo van Eyck, who took part in the artistic activities of the avant-garde group COBRA (whose founders, Asger Jorn and Constant, also belonged to the Situationist International), the concept of *Spielraum* applies literally to the playgrounds he designed in Amsterdam directly following the Second World War and until the 1970s (between 1947 and 1978), totalling around seven hundred. They occupied different grounds in the aftermath of a destructive period, completely changing the atmosphere. Dealing with the conflicting possibilities of urban settings, they present a concrete relationship between architecture, urbanism and play. The parks form a threshold,

and in this sense, they contain what van Eyck calls the realm of the in-between, an operative concept in which opposed elements are conciliated without eliminating their polarities. In the words of Francis Strauven, the playgrounds

> became elementary, archetypical constructions whose powerful simplicity evoked different associations. In the first place there was the sandpit, a solid yet soft, open body that could assume a variety of geometric shapes: a circle, a square or a triangle […]. Besides these large and solid forms, the playground usually included a number of small, solid elements.
>
> Strauven, 2002, p. 67

Elementary forms have an urban character (the same does not apply to imaginary animals, for instance, which are not real enough to become permanent objects in a city) and stimulate the imagination, since they have an open function and evoke all kinds of uses, including unexpected ones.

Not only are the playgrounds consistent formal compositions, but they were also conceived in terms of spatial perception and experience, which constantly changed according to the viewpoint and body movements inside the park (Strauven, 2002, p. 80). In addition to this, the large number of playgrounds scattered around the city and the fact that they are unfenced and architecturally well balanced, avoiding a strict separation between "play space" and "public space", make them powerful places aesthetically, but also *Spielräume* politically. Due to their soberness, they are not revolutionary in a straightforward sense, but they provide a place for children to imagine and experience their own space, and they entail political gestures in the sense that the tension between constraints and freedom is enacted in a shared urban place. One might say that they promote children's role in the "production of space" and also, to continue with Lefebvre, their "right to the city", since they promote the participation of children in public space while avoiding excessive control over it. Considering de Certeau's equation between habitability and the joyful manipulation of space in childhood,

the effects of which can spread throughout life, the seminal importance of van Eyck's architectonic concepts becomes clearer: while some features of his playgrounds, such as their unfenced structure, cannot easily be replicated in all urban contexts, they are still relevant in terms of the problems they pose and the solutions they provide – both aesthetically and politically – for cities and playground designers.

The second case study concerns the Belgian artist Francis Alÿs, who moved to Mexico City in the mid-1980s. In the wake of the great earthquake of 1985, the city faced profound changes, especially in the historic centre, following a modernisation process that, like in so many other cities, fell prey to a neo-liberal understanding of culture and history. In this case, this included the construction of new traffic routes and other elements that alienated the population from the city centre. In the beginning, Alÿs considered himself an observer of the peculiarities of daily life, which he often registered in video and photography, but he later became part of that daily life and began to integrate it into his performances.

Seemingly futile and "purposeless", his works invest in the creative potential of failure and in the absurdity of the poetic act as a way of revealing both the limits within a particular space or organisation and the possibilities of transgressing that space. At the same time, some of his performances explore the disruptive character of walking or wandering, often in conjunction with simple but provocative instances of play. In *The Collector* (Alÿs, 1991), he walks through the streets of Mexico City pulling a magnetic toy "dog" (similar to a children's cart) and collecting the metallic scraps of the city. In *Paradox of Praxis 1 (Sometimes making something leads to nothing)* (Alÿs, 1997), he pushed a huge block of ice around the city centre until it melted. In *Reel-Unreel* (Alÿs, 2011), a work commissioned for Documenta 13 on the theme "Collapse and Recovery", Alÿs draws inspiration from the games played by children in Kabul, creating a film that is both a journey through the Afghan city and a game in which the participation of children is essential to the reconfiguration of space.

It is also important to note that Alÿs has been recording children's games in different cultures since 1999, and these somehow find echoes in his larger projects (Bloemheuvel and Guldemond, 2019). What

seems to be merely ludic can also be looked at from a much more political perspective, however: on the one hand, he is transgressing the functionalism of space, infusing it with events, gestures and stories (fostering a sort of myth-making in the vein of de Certeau's "credible" and "memorable things"); on the other hand, as in the case of *Ambulantes*, a collection of photographs from street vendors and workers pushing carts full of goods around Mexico City (see Alÿs, Diserens and Cuauhtémoc, 2006, pp. 24–25), he is bringing to the foreground those who collect the remains, the scraps, of our modern cities. It is a way of giving visibility to the precarious condition of a certain stratum of the population, but also to the spirit of inventiveness of those who use space.[7] Thus, in Alÿs's case, situations create this in-between space, *Spielraum*, either ephemeral, recorded on video or in a photograph, or performed through playful mechanisms that disrupt both the idea of an innocent childlike gesture and the forced rationalisation of urban space.

These two examples from architecture and art ought to be viewed not as mere illustrations but re-enactments that show how forms of *Spiel* unfold in urban space, while at the same time establishing explicit and implicit connections with the theoretical framework developed in the first part of this chapter and summarised at the beginning of this section. They contribute to the contemporary discussion on the relationship between play and democracy by providing aesthetic and artistic elements the fertility of which extends far beyond the specific context in which they were produced. As we have seen, van Eyck's playgrounds draw on and materialise a series of concepts related to the idea of play in a shared urban space: room-for-play, collective play and Lefebvre's and de Certeau's concepts. The same is true in Alÿs's case, who in the past decades has been developing an influential work that intersects play and critical approaches to contemporary cities; more concretely, his walking performances and invocations of childhood play respond to de Certeau's and the Situationists' work on spatial practices and can be said to artistically expand or reinvent the former's concepts and examples.

7 These images also have a visual history: for instance, Eugène Atget's and Germaine Krull's photographs of Parisian rag pickers, who usually lived in the outskirts of the city. For a reading of Alÿs's work at this intersection between art, play and politics, see Taussig (2014).

In brief, by combining individual and collective spaces and intersecting aesthetic and political gestures, both examples are part of the dynamics of *Spielraum*, understood not only as a metaphor for free movement within social rules but also, very concretely, as an inscription of the human body, of the forces of perception and imagination in urban space.

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Modernist Realism and its Enemies: John Coetzee and Philosophy

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> It's fairly clear that all these fine tragedians trace their lineage back to Homer: they're Homer's students and disciples, ultimately. And this makes it difficult for me to say what I have to say, because I've had a kind of fascinated admiration for Homer ever since I was young. Still, we should value truth more than we value any person, so I'd better speak out.
> Plato, *Republic*, 595b

1. From philosophy to literature – and back

It is widely known that moral philosophers and philosophers of art have long relied on examples from literature. Indeed, an ongoing conversation between a cluster of contemporary philosophers and writers seems to indicate a modern lifting of the millennia-old ban, sanctioned by Plato, on the inclusion of literary writers in the philosophical republic. Relatively recent endeavours in philosophy and literature alike would seem to suggest that the two traditions have finally initiated a process of reconciliation[1]. As philosophers, though, we call for further support for this claim, as well as further clarification on *how* this reconciliation might be achieved.

1 Here I have in mind the following works in particular: Cora Diamond, "Realism and the Realistic Spirit", *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1991; "The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Literature", *Reading Cavell*. London: Routledge, 2006; "Having a Rough Story About What Moral Philosophy Is", *The Literary Wittgenstein*. London: Routledge, 2004; Stephen Mulhall, *The Wounded Animal: J. M. Coetzee and the Difficulty of Reality in Literature and Philosophy*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009; *The Self and Its Shadows: A Book of Essays on Individuality as Negation in Philosophy and the Arts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*. Oxford: OUP, 1990; Jonathan Lear, *A Case for Irony. The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2011; "Ethical Thought and the Problem of Communication: A Strategy for Reading Diary of a Bad Year", *J. M. Coetzee and Ethics.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2010; Alice Crary, "J. M. Coetzee, Moral Thinker", *J. M. Coetzee and Ethics*; Peter Singer and Anton Leist, Introduction to *J. M. Coetzee and Ethics*; J. M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons*. London: Secker and Warburg, 2003; *Inner Workings* Vintage: London, 2008; Stanley Cavell, "Companionable Thinking", *Wittgenstein and the Moral Life: Essays in Honor of Cora Diamond*. Boston: MIT Press, 2007.

Thus the importance of a new gathering of writers and philosophers, who transition between the two strands of this dialogue: from philosophy to literature, and then back again. Recent work in both fields illustrates this point: Stephen Mulhall's *The Wounded Animal* (2009) discusses both J. M. Coetzee's and (the fictional) Elizabeth Costello's projects, describing them as manifestations of a long-standing modernistic reflection on the conditions of literary formal realism; Coetzee's *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013)[2] neatly returns to the ancient philosophical dispute over the existence of universals. What motivates this conversation, if indeed it is a conversation?

Having selected one thread from each direction of this dialogue, I aim in this paper both to uncover the rationale behind Coetzee's use of the split page in *Diary of a Bad Year*[3] and to consider the implications of my own analysis for the practice of philosophical writing more generally, and so for my own contribution to the discussion. In this way, the following does not merely identify significant points of intersection between philosophy and literature. More than this, it *performs* the transformative shift in self-understanding, made possible by this very intersection that lies at the heart of Coetzee's novel.

The first part of this paper discusses the philosophical relevance of a notion that will play a central role in my interpretation of *Diary*: the concept of "substitution ethical thought". The second part further explores Coetzee's modernist realism and attempts, in a self-critical shift of perspective, to apply these insights to questions about the form of philosophical discourse.

2. Diary of a soul's journey

Despite the vastness of the South African author's corpus, I have chosen to focus on *Diary of a Bad Year* because of the distinctiveness – relative both to Coetzee's other works and to the genre as a whole – of the novel's unique formal composition. Here, Coetzee employs an unusual formal

2 Coetzee, J. M. *The Childhood of Jesus*. London: Harvill Secker, 2013: 159-160.

3 In the following, all references to this work are to the Penguin Books edition: Coetzee, J. M. *Diary of a Bad Year.* Penguin Books: London, 2008.

technique: each page is divided into two or three separate sections, each representing a different character's perspective – a device that has an initially destabilizing effect on the reader. Thus, the top section of the page consists of a series of "opinion chronicles" (a collection originally entitled *Strong Opinions*) by an experienced South African author, JC. The middle layer of the page corresponds to JC's private voice and offers a raw account of his daily encounters with his Filipino typist, the young and beautiful Anya, who is assisting him in the composition of his collection (commissioned by a German publisher). The lower layer of the page corresponds to the private voices of both Anya and Alan (the latter is Anya's misogynistic partner). In the two lower layers of the text, Coetzee reveals the extent to which JC is both haunted by his impending death and somehow comforted by daily contact with a beautiful woman. A first encounter with this text thus brings the reader into contact with three private narrative voices (corresponding to JC, Anya and Alan), along with what might initially seem to be a fourth public, "quasi-technical" narrative voice, represented by JC's political opinions. This multiple structure provides a modernistic framing for *Strong Opinions* (we shall return to this idea in what follows).

Questions about the relationship between stylistic devices – such as the split page – and the ethical ideas conveyed by a given novel can, of course, be situated within more general philosophical accounts of the impact of literary style (*how* a given position is articulated) on the statements being expressed. In this context, we encounter philosophers – many of whom mirror the history of tensions within their own discipline – who struggle theoretically with (what is apparently) the same issue. A classic example of philosophical reflection on the significance of the *style-content* dichotomy, both in literature and philosophy, is Martha Nussbaum's *Love's Knowledge* (1990),[4] the introduction to which contains the following:

> The "ancient quarrel between the Poets and the Philosophers", as Plato's *Republic* […] calls it, could be called a quarrel only because it was about a single subject. The subject was

4 See Nussbaum, M. (1990). *Love's Knowledge.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

> human life and how to live it. And the quarrel was a quarrel about literary form, as well as about ethical content, about literary forms understood as committed to certain ethical priorities […]. Forms of writing were not seen as vessels into which different contents could be indifferently poured; form was itself a statement, a content. (Nussbaum, 1990: 15)

On deeper analysis, Nussbaum's claim reveals itself as twofold: both in the philosophical text or essay (where literary style, the *way* content is conveyed, is often sacrificed in favour of substantial theoretical claims) and in the literary piece (where concern with form can reach such heights that content becomes impenetrable – arguably more so when one turns to modernist projects), style is an "assertion of content" in itself. But, as we shall see below, Nussbaum is far from being alone in maintaining this position in the current philosophical landscape.

Because I have chosen to begin with a literary text, I will first concentrate on the second part of the claim quoted above and say that *Diary's* prose*, and in particular its formal structure,* is a remarkable example of how the successful expression of propositional content is genuinely inseparable from matters of form. Coetzee's text reveals that "[literary] form is itself a statement, a content", such that formal composition is really a means of asserting, of putting forward, propositional claims. But the content conveyed by the literary form of *Diary* isn't merely "rightly-shaped matter", a casually well-accomplished combination of compositional technique and the thought expressed by that literary framing. Rather, I will claim, Coetzee manages to convey ethical thought by staging a direct *simulation* of ethical thought, precisely because this simulation is presented in a register very close to his own. The result of the simulation is a collection of opinions (JC's *Strong Opinions*) that is aesthetically maimed, theoretically convincing, and completely *sterile, from a practical point of view* – notions that will be developed in what follows.

At this point, two questions present themselves as interrelated: (1) what does it mean to argue that the structure of *Diary* conveys ethical thought? And (2) how does the novel do this without slipping into what

I will be referring to as "ersatz ethical thought", precisely by staging a version of this kind of displacement?

Some philosophers (see Jonathan Lear, 2010)[5] have argued that it is easier for a well-trained novelist to notice and prevent the communication of ersatz ethical thought than for a philosopher to do so – practiced as the latter is both in compressing philosophical questions into abstract, deductive systems of reasoning and in crafting the ordered, linear texts characteristic of the discipline. For the sake of better understanding the notion of ersatz ethical thought, then, consider the following thought experiment, centred on the figure of a philosopher who is trying to put forth an ethical claim. (In light of what has already been said, you might further conceive of JC as just such a philosopher.)

Imagine that our philosopher wishes to communicate a certain idea: namely, that the most important truths about human psychology cannot be communicated or grasped by intellectual activity alone, since powerful emotions play an irreducible cognitive role in self-understanding. If he states this view in a written form that expresses only intellectual activity and addresses itself only to the reader's intellect – as is usually the case in most philosophical essays, and is surely the case in *Strong Opinions* – we face the following question: Does the author really believe what his words seem to state? How can he avoid the charge of inconsistency? The philosopher may believe that the psychological thesis itself is not among the truths that must be grasped through emotional activity. Or he may believe that the thesis is among those truths, but remain indifferent as to whether or not the reader grasps it. Whatever the case, our example demonstrates how easily and intuitively the paradox arises. By contrast, a writer aiming to convey the same idea can *avoid* the charge of inconsistency to the degree that he expresses its (merely) propositional content *through* the text's formal features – such that the relevant claim

5 In his essay "Ethical Thought and the Problem of Communication", Jonathan Lear writes about "a fashionable substitute for ethical thought" and Coetzee's attempt to "defeat ersatz ethical posture". After having explored at some length the dialectic of these two ways of attempting to convey ethical thought, Lear closes by stating that: "Even at this early stage, one can see in the form of communication a strategy designed to defeat ersatz ethical thought" (Lear, 2010: 74). I have borrowed that last phrase from him, adapting it to my own interpretation of Coetzee's novel.

about self-knowledge is revealed to the reader precisely via formal devices that allow for emotional engagement (which is certainly not the case with regard to JC's work). Such a writer can even directly *display* this conflict to the reader by incorporating philosophical discussion of the relevant idea into a broader literary work that ultimately illuminates the inconsistencies associated with its purely intellectual expression taken in isolation. We shall see that Coetzee (unlike JC) performs both moves in *Diary*.

Modern literary works like Coetzee's *Diary*, then, seem to make this complicated unfolding possible: in allowing for the combination of emotive and reflective material, they reveal the truth of claims such as that outlined above, where an appeal to intellect alone is clearly insufficient. Crucially, they are able to reveal the inconsistency of claims such as this by incorporating their philosophical formulation. (We shall see below how the very same effect can be accomplished in philosophical prose that expresses an awareness of the sorts of paradoxes associated with the psychological claim sketched above).

Thus attention to the specific kind of storytelling at work in a text like *Diary* both helps us to overcome the difficulties affecting these sorts of claims and reveals a strategy for answering questions (1) and (2). If conveying ethical thought via writing involves providing some kind of practical guidance as to how one should live, as well as guidance on how to read the text in question and appreciate its message, then we can say that *Diary* does both by incorporating a vision of how one can fail in both regards, i.e. by calling the reader's attention to how the expression of genuine ethical thought in such a text can slip easily into the communication of *ersatz* ethical thought, and by isolating and thus revealing a layer of interpretation – a way of reading the text – that is both tempting and inadequate. Ersatz ethical thought is the mere simulation of ethical thought – a substitution for genuine ethical thought, which, although intellectually graspable, does not actually make a *practical* difference in terms of how we shape the world and behave. As Coetzee seems to imply, this is the form of thought expressed in *Strong Opinions* and in JC's stance towards his book and its readership.

With this brief sketch of the problem at hand, we can now begin to turn to another question raised by Coetzee's method in *Diary*: how can a text convey genuine ethical thought as opposed to mere ersatz ethical

thought? Is this at all possible? We shall see more clearly how, in *Diary of a Bad Year*, Coetzee's answer to this question hinges on the triadic structure of the page and our confrontation with the book within the book, i.e. *Strong Opinions*, situated as it is within *Diary*.

3. The writer's writer and substitution ethical thought

It may be tempting to identify the author of *Strong Opinions* with the author of *Diary of a Bad Year.* The ostensibly straightforward identification of JC with John Coetzee is only partially accurate, however, and more must be said on this point. In truth, the connection between JC and John Coetzee has highly elusive – and not merely stylistic – implications; it is no mere curiosity, reducible to self-indulgent vanity on Coetzee's part. Indeed, the temptation to merge their identities is a result of our having succumbed, in part, to ersatz ethical thought.

JC is an elderly South African writer, who has recently relocated to Australia. When asked by a German publisher, he agrees to record his opinions on some of the most pressing issues of global societies (terrorism, ethnic conflicts, global warming, animal rights, genetic experiments) in a collection of essays. As JC confesses, the prospect is a welcome one: "An opportunity to grumble in public, an opportunity to take magic revenge on the world for declining to conform to my fantasies: how could I refuse?" (Coetzee, 2008: 33).

Although it is tempting for readers to conflate JC and John Coetzee, there is something that sets the two apart unmistakably. JC is willing to publish his strong opinions on contemporary social issues just as they stand (parched theoretical fruits from a stage of life of decreasing vitality). John Coetzee is not willing to do so. The latter published his strong opinions alongside "soft opinions": a "Second Diary" of intimate notes on the everyday life of a man sinking steadily toward decrepitude – some erotic, but most representing an almost always dull routine involving a series of nuisances. This "Second Diary" is the text that occupies the lower layers of *Diary*'s pages. John Coetzee tells us about JC, and it is only in doing so that he gives us access to his opinion essays.

The formal technique employed by Coetzee in *Diary of a Bad Year* can be interpreted as a rhetorical manoeuvre that confronts the reader with a challenge (*a difficulty*, one might say) and thereby manages to convey disparate contents, graspable only by "different parts of the soul"[6]. The book *Strong Opinions* is embedded in *Diary of a Bad Year*; were it published in isolation, it would require a different kind of focus from that which the reader brings to the latter.

The disparity between the type of content articulated at the top of the page in *Strong Opinions*, on the one hand, and JC's, Anya's and Alan's notes on daily life, on the other, is sufficiently striking to induce a conflict for the reader, particularly when it comes to how she ought to assimilate what she reads. The following passages, for instance, reveal how and to what extent this is so:

> [*Strong Opinions*] One would like to retain some respect for any person who chooses death over dishonour, but in the case of Islamist suicide bombers respect does not come easily when one sees how many of them there are, and therefore (by a logical step that may be *badly* flawed, that may simply express the old Western prejudice against the mass mentality of the Other) how cheaply they must value life. In such a quandary, it may help to think of suicide bombings as a response, of a somehow despairing nature, against American (and Israeli) achievements in guiding technology far beyond the capacities of their opponents.
>
> [*Private dialogue between Anya and JC*] Nothing like the feel of words coming into the world, he says, it is enough to make you shiver. I draw myself up, make a prune mouth. You shouldn't say things like that to a nice girl, Señor, I say. And I turn my back and off I go with a waggle of the bum, his eyes avid upon me. I picked it up from the ducks, I think: a shake of the tail so quick it is almost a shiver. Quick-quack. (Coetzee, 2008: 39-40)

6 See Lear, 2010: 70.

Were we to read JC's *Strong Opinions* on its own, approaching the broader work in which it is situated only horizontally, as it were, we would encounter a space of argumentation. JC's book, which John Coetzee refuses to present to us separately, addresses the rational part of the soul almost exclusively. This approach relies on an *affinity* between sender and receiver, insofar as the rational part of JC's soul addresses the rational part of the reader's soul. (Obviously, this is an oversimplification; it is useful, however, when it comes to the issue of methodology in interpreting *Diary* and Coetzee's therapeutic role as writer and creator of JC.)

If we instead adopt a vertical reading of the pages of *Diary of a Bad Year*, we come across what Jonathan Lear calls "a spectacle of embedding".[7] Relying on the plasticity of this expression, Lear describes the heart of the connection between the book's page structure and Coetzee's handling of the stories of his main characters: if we read the book vertically, we see how the compilation of JC's "strong opinions" is embedded in the presentation of the fantasies and daily lives of the three main characters. As we read down the page, we also move further into the lower part of the soul (and even to the presentation of lower parts of the body: Anya's body, JC's body and Alan's body). This "inferior" display of aspects of daily life is the separable (because useless) part of a book of "strong opinions" on contemporary social and political issues from an ethical perspective. But it is not separable from the *modernist realist* book that John Coetzee offers us. *Strong Opinions* is thus a realistic (pseudo) book written in the form and under the influence of argument, but this form is only one aspect of the organic unity of form and matter embodied by JC's collection, embedded as it is in the episodes that make up his daily life. JC's authority as a character influences the fundamental structure of *Diary*; Coetzee has us actually read *Strong Opinions* and does not merely tell us about the process of its composition (which, were it so, would detract considerably from the novel's effectiveness).

We must still examine in more detail and finally *move beyond* the more or less methodological and associative elements discussed until now if we want to make clear how embedding JC's strong moral opinions in descriptions of private daily life prevents the mere communication of

7 See Lear, 2010: 70.

substitute ethical thought and instead promotes authentic ethical thought through the text's destabilizing form. To do so, I will proceed as follows:

a) I will examine how the compositional form of *Diary of a Bad Year* precludes what I have been calling ersatz ethical thought by incorporating a simulation of this type of thought; and
b) I will analyse one of the opinions in *Strong Opinions*, as a "case study" of sorts, in order to obtain confirmation of (a).

4. The substitution of ersatz ethical thought

Let us look more closely at "ersatz ethical thought". Once again, the underlying idea can most easily be expressed via consideration of a thought experiment.

Let us imagine that a respectable academic – a professor of contemporary ethics at Yale, let us say – spends one semester at Yale and another semester at a foreign university. Let us also imagine that our distinguished academic has a teaching commitment that makes it necessary for him to commute between Europe and the United States. Our distinguished academic dedicates his professional life to writing technical articles, opinion columns and conference presentations on "contemporary ethical issues" (we can imagine that one of these articles even bears the title "Modernist Realism and its Enemies: John Coetzee and Philosophy"). University professors are usually well paid, both in Europe and in America, and our notable academic is no exception. Committed to writing specialized articles, opinion columns and encyclopaedia entries on subjects such as global warming, animal rights, gender-based violence, the Middle East, paedophilia, the sale of nuclear weapons to Iran, or ersatz ethical thought, our distinguished academic has grown accustomed to accepting things as they stand in a globalized world and in the social contexts in which he engages – whilst also taking advantage of his prestige and intellectual influence.

The sort of work carried out by our notable academic – who is surely too realistic to have been made up – could be considered *one*

instance of ersatz ethical thought, especially insofar as its (alleged) ethical content is conveyed as mere *information* (just like *Strong Opinions* and, possibly, this essay) without any need for emotional involvement.

With this example in hand, let us return to *Diary*. When narrating first-hand experiences of barbaric situations, John Coetzee's tone tends to be unsettlingly apathetic. Yet, as we shall see, it is precisely this narrative style that provides an antidote to any conceivable form of substitute ethical thought. *Diary* portrays something that is itself an ethical issue – the intrusion of forms of ersatz ethical thought into a literary work that aims to convey ethical content. Mostly by way of the inclusion of *Strong Opinions*, Coetzee's technique allows him to *show* how difficult it is for a literary text – one meant to convey ethical thought – to avoid becoming a vehicle for ersatz ethical thought (such as an opinion chronicle, for example). JC falls into this very trap, and he is "a prestigious South African writer". What guarantee do we have that John Coetzee will not do the same?

Coetzee's body of work as a whole incorporates a heavily self-referential component, which is conspicuous in his most recent books. In addition to *Diary*, we find a remarkable self-referential strategy in *Summertime* (2009)[8], where the author employs another technique to replace substitution ethical thought. Whereas the technique for preventing ersatz ethical thought in *Diary* is mostly based on the triadic narrative voice – with the nuances and degrees of formality I have analysed thus far – the relevant technique in *Summertime* is its post-mortem structure. The writer John Coetzee has recently died, and the whole book, whose starting point is this very fact, is a collection of personal accounts of his life, as related by different narrators (including a former lover, a neighbour, and the mother of a former student in Cape Town).

Insofar as the (potentially dangerous) self-referential literary techniques vastly and variously employed in his books are one of Coetzee's assets in defeating ersatz ethical thought, and insofar as defeating it matters at least as much to us as finding out *how* such a defeat might be accomplished, in both literature and philosophy, I shall concentrate on the details of these techniques in Coetzee's novels, later applying the

8 See Coetzee, J. M. *Summertime*. Vintage: London, 2009.

results to my own philosophical inquiries. Having already explored one such manoeuvre – the complex overlapping of the personal identities of Coetzee and JC – we shall now turn to another: JC's commitment to specific political views that are easily attributable to John Coetzee.

5. The dialectic of responsibility

In the "spectacle of embedding" that is *Diary of a Bad Year*, a reflection entitled "On National Shame" is included as a section of JC's book, *Strong Opinions*. In this section, JC is credited with having written the following:

> An article in a recent *New Yorker* makes it plain as day that the US administration, with the lead taken by Richard Cheney, not only sanctions the torture of prisoners taken in the so-called war on terror but is active in every way to subvert laws and conventions proscribing torture. […] Their shamelessness is quite extraordinary. Their denials are less than half-hearted. The distinction their hired lawyers draw between torture and coercion is patently insincere, *pro forma*. In the new dispensation we have created, they implicitly say, the old powers of shame have been abolished. Whatever abhorrence you may feel counts for nothing. You cannot touch us, we are too powerful.
>
> Demosthenes: Whereas the slave fears only pain, what the free man fears most is shame. If we grant the truth of what the *New Yorker* claims, then the issue for individual Americans *becomes a moral one*: how, in the face of this shame to which I am subjected, do I behave? *How do I save my honour?* […] Dishonour is no respecter of fine distinctions. Dishonour descends upon one's shoulders, and once it has descended no amount of clever pleading will dispel it. (Coetzee, 2008: 39)

The aim of this reflection (both JC's and my own in this paper) is to inquire into how the relevant "moral issue" can be articulated by means of what

I – following Jonathan Lear – have called the "dialectic of responsibility". Within JC's *Strong Opinions* itself, there is a sort of "division of explanatory labour" at work between a broader theoretical position (a view on national shame) and the illustration of that position (examples of torture) in "On National Shame". Furthermore, to the extent that we are familiar with Coetzee's work (his fiction and his essays) and thus acquainted with some of his own public views on international politics, we could easily ascribe this stance on American governmental decrees related to the so-called post-9/11 "war on terror", here apparently held by JC, to Coetzee himself.

In the preceding section of *Strong Opinions*, JC analyses a moral-political position held by Machiavelli in *The Prince*: the *Necessità*.

> Necessity, *Necessità*, is Machiavelli's guiding principle. The old, pre-Machiavellian position was that the moral law was supreme. If it so happened that the moral law was sometimes broken, that was unfortunate, but rulers were merely human, after all. The new, Machiavellian position is that infringing the moral law is justified when it is necessary. Thus is inaugurated the dualism of modern political culture, which simultaneously upholds absolute and relative standards of value. The modern state appeals to morality, to religion, and to natural law as the ideological foundation of its existence. At the same time, it is prepared to infringe any or all of these in the interest of self-preservation.
>
> Machiavelli does not deny that the claims morality makes on us are absolute. *At the same time, he asserts that in the interest of the state the ruler "is often obliged [necessitato] to act without loyalty, without mercy, without humanity, and without religion"*. (Coetzee, 2008: 26)[9]

A suitable adaptation of Machiavelli's idea, here, is the notion that there is no such thing as national shame, let alone "shame assimilated by mere citizenship" – contrary to what JC contends, though it is still *he* who

9 The passage in italics is from Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Chap. XVIII.

includes a quotation from *The Prince* in *Strong Opinions* – because one must do whatever one must in order to protect and preserve the state. Yet an important social group, which JC calls "liberal intellectuals", rejects *both* Machiavelli's *Necessità* and the "assimilation of shame by citizenship" argued for by JC. Here, JC refers specifically to the Bush administration and to the behaviour and political views held by liberal intellectuals in post-9/11 American society, where these intellectuals aimed to distance themselves from both positions by means of rational self-justification. This specific example represents a more generalizable ethical posture, however, in which personal responsibility is denied and blame shifted to another. The dialectic of responsibility, aimed at deconstructing this posture for the reader of both the book and the pseudo-book (*Diary* and *Strong Opinions*) will operate through my own interpretation of JC's argument for national shame in this section of *Strong Opinions*, to which we now turn. This stance is easily attributable to Coetzee himself, and the following analysis aims in part to reveal the role that JC – himself a fictional creation – plays with regard to the author of *Diary*.

JC describes the mechanism of a self-justifying denial of national shame as involving three steps: (1) the ascription of shameful guilt to the political leaders of the relevant country – i.e. US post-9/11 political leaders; (2) a massive distancing from the positions adopted and the actions carried out by these leaders; and (3) a rejection of both moral dualism *and* the divide between theory and practice inherent in Machiavelli's *Necessità*.

Liberal intellectuals actively want to distance themselves from both the central idea of *Necessità* and the attribution of national shame, precisely because such positions implicate *them*. However, there is something the liberal intellectual doesn't see – mostly because he cannot see it – and this is the fact that shameful guilt descends like a curse and cannot be removed by argument. Liberal intellectuals cannot recognize this phenomenon because they want to deny their involvement in national shame by way of logical justification.

At this point in JC's strong opinion on national shame, the astute reader of *Diary* gradually realizes that JC is talking about and to the reader *herself* whenever he writes about "liberal intellectuals", describing their behaviour and the structure of their stance in view of this specific moral and political issue. And, at the same time that this manoeuvre is

acknowledged, the reader is further reminded that JC is no more than a product of Coetzee's literary imagination. Although Coetzee gives us *more* than *Strong Opinions*, he offers it to us nonetheless, and so must be held accountable for whatever positions are defended therein – even if he sometimes feels tempted to decry JC's decrepitude and misogyny and never completely identifies himself with his alter-ego (thus making things easier for him and harder for us). In spite of the likely frustration caused by this device, the dialectic of responsibility extends to the reader herself, who, after all, chose to take up the novel in the first place.

The dialectic of responsibility can therefore be said to act upon the reader of *Diary of a Bad Year* via a mechanism of identification. At the moment in *Diary* where the above quotation occurs, it is again Coetzee who wants to make us understand that there is something extremely inconsistent about the stance of these "liberal intellectuals". More specifically: how can "they" be opposed to both Machiavelli's *Necessità*, as a positive stance, and the assimilation of shame by citizenship, when both positions represent contradictory yet complementary ideas that "exhaustively cover a domain of intelligible positions"? The problem arises precisely because one must choose between the following options:

a) Either there is no such thing as national shame, because one must do whatever is needed to protect the interests of the state (*Necessità*); or
b) National shame exists and does not pertain exclusively to political leaders, insofar as it spreads via non-rational mechanisms, its removal cannot be effected by rational justification, and these leaders were elected by the public. To accuse political leaders of "shameful behaviour" *is already to experience the curse of this shame.*

This inconsistency, however, belongs also to *me* – an astute, well-informed reader of *Diary of a Bad Year.* I am perfectly capable of understanding the structural paths of this inconsistency, and I can even detect the responsibility-divesting cynicism inherent in it, so long as I am able to rely on the scapegoat of the third person. *It is "them", of which we speak, the so-called "liberal intellectuals".*

Only by means of the formal use of the third person to refer to this social group does Coetzee manage to convey his intended content in an effective way, removing the veil of blindness that risks shielding the eyes of the liberal intellectual reader. The dialectic of responsibility is the reading process by which we achieve the lifting of this veil.

It is more than plausible to suppose that, upon finishing *Diary*, one might come to view this formal strategy as a "formal subterfuge" and thus be left feeling naked and doubly deceived – for we do not like the position held by the liberal intellectuals, which isn't actually "their" position, but rather *ours*, and we do not like the way Coetzee's text pretends to tell us about an abstract group of people who can only stand for strong positions by being blind to their own point of view, when actually it describes us.

The dialectic of responsibility – this whole process – functions as a bridge between the *formal method of writing* and *the act of conveying ethical content* (both as a "material" posture towards human action and as a strategy for reading the book). It is by means of this dialectic that the reader manages not only to understand her place on the plane of reasons embodied by *Diary of a Bad Year* – becoming aware that she is an integral part of this space and not a mere spectator – but also to replace substitute ethical thought (the only kind available to any reader who merely occupies the position of spectator) with a straightforward but difficult ethical attitude: a commitment to decide how she should live and behave, given the shame that is hers *ab initio* – maybe because she is American, most likely because she is human.

But why did Coetzee feel compelled to use JC to morally educate *his* readers, while refusing to reveal his precise relation to this character and to his views? Isn't this, after all, a sheer abuse of well-known rhetorical devices? In other words, isn't he as shameless as any liberal intellectual?

6. Unveiled methodology

Admittedly, we may not ultimately settle on the interpretation of *Diary* I have been offering here; it is, after all, just one of many possible approaches to Coetzee's work, with its own potential shortcomings (for which I alone am responsible). With this said, however, two points in particular

have thus far become apparent: both in the sections that Coetzee wants to attribute to JC and in the lower sections of the page that he doesn't mind presenting as his own, Coetzee's writing style is extremely clear, descriptive and neat. Indeed, he must avoid obscurity and linguistic excess if he wants the narrative to progress through the different sections of the book's pages, to preserve the important connections between them, and to hold the reader's attention. On the other hand, the narrative device of a split in the author's voice instantiates a gap with regard to the identity of the novel's author at the very outset. The graphic structure of the book's page is of course highly unconventional, and both it and the related identity split between JC and John Coetzee are features that the reader confronts from the moment she takes up the novel. Philosophers are drawn to Coetzee's texts in part because of their complexity and the stylistic puzzles they contain. My own reading of *Diary*, whether or not it is ultimately helpful, can be viewed as a response to its ostensibly puzzling rhetorical features. The complexity of this interpretation directly reflects the complexity of the book's structure – an enticement with which Coetzee subtly provokes philosophical engagement.

Contemporary philosophers describe John Coetzee's work as "modernist realist" (see Mulhall, 2009), both because of its systematic formal features and because of the careful meta-reflection on the historical evolution of literary realism and modernism that some of his works explicitly contain.[10] Such philosophers go even further when they argue that a parallel struggle between realism and modernism, in terms of both technique and the corresponding impact on thematic issues, is intrinsic *both* to the realist design of the novel since its inception (citing either Cervantes or the pioneering English realism of Daniel Defoe) and to the realist efforts of modern philosophy. Mulhall has the following to say about this dialectic in relation to the genre of the novel:

> The history of the novel since Defoe, Richardson and Sterne might therefore be written entirely in terms of the ways in which novelists repeatedly subject their inheritance

10 See, for instance, J. M. Coetzee's modernist reflection on main features of formal realism in *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons* (London: Secker and Warburg, 2003, 4).

> of realistic conventions to critical questioning in order to recreate the impression of reality in their readers (in large part by encouraging those readers to see prior uses of convention to represent the real as merely conventional in contrast with their own, far more convincing ones). […] [I]t is not simply that the novel has a cannibalistic relation to other literary genres; from the outset, its practitioners had a similarly Oedipal relation to prior examples within the genre of the novel, and so to the prior conventions within which they necessarily operated (Mulhall, 2009: 145).

In *The Wounded Animal,*[11] Mulhall elaborates on the same kind of Oedipal struggle we encounter in the founding projects of modern philosophy – including those undertaken by Descartes, Locke and Berkeley – and their spectacular fight against arguments of authority, from both philosophy and religion.

Following this thread, and having presented the dialectic of responsibility in *Diary of a Bad Year* (along with one possible explanation for the tripartite structure of the book's pages), I must now apply the results of my own inquiry to philosophy – so that my own effort doesn't merely collapse into yet another case of the imposition of a dry philosophical framework on a remarkable piece of contemporary literature, and thus the destruction of the latter's original vitality. The crucial issue at this point can be put thus: recent philosophical projects have turned to specific literary achievements – like Coetzee's – and found that they have such-and-such to say about them. Who, then, in turn examines these philosophical commentaries on works of literature? Writers like Coetzee tend to be extremely critical when they do so (as our consideration of *Strong Opinions* shows). Is there, perhaps, a more genial approach available to us?

11 Mulhall, Stephen. *The Wounded Animal: J. M. Coetzee and the Difficulty of Reality in Literature and Philosophy.* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009. Print (esp. chap. Nine).

7. A third contributor

A further important source for this resumed conversation between (contemporary) literature and (contemporary) philosophy – neglected thus far – is literary criticism[12]. In his 2005 study, *The English Novel: An Introduction*,[13] Terry Eagleton (whose critical standpoint is distinctly Marxist) insists that it was the extraordinary rise of the middle class throughout eighteenth-century Europe that, via a narrative mirroring of its social struggles and aspirations, paved the way for the realist novel. Eagleton grounds his critical reading of canonical English-language novels, reaching from the work of Daniel Defoe to that of Virginia Woolf (the book not only argues for an historical model for interpreting the evolution of the genre, but also follows the historical evolution of the canon), on an essentially sociological model, arguing that the ascending middle class can be characterized as the great protagonist of the liberal values of individual self-determination and prosperity, unwilling to stand for romantic myths and general abstractions, and that its most representative writers projected the main values defended by the class to which they belong. For Eagleton, then, the realistic prose of most eighteenth-century literature both mirrors and embodies the pragmatic values of a new social order. If we accept that the purpose of the realistic novel is to do justice to the facts, to life as it stands in this new social configuration, we must also assume that this social mirroring, arguably accomplished through an inevitably conventional medium – a natural language – is the true purpose of realistic prose. The linguistic convention that makes narrative possible is thus an essentially phenomenal device, in the sense that it allows for the linguistic manifestation of the (socially relevant) facts as they stand.

Both in the introduction to his study "What is a Novel" and in his critical discussion of the canon, Eagleton relies on a socio-dialectical

12 Coetzee himself is an outstanding and well-known literary critic, of course (see, e.g. his *Inner Workings*. Vintage: London, 2008). We have been focusing here only in his literary works.

13 Eagleton, Terry. *The English Novel: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. Print.

model to explain literary formal realism. According to this stance, the realistic, self-effacing style of the eighteenth-century English novel is as much a product of the contemporary liberal social order as the modernistic turn of the early twentieth century is a product of the social and political disasters that resulted in the Holocaust. To Eagleton, if the novel does indeed have representative potential, so does the social order whose essentially evolutionary dialectic can also be depicted by conventional linguistic means.

By contrast, Stephen Mulhall (in two chapters in *The Wounded Animal*[14] and two essays in *The Self and its Shadows*[15]) considers the tension between realism and modernism in the work of John Coetzee, detecting in the latter's working out of the modernistic-realist tension we've analysed above what I will term a "conventionalist" pattern of self-overcoming with regard to inherited literary styles.

At the risk of oversimplifying Mulhall's dense account of modernist realism in the contemporary novel (which will serve my own purposes below), I want to describe his proposal as follows. He insists on the existence of an inner and inevitably doomed struggle within literary prose itself, present since the very inception of the novel, arguing that the novel has been struggling against its own conventional status as a genre in the name of fidelity to the facts. However, since these supposed facts are themselves a product of the literary imagination (and since, as linguistic creations, they are particularly "conventional"), the realistic novel is logically doomed to inflict on its descendants the same Oedipal tension it inherited from its ancestors (this is the material point of his quotation above).

Now, this dialectic of self-overcoming is made all the more acute by a progressive awareness within the modernist tradition of the fact that the methodological design of formal realism can only be accomplished through a means of expression that is highly conventional or non-natural – a means *that must be acknowledged as such*. (According to

14 Mulhall, 2009: Chapters Nine and Ten.

15 Mulhall, Stephen. *The Self and Its Shadows: A Book of Essays on Individuality as Negation in Philosophy and the Arts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Print ("The Melodramatic Reality of Film and Literature" and "Countering the Ballad of Co-Dependency").

this proposal, Coetzee's literary project, not least because he is also an outstanding critic, inherits this self-conscious historical design.)

The potential for reflection afforded by the insurmountable barrier separating the realistic writer from the factual world that his prose intends to represent provides a path for awareness of the facticity of the prose itself and for reflection, through that very prose, on both its representative potential and its representative limits. This in turn calls for a reflective fold within the prose itself in what concerns the conditions of its own possibility as a (conventional) representative device – something we've seen exemplified in Coetzee's modernistic approach to his own literary project, e.g. by reflecting on the conditions of the composition of *Strong Opinions* as an element within *Diary*.

By the time this turning-in-upon-itself on the part of literary prose is finally explored systematically from within the bounds of literature, we encounter modernism scholars arguing that:

> Typical aspects […] of "modernist" writing are radical aesthetics, technical experimentation, spatial or rhythmic rather than chronological form, self-conscious reflexiveness, skepticism towards the idea of a centered human subject and a sustained inquiry into the uncertainty of reality. […] Modernism [was thus] concerned with self-referentiality, producing art that was about itself and texts that were self-contained rather than representational. (Childs, 2008: 19)[16]

We also encounter (historically minded) modernist realist writers like Coetzee, reflecting on the tradition he inherited within a novel of his own:

> The blue costume, the greasy hair, are details, signs of moderate realism. Supply the particulars, allow the significations to emerge of themselves. A procedure pioneered by Daniel Defoe. Robinson Crusoe, cast up on the beach, looks around for his shipmates. But there are none. "I never saw them afterwards, or any sign of them",

16 Childs, Peter. *Modernism.* 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.

> says he, "except three of their hats, one cap, and two shoes that were not fellows". Two shoes, not fellows: by not being fellows, the shoes have ceased to be footwear and become proofs of death, torn by the foaming seas off the feet of drowning men and tossed ashore. No large words, no despair, just hats and caps and shoes. (*Elizabeth Costello*, 2003: 4)

At this point, we *should* already also know what philosophers themselves have to say about these historical tensions, both in the (finally) fellow subject of literature and within philosophy itself. But do we really?

8. Self-subverting models: are we left without a theory?

What have we accomplished thus far? We began by mentioning an ongoing conversation between philosophers and writers (especially novelists) that seems to rescue the latter from Plato's exile (it is also important to stress here that this is mainly a philosophical worry, since the poets were never greatly concerned about their ostracism from philosophy). We then analysed an extremely concrete contemporary discussion of two issues that were raised by Plato as (philosophical) obstacles against the poets: namely, the worry that poetry, due to its idolatrous character, leads us away from virtue, and that an excessive focus on images addresses only the appetitive part of the soul, leaving our rational faculty hungry for argument. As it happens, John Coetzee seems to turn these worries upside-down (in *Diary of a Bad Year* and elsewhere), putting both (platonic) charges to the philosopher himself and *working his way out of a rationalistic trap by paying close attention to the work's form, in addition to both creating an alter-ego who plays along with it and imposing himself as the author of a larger book, which finally frees him from the bonds of mere argument by incorporating argument and presenting it as essentially defective*. But then, one question still remains: *who* reads John Coetzee and tackles his therapeutic aims, in part by showing that she has been cured of the argumentative blindness

he diagnoses? In other words, is it possible for Coetzee's charges against philosophy to be not only answered, but even incorporated into a new way of doing philosophy? I have implied that the answer is yes, but I haven't yet said *how* this might be so.

One of the things that ought to be highlighted once again is that Coetzee himself writes his novels (and voices its charges) *in a specific way*: his style is sober, compact and self-conscious, all at once. Furthermore, he reflects on the peculiarities of (his own and others') literary styles, and, partly because of this incorporated self-reflection, his novels belong to what philosophers like Mulhall have termed "modernist realism". How can we account for *that* – that is, for our claim, as philosophers, that Coetzee is a modernist realist writer?

In the preceding section, I presented a two-pronged reading of the evolution of realism and modernism in the history of the novel, thereby generating a fiction of my own about the sort of literary prose that aims to represent invented stories about made up characters whilst doing justice to social and psychological reality. I gave names to the two explanatory models that account for the realism/modernism dialectic in the history of the novel, arguing that, whereas Eagleton's model is essentially socio-dialectical, Mulhall's account emphasizes a conscious self-overcoming of the constraints provided by literary conventions. And now I want to say that, in truth, neither of the two models functions exclusively of the other as a means of capturing the true nature of the development of literary realism and the turn to modernism – nor, for that matter, can either of them account for the sort of modernistic critical framing of an internal realistic project that we encounter in *Diary*.

Even if, with Eagleton, we accept as our starting point the historical emergence of the European middle class from the eighteenth century onwards, the shattering events of the twentieth century (not least South African Apartheid) are such that the historical developments emphasized in the socio-economic model come to be reflected in precisely the struggle against inherited conventions emphasized by the "conventionalist" approach outlined above. Given the unique and devastating nature of the historical realities in question, reflection on one element cannot be undertaken in isolation of careful reflection on the other.

And thus no sociological model that can account for the modernistic

turn in the European novel in the last decade of the nineteenth century can dispense with Oedipal struggles within and against literary conventions that have become either incomplete or totally obsolete as a means of representing reality as it truly stands. As the relevant social developments themselves come to be characterized by a breakdown in structure, unity and value, their representation becomes inseparable from a struggle against increasingly inadequate conventions – the odd structure of the page in Coetzee's *Diary* bearing witness to this inadequacy.

To my analysis of the split page, we should also add a consideration of the remarkable methodological differences between the voices of JC and John Coetzee in *Diary of a Bad Year*, played out by the latter as part of his therapeutic induction of readers of *his* book. The passages from both *Strong Opinions* and the lower sections that Anya encourages JC to call "soft opinions" cited above attest to a genuine difference of tone with regard to each voice. JC's writing is as informative and opinionated as a thematic essay can be, and he never allows his reasoning to deviate from a clear argumentative pattern. *Strong Opinions* is rightly described as a *realistic report* on contemporary ethical and political issues. In the lower sections of the page – where we also read how the upper sections were produced – Coetzee departs from straightforward reasoning, allowing for suspensions, onomatopoeia and markedly emotive language. It seems likely that Coetzee wants his readers to realize *that* and *how* a maximally comprehensive literary achievement cannot rely merely on the politically realistic prose characteristic of JC's voice. The way Coetzee shows us *this*, as we have seen, is via a modernistic embedding of *Strong Opinions* within his own book.

But then, if that embedding is one of the key features of this modernist realist literary project at this stage of its evolution (we know that it has evolved further in the meantime), and if one of the practical outcomes of this manoeuvre is the dialectic of responsibility and its unveiling of the truth about the status of *Diary*'s reader by refusing to feed him a straightforward argumentative treatise like *Strong Opinions* alone – precisely because, as we've seen, it cannot do the job it is intended to do – how can an explanatory essay on *Diary of a Bad Year* and its modernistic refinement possibly escape the fate of ersatz ethical thought? What I want to say is: how can a plausible theory of ersatz ethical thought

avoid collapsing into mere ersatz thought itself, where such failure is attributable in part to its very plausibility and persuasiveness? After all, the discovery of a good explanatory model usually provides us with a grounded excuse to stop thinking about the topic it explains. We assume that we know, and we proceed from there. As we have seen, by Coetzee's lights, both the theory and our acceptance of it are forms of substitution ethical thought. Thus, we might suspect that this paper should itself have been written in three layers, to the degree that its aim was to prevent ersatz ethical thought. But then, what would have been the point of writing it, other than to re-phrase *Diary of a Bad Year*, re-composing it in other words and perhaps damaging the original's reputation?

Is there anything left for us to do when the target of our inquiry, with which we are directly confronted, throws itself back upon us? Perhaps we should look more closely at how philosophers have dealt with the traps left by novelists they do not want to expel from their citadel again – such as Coetzee.

Mulhall is a case in point. Both in *The Wounded Animal* – especially in those chapters that most insist upon the dangerous overlapping of the literary identities of Costello and Coetzee – and in the more recent "Countering the Ballad of Co-dependency" (Mulhall, 2013), he explores various possibilities for *staging* or *performing* the literary encounter between realism and modernism in the story of Elizabeth Costello, displayed in the novel of the same name (it is now evident that, and how, the same can be done for *Diary*). But that staging is not merely theoretical, if only because Mulhall's philosophical prose embodies what it stands for, thus constituting another plausible candidate for a defeat of ersatz ethical thought. (Because his approach doesn't duplicate Coetzee's ways, it can, at least on the face of it, be set free of the charge of involving an inconsistent – or desperate – appeal to the authority of the writer, which would have rendered him irresponsible in just the way that the liberal intellectual is irresponsible.)

Mulhall chose to focus on *Elizabeth Costello*. Readers of this book, Mulhall claims, are introduced to events that take place both in the protagonist's academic life and in her everyday family life – both of which happen to be products of Coetzee's literary imagination, as are *Diary*, *Strong Opinions* and JC. Reading *Elizabeth Costello*, we learn

about the protagonist's physical decay, which contrasts sharply with the prodigiousness of her literary imagination and the playful recreation of the history of the novel that she provides in *The House on Eccles Street* (a novel by Costello to which we have no access whatever), in the Gates Lecture at Appleton College, and in private conversation with John, her son. In the course of her lecture at Appleton College, Costello even tackles the meaning of Kafka's "Report to an Academy", whose strange narrative starting point (an ape talking to a human audience) perhaps resembles her own situation in delivering the Gates Lecture.

The set of episodes in Costello's life brought together by Coetzee in a novel published several years after their individual presentation as lectures[17] does not present us with a theory about the (realistic) evolution of formal realism up to the modernistic turn (just as the modernistic performance of embedding one realistic book – *Strong Opinions* – within a larger one and toying with the names of their respective authors does not constitute a theory about the evolution of these formal techniques, or even about the evolution of both books as instances of each). Rather, the book stages or performs this evolution, in part by including reports on unexpected events during Costello's visit to Appleton College and to John's family. What happens during this visit (both the lectures and the meetings they occasion), provides the raw material for a realistic novel which, in a modernistic fashion, reflects both upon its own conditions of possibility and development as a specimen of the genre and upon the historical evolution of the latter. *Elizabeth Costello* is precisely this novel, and Mulhall, in his reading of it and the modernistic turn it instantiates, chooses to bring neither its story nor the puzzle of the identity of its author and narrator into a scholarly frame. Instead, and battling against the standards relied upon by his own analytic-philosophical tradition, he does justice to the literary and philosophical aspects of both (story and puzzle) by giving them a voice in his own reading – itself an example of the interdisciplinary conversation between philosophy and literature I have been tracing, which becomes possible when traditional, discipline-specific strictures are loosened. In precisely this way, and much like Coetzee's,

17 *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, delivered at Princeton University in 1997, under the title "The Lives of Animals" and published in 1999 (Coetzee, J. M. *The Lives of Animals*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

his own work represents a critical response to traditional philosophical modes of investigation, and thus also an Oedipal overcoming of a widely accepted methodological inheritance. Contrary to what occurs with regard to Coetzee-the-writer, however, this way of doing philosophy is polemic and faces several kinds of Platonic critic. It does reply to Coetzee's challenge, though, and without replicating its form – which is crucial to its avoiding the descent into ersatz ethical thought. With this important development noted, what this open-ended inquiry would still seem to require is a similarly therapeutic critique of the literary critic – and indeed of the tentative reflections offered here.

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The drawing of the winding line

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1. The primordial line of the universe

This text is a sketch, a preliminary drawing, an excuse that enables us to ask once more the same question which we have done countless times: what is thinking? And that goes to another question: what is drawing? What is a drawing? Why is drawing so different from other arts? Why does it have that quality which makes it possible to reveal what, according to Hesiod, Gods will have hidden and that makes men live?

We think that Valéry is right when he questions himself about drawing and asks if it is not the major obsession of the spirit, an obsession that is shown through the movement of the hand that draws or makes a sketch. Creating is always producing lines. "Drawing is free", a free design of the spirit, an unconscious mental operation and at the same time design of the eye, which more than see, becomes mediumistic design of the eye, which beyond time and space captures that hidden thing and draws it (Duchamp).

Leon Battista Alberti (1406-1472), to be brief, privileges a conception of drawing in which the contour borders an object making it visible. Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) comes with the idea of shape, an inheritance from Plato and Aristotle. *Disegno,* is something intelligible and sensitive. This concept expresses how the matter is made. The drawing is the place where we create any forms according to established codes. It is also a place where we draw and sketch our thoughts and imagination in a movement of previous exploration and preparation (for other forms of art, for example). The drawing will find the line and the movement of its artist, through which he can express himself.

But it is Leonard de Vinci (1452-1519) who brings us new ideas and essential differences, which will change the relationship between body and matter in the drawing: movement, rhythm, incompleteness, freedom to express what we want, winding (serpentine) lines that carry potentialities, experimentations, lack of any contour. The drawing becomes autonomous and *sfumato*, fluid, zone of vibration. The forces and lines that go through it have no substance or matter; carried by the drawing, they go through the space and meet between the shadow and the light. The drawing, judgement of the eye, without the interference of

the mind, is like a mirror that reflects every single object that is before it without knowing them (De Vinci, 2004: 273). For Leonard the secret of the gift of drawing lies in the discovery, in each object, in every tiny detail, of a certain flexuous line, which resembles a generator, and which is not one of the visible lines of the figure. A line that is less perceptive by the eye than thought by the spirit. Drawing is an obsession as it makes appear in each one of us the "individual meander" that in Bergson's view makes our individuality alive. Obsession that searches behind the lines for which is not representational.

We always draw to give life or to release it from down there where it is imprisoned, to draw lines of flight. Deleuze will call it the line of "continuous variation" like the Wörringer's gothic line or "wizard line", without contour, always unfinished. We can also call it primordial line, of the universe that goes

> *"to reach that point where the associative chain breaks, leaps over the constituted individual, is transferred to the birth of an individuating world. And it is no longer a matter of saying: to create is to think - but rather, to think is to create and primarily to create the act of thinking within thought" (Deleuze, 2000: 111).*

2. The power of the magic line

The drawing starts in the first line of its own beginning. We would like to notice the way this line is conceived, and its relationship with the other ones, its implications in painting, sculpture, architecture, in the body, in life, in the city.

Italo Calvino in the beginning of "*Invisible cities*" (Calvino, 1974) tells us that we cannot be sure about everything Marco Polo says when he describes the cities he has visited (the way he has described them to Kublai Kan and has drawn them to us). In life "there is a moment" in which the "sense of emptiness" reaches us, a moment of "dizziness that makes rivers and mountains tremble" that captures us and "flakes the wax of seals". It is in that moment that Marco Polo can draw the

cities, a moment that comes through what we have never heard or seen or found out. By that time we ask the same way Van Gogh did: "what is drawing? How does one get there?" And he answers his question saying that drawing is how we open a "way through an invisible iron wall" (Van Gogh, 1996: 451) (letter quoted by Artaud). Only through Marco Polo's reports ("accounts"), according to Calvino, "was Kublai Kan able to discern, through the Walls and towers destined to crumble, the tracery of a pattern so subtle [filigree] that could escape from the termites' gnawing" (Calvino, 1974: 6). But nothing can assure us that we can ever escape from that. We have found in the tracery of a pattern so subtle drawn by Marco Polo, who we see now not as a merchant but as a draughtsman, the possibility of going through that invisible iron wall. This is one of the designs of the drawing.

The filigree is the line or the tracery of a pattern so subtle we follow when we are "meditating, lost in thought", line that unfolds and improvises at its own risk. An imaginary line that gets lost in "unfamiliar quarters of distant cities", and the more it gets lost, the more it changes and will change while moving forward. A draughtsman like Marco Polo goes into a strange city and "sees someone in a square living a life or an instant that could be his". The drawing becomes the place where one could be and that is known to widen endlessly. Drawing to find out the future. After we draw the first tracery of a pattern so subtle, it becomes another and others. The filigree is able to rebuild itself, to replace itself, to move away, to go backwards; endless movements are possible. But, just like the first city this line has neither "name nor place" or a connecting thread. It is a line of nothing, dreamt in an uncertain and winding north that needs to be decoded and seen. Lines like cities seem to be "work of the mind or of chance, but neither the one nor the other suffices to hold up their walls" (Calvino, 1974:44), as words are not enough, what are we supposed to believe in then?

In *50 drawings for murder magic* Artaud will say:

> *"… These drawings,/ are not/ the representation/ or figuration/ of an object / of a state/ of mind or heart,/ of an element/ or an event/ of a psychological kind, / they are purely/ and simply/ the reproduction on/ the paper/ of a*

> *magical action/ that I have performed/ in true space/ with the breath of my/ lungs/ with my hands/ with my head/ and my two feet/ with my torso and my/ arteries, etc." (Artaud, 2008, 16)*

The drawing has therefore this virtue: we can "walk" in it with the whole body and "soul" that has created it with magic the same way we can walk through the cities "in thought", running the risk of getting lost, "stop and enjoy the cool air, or run off." The line is thus a "sensation line", something that you feel (*affectus*), not a sensational line, an obstinate, fierce, vital line, pure immanence, or "pure power", potential as *puissance* (the power to act and create, the sensibility of force), "a life" which expresses through minor events, a whole series of slight differences, reproductions of a "magical action", which represent nothing. The line doesn't separate from the body and feels the same vibrations that go through it - the body-bundle of forces becomes line-bundle of forces, which don't have either a subjective or a representative nature.

And when she becomes too visible and is unable to go forward, when she is no more fluid or *sfumata*, it may be drawn again (as Marco Polo does) in order to see it differently. Coming back to the hands (each one of them corresponds to "a shift of mood, in their alternation and repetition"), with them we draw once more the "monuments, markets, costumes, fauna and flora" and everything else words are unable to catch.

If the line, the tracery of a pattern so subtle is like Marco Polo's city thus "the city exists and it has a simple secret: it knows only departures, not returns", and if it doesn't exist, it has probably never existed. "Your cities do not exist. Perhaps they have never existed. It is sure they never exist again."

But the draughtsman sharpens his look: "If you want to know how much darkness there is around you, you must sharpen your eyes, peering at the faint lights in the distance." Up there, where the look goes, the strength of the line appears, the grey point, and up there it is drawn in accordance with "a perfect pattern", and Calvino goes on: "Amid the surge of the elements, a splendid hard diamond takes shape, an immense, faceted, transparent mountain." The line appears, in an unstoppable process the other supposed lines cannot keep. The draughtsman, Marco

Polo, draws, obsessed, with a different line, "made of exceptions, exclusions, incongruities, contradictions", and he concludes that "if such a city is the most improbable", then we need, we believe, to increase the probability of that line existing. But how far can the draughtsman go? He may not go beyond a certain limit, otherwise he "would achieve cities too probable to be real", and if he does? If he goes beyond a certain limit, what does he get?

Many difficulties still remain, but even without any guarantees:

> *"Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone.*
> *- But which is the stone that supports the bridge? – Kublai Khan asks.*
> *- The bridge is not supported by one stone or another,*
> *- Marco answers, – but by the line of the arch that they form.*
> *Kublai Khan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds:*
> *-Why do you speak to me of the stones? It is only the arch that matters to me.*
> *Polo answers: -Without stones there is no arch."*
> *(Calvino, 1974: 82)*

Polo and Calvino draw in filigree not to lose their "*Invisible cities*". In order to be able to draw the world with words and actions, they need that everything they see and do makes sense "in a mental space where the same calm reigns as here, the same penumbra, the same silence streaked by rustling of leaves" (Calvino, 1974: 103). "As here" is the garden that only exists "in the shadow of our lowered eyelids". Whenever we squint our eyes, we can see more clearly. Through the line of half-open eyelids we separate, differentiate, trace, draw, that is, by losing the usual references, "we cannot know which is inside and which outside" the "hanging garden" or "wasteland". But when "we draw some conclusions" it's impossible to know if the thing turns to the mind or outside. The invisible line that rules the drawing seems to be always about to be discovered and to become similar to a whirling, slow, frantic, proliferating, in a spiral shape or about to implode, *mise en abîme*. But, seeing an object is not the same as drawing an object. Kublai Kan just wants to see and that is

why he drives his obsession over the edge, to the definitive conquest: the "nothingness…"

Perhaps Marco Polo reaches an "oasis hidden in a fold of the desert" if that is his city. He may find a way of expressing by gestures what he has drawn in his spirit, the multiplicities to come, since he draws as Calvino (who was an excellent draughtsman when he was young) the text that is born continuously through "signals one sends out, not knowing who receives them". He draws in the folds, in the bends, where the "infinite line of virtual inflection" exists. Between matter and soul, between heaven and earth, openings for the slightest difference do not stop to come up not even by "an opening in the midst of an incongruous landscape, a glint of lights in the fog", by hands painted at the bottom of a cave. There, in "instants separated by intervals", in filigree, *"the city toward which my journey tends is discontinuous in space and time, now scattered, now more condensed, you must not believe the search for it can stop"* (Calvino, 1974: 164). What are Marco Polo and Calvino looking for when the first one draws with gestures in the air and the latter with words?

Marco Polo's drawing, as every drawing, will not stop finding that intrinsic singularity, which doesn't resend to any coordinate, and which is the beginning of the world. Paul Klee will call it the place of cosmogenesis", the "non-dimensional" point, "between dimensions". He will also state that, in early times, when writing and drawing coincide, the line was the first element. And Marco Polo will also say "perhaps, while we speak, it is rising, scattered, within the confines of your empire". Klee's spontaneous and dynamic line, Calvino's filigree, Artaud's magic action, Wörringer's non-organic powerful life are the real atom, the elastic point, which Deleuze will call line of infinite inflexion or celestial line of flight. Wörringer, Deleuze says, thought he had found his formula for this frenetic line: "it is a life, but the most bizarre and intense kind of life, a *nonorganic* vitality" (Deleuze, 2003:129).

The way Italo Calvino reads the world goes a thousand times through what is not written and not said, which the drawing and the visual images or the music are more capable of opening, that is to say, to express. Listening to the lines, going from the ear to the eye, passing by the hand. And after the hand, what can be found? Because it is the own universe of the drawing that is drawn, that is redefined at any moment,

that makes its own experiments from countless ways, with myriad styles and a prodigious imagination that go through times. And a last question in the last but one of the "*Invisible Cities*" "- You, who go about exploring and who see signs, can tell me toward which of these futures the favoring winds are driving us?"(Calvino, 1974: 164).

In his last fable written in 1980 Calvino tells us that in a beautiful day the Line was very angry, as she had to obey to the rules of the Hand. Therefore, she uses her trickery to take control over the situation. She tells the Hand she wants to help, as a sign of *a*cknowledgment, by drawing a hand. The Hand let herself guide by the Line, becoming submissive. The Line rejoices as she is certain she is the only one that can explain to the Hand what a hand really is. But the hand that was drawn, will not cease to draw some hands in different positions, since it was unable to use up all the existential possibilities of the drawing hand (Escher "Drawing Hands", 1948). At the end, the Line believes she is the only one to conduct the game, without realizing that she is more governed and better governed than before. The Hand, on the contrary, is convinced she has found out her own essence ignoring that in the absence of the Line she wouldn't really know that she exists.

The drawing, on the contrary, seems to have that quality that makes it live since its origin of "invisible reasons", which make it free. The same reasons Kublai Kan has heard Marco Polo saying: "The invisible reasons which make cities live, through which perhaps, once dead, they will come to life again." (Calvino, 1978: 136)

3. The invisible reasons

The invisible reasons we seek and suspect of being the main elements of the drawing do not stop showing up between heaven and earth, matter and soul, body and spirit. On the walls of the prehistoric caves we find extraordinary traces of that puissance, something able to catch the movements and the most secret and the finest rhythms of the universe.

Jean Clottes and David Lewis-Williams, in the nineties (1996), put forward an idea that still remains nowadays in spite of having aroused considerable controversy. An idea that brings the prehistoric parietal art

closer to shamanism, (this theory had already been suggested by two experts: Kirchner and Lommel), and that we formulate our own way by asking: what if those reasons that we miss were in another world? In the world that the shamans (through trance) drew on the walls of the caves thought to be an underground way of appropriation and communication of forces, control and incorporation that are absolutely essential to an introduction and meeting with the world.

Or, following Pascal Raux's point of view who in 2004 resumes the idea of the wall as a door, a passage or a porous frontier between the world of the living and the world of the spirits or of the supernatural. The way Pascal Raux "reads" the drawings send us to the origins of art. From animist beliefs, the author reinforces the idea of animism as being the first religion of humanity, which consists of believing that everything and every being have a living soul. The soul is something different from the body it takes up and which it can leave temporarily during sleep or trance. The first beliefs thought the dream was a phenomenon where we can see what has vanished from our life. The dream was another world that was closely linked to life just like the spirit that leaves the bodies when we die is superior to the body and outlives it. Ancestor worship has the same belief. If drawings are related to rituals of trance, the shaman is the one who draws and can travel to and in another world, when he is in an altered state of consciousness. We cannot help agreeing with Valéry "there is a huge difference between seeing one thing without a pencil and seeing it when it is being drawn" (Valéry, 1938: 63).

Drawing allows subject and object thus to change their status and their nature. We draw the first traces, curves and lines, contours of animals, negative and positive hands, *in sfumato*, figures, silhouettes and uncompleted bodies. We apply pigments using some techniques of a great complexity, we project blows and fluids from the bodies. They are the main traces that come from a will, an intention that is magical or animistic, divinatory or that adjures us.

Drawing for the first time is setting a rhythm, inscribing the movement in acts and events, in traces that are addressed to beings from other worlds, other times, and that define ways through, possibilities of a free and expressive gesture. In this first communication with the world or with the worlds drawing was actually there.

In the crucial moment of the genesis a will of saying and showing our own way of being (style) in the world was felt. "A will of art" or a "will of the shape", as Maldiney notices quite well in "*Regard Parole Espace*". And we still add another will: a will of the forces that fixes materially a time and a space of the past, of the memory and the imagination, to create the present and the future. Going beyond a certain limit is overflying that sinuous line of the primordial inflection of the drawing that from the beginning seems to be linked to magic. We are not exaggerating when it is said that drawing is magic. Jean Clottes will even state that magic only worked with drawing: the hands drawn on the rock went through it to travel as far as the world of the spirits (as we can see in the Chauvet cave, discovered in 1994, or in Gargas in 1906, or even more recently in Borneo, 2006).

A lot of studies about the eastern handwriting lead to the same conclusion. This handwriting might also make the passage and the communication to the world of the spirits, of the Gods and of the ancestors. Through the drawn surface, through the rituals and the chants, which accompany it, death has been abjured. Perhaps through a "magical action", as we have seen with Artaud and that Fernando Pessoa also describes in the same way:

> *"This action through which something is created is called a magical action, and we call magic the art through which that action is possible/ is achieved. And as the «non nisi parendo vincitur» can be applied here in this context, we need to know how we can control the external force in order to transform it, so that magical action can exist" (Pessoa, 1968: 44).*

The parietal art as well as the eastern handwriting (we could not develop) are some of the fundamental evidence from this beginning of the sinuous travelling line, the one which has never lost its purpose and that is the most unpredictably necessary. If drawing is giving life and venture in it, then "without stones there is no arch". We can speculate and not knowing much more than our own interpretation and theories can reach, but drawing, as well as sensation, is a certainty that confirms the world's reality. And we

can say about its origin fair words that Maldiney cites: "either it is here the place where light was born or it is here the place where it reigns freely, after having been taken captive" (Maldiney, 1999: 163).

Far from intending to depict or present a finished product (a figuration, an image close in itself), the drawing is an art of passage, of movement between forces and shapes, matters and signals. Therefore, drawing is said to be a preparation for painting or for sculpture or architecture; and if it is worthy, it is as a movement outside, between what doesn't have any shape and the shape. That is why in every situation a singular line flows, without any dimension, between the night and the light, *sfumata*.

4. The invisible origin of drawing

The invisible origin of drawing, what the whirling line draws or the difficulty in establishing the distinction between painting and drawing together with the empowerment of the last one regarding writing are some of the worries that made us believe (according to Deleuze) that drawing and arts in general share a common problem. That is why we have looked for an axis, a nexus, in what concerns the possibilities of drawing. In a certain way, we know that drawing is different from painting or writing, but the same physical gesture traces, inscribes and embodies itself in the space and in the spirit.

The drawing is generated and kept when we create a trace, which is not ruled by the visible, but that always begins by the invisible. Really contagious, it becomes an explorer of an incalculable extension, which is still unknown for us, and it does "body to body" with it. Drawing is, as we have seen, a way of opening a path through multiple spaces of heterogeneous surfaces: a "wall of invisible iron" or a wall of a cave. It is the availability of opening to live in a place, an area of imperceptibleness that is always about to begin and about to disappear (a huge number of possibilities are possible either in painting, in architecture, or in the technique), or it is still for Duchamp a means of "surpassing the animal state", "a way out to regions governed by neither time nor space". And, just like a line "never exists alone" (in Matisse's viewpoint) the same

happens with the drawing. Autonomous and free, it has the power to keep the virginity of the "first" forces while it makes its own drawing and go through the time. Deleuze will say in a fair and reasonable way: "There is a pictorial possibility that has nothing to do with physical possibility and that endows the most acrobatic postures with the sense of balance" (Deleuze, 1994: 164). We draw even before starting drawing anywhere, with any element, either matter or material, as we deeply need or wish to do it.

The drawing waves in a direction that is open as we go further, but in some way it remains inaccessible and problematic. It escapes from any reflection as it avoids the mirror, its own image, the sensational and the spectacular. Kora's lover (Dibutade's daughter) has also escaped from it and has kept himself the way he was. There is a trace that lights what it is needed to be seen, just like Marco Polo's drawing that always appears in the place of the missing city and about which he never talks but that is always there. Marco Polo's "visions", which make the mountains tremble and escape from the gnawing of the termites are kept in filigree. Calvino has found a way of expressing for ever by gesture what he drew in his spirit.

There is a trace or a line that only art is able to maintain and that western handwriting seems to have lost, but not the eastern writing/handwriting or the drawing (we can honestly say the same to music, literature and poetry, which we are not to talk about), as they had not let escape the rhythm, the concrete movement of the cosmos, the expressive freedom, the wish of making the first virgin forces visible. They can keep the power of creation through the hand and the trace, and the possibility the magic action calls and puts into practice. It is possible that through Kora's hand, which came from the night, love has invented drawing. The visions suspended in time and space (what Giacometti called style) travel beyond the limits and are drawn countless times before, after and right now with the power they have to decide and create. And, tirelessly, other hands will come from the bottom of the caves up to the surface and will mend it incessantly, as Penelope did. They are hands that follow the spirit and are closely linked to the movements of the soul, which are movements of the world.

As groups of delicate joints, nerves and ligaments that expand and

contract, thumb and index finger mould, move roughly and join together in a unique tension exploring beyond the fingertip, memorising visions, dreams and sliding through rhythms and blows. The drawing "puts its hand on the thought", because it makes it come out from the common paths. The draughtsman "sees" behind the lines we see the line of the unseen movement. For Ravaisson, the drawing begins with the "good judgement of the eye", which definitely "sees", when it lets itself go. And, in this act of abandon or "acceptance" it doesn't let the spirit escape from its fundamental design. This is what the draughtsman should do when he creates. In order to truly see life that expresses itself to the eye in the thinnest and most invisible curves the draughtsman becomes "gentle" and, in an act of "acceptance" he pounces and gets into "the privacy of the work of the nature"(Bergson, 1959: 1472). There he catches the gentle movements through which, according to Ravaisson, we feel, we get a feeling and guess in a kind of "distension" of the spirit". Inspired by Leonard de Vinci, to whom beauty was the established grace, Ravaisson considers, according to Bergson, that "grace" is the most concrete "vision" of things, the major freedom, it is acceptance and love, it is life itself.

Between inside and outside, past and future, shadow and light, in the unique edge lives a line that generates life, whirling "cosmic axis" *sfumato* hidden by the Gods, (that was what Hesiod thought), which waved in the wind in a rhythmic and infinite "individual meandering" like a bamboo or a grass or a *disegno*. The "grace" of the drawing lies in its mysterious and magic quality of making my soul and my body be the same, be just one. It is the drawing as *cosa mentale*, body and mind that really matters: "… and it is the only thing in the world that is preserved. (…) The air still has the turbulence, the gust of wind, and the light that it had that day last year, and it no longer depends on whoever was breathing it that morning." (Deleuze, 1994: 163)

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A taste of Moral Concerns – On the Applied Judgment of Taste

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It is hard to find a dictionary or encyclopedia of aesthetics that does not mention Kant's aesthetic theory or Kant's account of taste. And yet, the references made to his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* are usually focused only on the pure judgment of taste.

Focusing on this notion makes it easier to situate Kant's account both within his entire philosophical system and within the emergence of aesthetics as a discipline. What is more, such a focus has proven to be of much help when one intends to present Kant as a distinguished precursor of the art for art's sake movement, of aesthetic formalism, or even of the so-called theories of the aesthetic attitude.

As such, Kant has often been described as if his views on aesthetic appreciation had made it to be incompatible with the consideration of moral issues – as if one could not consider purposes of a moral sort while passing a judgment of taste.

Now, taking into account how morally and politically engaged art has become since Kant and above all throughout the last century, it is easy to see why interest in Kant's account of taste has waned.

Such a picture of Kant and his aesthetic theory is not the most accurate, though. To be sure, there are two kinds of judgment of taste: the pure judgment of taste (the judgment of free beauty); and the applied judgment of taste (the judgment of adherent beauty). Descriptions of Kant's theory are usually concerned with the former. My paper will be rather focused on the latter.

I claim that the judgment of adherent beauty can include the consideration of moral purposes while still being an aesthetic judgment.

In the first part of my paper, I will argue that the beauty of buildings and the beauty of horses may include the consideration of concepts of a moral sort and that human beauty does necessarily include it; in the second part, I will give an account of why adherent beauty is a genuine kind of beauty, why the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste.

If my hypotheses are correct, we have good reasons to believe that Kant's aesthetic theory, and particularly his notion of applied judgment

of taste, might enrich current discussions in the fields of aesthetics, philosophy of art, and art itself. The judgment of adherent beauty instantiates aesthetic appreciation of morally and politically engaged works of art without dismissing – and on the contrary, considering – their moral and political engagement.

I.

Kant introduces the notion of adherent beauty at the outset of §16 of his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.[1] He describes it as a kind of beauty that presupposes a "concept of what the object ought to be" and "the perfection of the object in accordance with it."[2] Adherent beauties are thus "ascribed to objects that stand under the concept of a particular end."[3]

As we can see a couple of paragraphs later, that is the case of the beauty of buildings, horses, and human beings:

> the beauty of a human being (and in this species that of a man, a woman, or a child), the beauty of a horse, of a building (such as a church, a palace, an arsenal, or a garden-house) presuppose a concept of the end that determines what the thing should be, hence a concept of its perfection, and is thus merely adherent beauty.[4]

Nothing in this passage can make us sure of what kind of internal objective purposiveness is at work in adherent beauty. In the case of the beauty of a building, it is very likely that criteria of functionality play a role, for, as Kant states in §51, "the appropriateness of the product to a certain use is essential in a *work of architecture*;"[5] but it is not hard

1 English quotations of Kant's works are from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood.

2 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 114.

3 Ibid., 114.

4 Ibid., 114.

5 Ibid., 200.

to think of architecture as raising moral issues as well. According to Geoffrey Scarre, for instance, when architects fail to see "that buildings should be fitted to human beings", and not the converse, "[i]n Kantian language" they fail "to treat people as the *ends* of his activity."[6] To be sure, this does not entail that every building has a moral end in its cause – as Paul Guyer maintains, at least some buildings "have practical but not moral purposes."[7] But one could hardly argue that purposes of a moral sort are never in the cause of a building or that such purposes are never to be taken into account in judging its beauty.

Something similar happens when one turns to the question of knowing what kind of concept the beauty of a horse adheres to. Nothing in §16, nor even in the entire third *Critique*, functions as evidence that such a concept is of such or such a sort. However, something promising if linked up with the assertion that the beauty of a horse is of an adherent kind can be found in the *Critique of Practical Reason*: Kant asserts that, if compared with inclination, love or fear, admiration comes nearer to the feeling of respect but, unlike the latter, it "can be directed to things also," such as "the strength and swiftness of many animals."[8] While one cannot conclude from these words that the beauty of a horse is fixed by a concept of perfection of a moral sort, it is plausible to believe Kant's view to be that anything that precludes a horse from displaying its strength and swiftness would also preclude us from judging it beautiful. It is precisely to this excerpt of the second *Critique* that Scarre draws attention when he suggests that Kant's view might have been "that the limits of the legitimate decoration of horses are set by a quasi-ethical requirement of preserving their ability to display their strength and swiftness."[9]

In *The Metaphysics of Morals* there is something challenging as well: Kant says that once "violent and cruel treatment of animals (...) weakens and gradually uproots a natural predisposition that is very

6 Geoffrey Scarre, 'Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 21 (1981), 351-362, at 359.

7 Paul Guyer, 'Free and Adherent Beauty: A Modest Proposal', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2002), 357-366, at 364.

8 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 202.

9 Scarre, 'Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty', 359.

serviceable to morality in one's relations with other people," human beings have "a duty to refrain from this."[10] From this passage, too, it is plausible to believe Kant's view in third *Critique*'s §16 to be that anything that promotes, functions, or perhaps looks like a violent and cruel treatment of an animal would preclude us from judging it beautiful.

Here, as above, Guyer would claim that a horse "has no moral standing of its own" and, thus, that "any suggestion that it is only moral ends that restrict permissible forms in the case of adherent beauty is incorrect."[11] This does not entail that moral concepts are never to be considered within the judgment of adherent beauty, though; on the contrary, as Guyer himself does add, "an object's failure to satisfy either our moral expectations or some other practical but non-moral expectations will be sufficient to block any pleasure in its beauty."[12] All Guyer seems to hold, then, is that ends of a moral sort are neither always considered nor the only ones to be considered.

As for myself, I wonder what Kant would say about the nature of the ends that the beauty of a horse adheres to in a time when moral and political issues such as animal rights are seen by many as a major concern. Insofar as the right to housing is also often seen as a prior political and moral issue, the same applies to the concepts of what the object ought to be considered in the beauty of a building. Based on the

10 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 564.

11 Paul Guyer, 'Free and Adherent Beauty: A Modest Proposal', 364. According to Guyer, such a suggestion has been made by Scarre. Indeed, Scarre holds that the concept of what the object ought to be involved in the judgment of adherent beauty "somehow places a restriction of a moral sort on the aesthetic judgement" (Scarre, 'Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty', 357) and that one of the necessary conditions of an object's being adherently beautiful is that "it does not offend against decorum (where it belongs to a kind of objects for which questions of decorum arise)" (ibid., 358).

12 Ibid., 364. To some extent, he seems to agree with Henry E. Allison, according to whom "other considerations (…) may, but need not be, moral" (Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 140). Earlier, Martin Gammon had asserted it was "difficult to discern the moral "decorum" which stems from restricting the crenelations on "summer houses"" (Martin Gammon, '*Parerga* and *Pulchritudo adhaerens*: A Reading of the Third Moment of the "Analytic of the Beautiful"', *Kant-Studien* 90 (1999), 148-167, at 163).

excerpts I have quoted from the second *Critique* and *The Metaphysics of Morals*, I suggest that concepts of a moral sort could be among the ones to be considered: if anything in an object conflicts with duties we have to ourselves, then we cannot judge that object beautiful.

Let me now move to the beauty of a human being. Going back to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, we will see that the concept of perfection that the beauty of human beings is fixed by is of a moral sort.

In §17, Kant says that an ideal signifies "the representation of an individual being as adequate to an idea."[13] As such, the ideal of the beautiful, the ideal of beauty, is the representation of an individual as being adequate to what Kant had just called "the archetype of taste."[14] Next, Kant asserts that "[o]nly that which has the end of its existence in itself, the *human being*, who determines his ends himself through reason (…) is capable of an ideal of *beauty*"[15]. Now, since the human being is a moral being, precisely insofar as (s)he determines her/his ends her/himself through reason, Kant can finally add that "in the *human figure* (…) the ideal consists in the expression of the *moral*,"[16] in other words, that the ideal of (human) beauty is "[t]he visible expression of moral ideas."[17]

That being said, considering that human beauty must be judged according to such an ideal – which, as an ideal, is judged in terms of its adequacy to a concept of reason and which, as the ideal of human beauty, is judged in terms of its adequacy to the archetype of taste, which after all is a moral idea – we are entitled to conclude that the adherent beauty of a human being is conditioned by a concept of what a human being ought to be, which is an idea of a moral sort.[18]

13 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 117.

14 Ibid., 116. In other words, the ideal of beauty is the representation of the archetype of taste "in an individual presentation" (ibid., 117).

15 Ibid., 117.

16 Ibid., 120.

17 Ibid., 120.

18 Addressing some consequences of the introduction of the notion of an ideal of beauty to Kant's entire philosophical system, Allison suggests that "Kant's discussion of this unique ideal points ahead to the connection of taste and

Human beauty is not at odds with moral concerns, then. On the contrary, the judgment of the beauty of a human being is necessarily applied to the visible expression of the moral.

What is more, even before asserting that only the human being is capable of an ideal of beauty, Kant had said that the archetype of taste was "a mere idea, which everyone must produce in himself, and in accordance with which he must judge everything that is an object of taste."[19] Not only human beauty, then, but rather everything that is an object of taste[20] must be judged in accordance with the archetype of taste. Now, such an archetype can only be represented as an ideal of the beautiful, as we have seen, and the ideal of the beautiful, as the ideal of human beauty, is the expression of the moral. If things are so, then, it seems plausible to suggest Kant's view to be that everything that is an object of taste must be judged in terms of its adequacy to a moral idea.[21]

To sum up, even though we cannot be sure what kind of concepts about objects ought to play a role in the beauty of a building or of a horse, we have good reasons to believe moral concepts to be among them. In the specific case of human beauty, I have made it evident that the concept of an end that human beauties adhere to is of a moral sort. If it is so, I am entitled to claim that adherent beauty can include – and in some cases it necessarily includes – the consideration of moral concerns.

The question that now arises is whether adherent beauty is a kind of beauty. One must have in mind that

> the experience of beauty with morality" (Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 143). Here as elsewhere, Allison follows the view of Gammon, according to whom "[t]he crux of the "ideal of beauty" in Kant's account (…) rests on the possibility of accommodating a sensuous estimate to the estimate of moral perfection, which necessarily exceed the bounds of sense" (Gammon, '*Parerga* and *Pulchritudo adhaerens*', 165). However valuable these hypotheses may be, elaborating on them would exceed the purposes of my paper.

19 Ibid., 116-117.

20 Let alone "that [which] is an example of judging through taste, even the taste of everyone" (ibid., 116-117).

21 This would be a stronger claim than the one I have sustained in this paper. As such, it would require a more extended argument. For present purposes, namely to argue that, within Kant's aesthetic theory, moral concepts can play a role in judgments of taste, all one needs is to show that in judgments of human beauty they necessarily do so. This is what I have shown.

> the beauty for which an idea is to be sought must not be a *vague* beauty, but must be a beauty *fixed* by a concept of objective purposiveness, consequently it must not belong to the object of an entirely pure judgment of taste, but rather to one of a partly intellectualized judgment of taste[22].

In other words, I must answer the question of knowing whether a partly intellectualized judgment of taste, an applied judgment of taste,[23] is a genuine kind of judgment of taste. In the remainder of my paper I shall turn to that.

II.

We have seen that, according to §16, the beauty of an adherent kind presupposes a "concept of what the object ought to be" and "the perfection of the object in accordance with it."[24] This is not an uncontroversial statement, for in the title of the third *Critique*'s previous section (§15) Kant had written that "[t]he judgment of taste is entirely independent from the concept of perfection."[25]

22 Ibid., 117.

23 Or, in §48's words, "a logically conditioned aesthetic judgment" (ibid., 190).

24 Ibid., 114.

25 Ibid., 111. While some authors see just a puzzle here (see: Eva Schaper, 'Free and Dependent Beauty', in Paul Guyer *Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment – Critical Essays* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 101-119; Robert Stecker, 'Free Beauty, Dependent Beauty, and Art', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 21 (1987), 89-99; Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Philip Mallaband, 'Understanding Kant's Distinction between Free and Dependent Beauty', *The Philosophical Quarterly* 52 (2002), 66-81; Paul Guyer, 'Free and Adherent Beauty: A Modest Proposal', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2002), 357-366; or Rachel Zuckert, *Kant in Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the* Critique of Judgment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)), some others cannot help noticing a contradiction (see: Donald W. Crawford, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974); Ruth Lorand, 'Free and Dependent Beauty: A Puzzling Issue', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 29 (1989), 32-40; or Denis Dutton, 'Kant and the Conditions of Artistic Beauty', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 34 (1994), 226-241). In any case, the worries raised by the abovementioned assertions (the judgment of taste

Fortunately, still in §16 we can find a decisive hint about why the applied judgment of taste is a judgment of taste, or, in other words, why adherent beauty is a kind of beauty. After having mentioned the beauty of a building, the beauty of a horse, and the beauty of a human being as adherent beauties, Kant writes:

> One would be able to add much to a building that would be pleasing in the intuition of it if only it were not supposed to be a church; a figure could be beautiful with all sorts of curlicues and light but regular lines, as the New Zealanders do with their tattooing, if only it were not a human being[26].

I take two suggestions from this assertion: that in order to assess the beauty of a church or the beauty of a human being concepts of what those objects ought to be must be considered; and yet, that the consideration of such concepts – in this case, respectively, church and human being – does not prevent the faculty of the imagination from playing freely and, therefore, that it does not preclude one from judging those objects beautiful.[27]

To be sure, the concepts of what the objects ought to be constrain, limit the freedom of the faculty of imagination. However, they do not undermine it. Considering the concept of an end that determines what a human being ought to be, therefore the concept of its perfection, one might claim, for instance, that its figure must not be tattooed with all sorts of curlicues and light but regular lines; considering the concept of an end that determines what a church ought to be, therefore the concept

is entirely independent from the concept of perfection; and adherent beauty presupposes the perfection of the object in accordance with a concept of what such object ought to be) cannot be allayed just by appealing to the difference between pure and impure judgment of taste. As Schaper does warn, calling the applied judgment of taste impure "makes no difference in this respect as it still is to count as a judgment of taste, an aesthetic appraisal. Any dilution of such a notion by admitting conceptual ties at all is a move away from the necessary conditions of aesthetic appraisals as outlined so far in the first three Moments" (Schaper, 'Free and Dependent Beauty', 104).

26 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 115.

27 Here it must be reminded that the determining ground of the judgment of beauty is a pleasure in the free play of the imagination with the understanding.

of its perfection, one might claim that its floor plan must be cruciform.[28] Although such concepts do constrain, limit, circumscribe, or even guide, the freedom of the faculty of imagination, it still imagines freely, in a free play with the understanding.[29]

28 I have taken the former example from *Critique of the Power of Judgment*'s §16 itself; the latter, from Guyer: "while the general purpose of worship and such more specific requirements as that of a cruciform floor plan may place limits on what can please us in a church, these hardly provide rules which are sufficient for producing a beautiful church or judging one. The concept of its purpose leaves room for a genuine aesthetic response to the beauty of a church, although it places some limits on the forms which might constitute that beauty" (Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 219). Hans-Georg Gadamer had already sketched a similar explanation out by associating adherent beauty with those cases "where "looking to a concept" does not abrogate the freedom of the imagination" (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd, revised edn (New York, Continuum: 2006), 41). More recently, Brent Kalar has spoken of the freedom of the imagination as being "somehow *circumscribed*" (Brent Kalar, *The Demands of Taste in Kant's Aesthetics* (New York, Continuum: 2006), 85) while Robert Stecker placed emphasis on the suggestion that "[t]he imagination is guided by a concept but not determined by it" (Stecker, 'Free Beauty, Dependent Beauty, and Art', 92).

29 Denis Dutton goes further and stresses it is only by means of rules that such a play is possible. According to Dutton, "complete, structureless freedom would make play impossible; there can be no play without rules" (Dutton, 'Kant and the Conditions of Artistic Beauty', 237). It is precisely because of this necessary link between play and rules that he has rather spoken of the latter as the "enabling conditions" of beauty (ibid., 233) and asserted that Kant "recognized the ability of rules not just to limit, but to incite the free imagination and provide it with material" (ibid., 234). Once again, Gadamer had already advanced something similar when he stated that "this imaginative productivity is not the richest where it is merely free (…) but rather in a field of play where the understanding's desire for unity does not so much confine it as suggests incitements to play" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 41). One of the main reasons why there is no unanimity among scholars may be the fact that Kant has never established the conditions of the freedom of the faculty of imagination. Guyer, for instance, admits as "a fundamental problem about Kant's explanation of aesthetic response (…) the question of the real conditions of the freedom of the imagination" (Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 219), that is, "the indeterminacy of his conception of the freedom of the imagination, linked to his uncertainty about the scope of the power of abstraction" (ibid., 222). Nevertheless, as Guyer himself does add, "anything less than a very broad power of abstraction will make aesthetic response a rare occurrence. (…) The nature of sensation and empirical knowledge, were the imagination constrained by everything these present, would preclude our finding many objects beautiful. Clearly, Kant did not mean to imply such a conclusion" (ibid., 224).

Now, since, in the case of adherent beauty, despite the constraints imposed on the freedom of the faculty of imagination by the consideration of concepts, imagination does imagine in a free play with the understanding, then adherent beauty is de jure beautiful, the applied judgment of taste is de jure a judgment of taste.

To summarize, even though, in the case of adherent beauty, concepts of what the object ought to be must be considered, such concepts are not to function as the determining ground of the judgment. The determining ground of the judgment of adherent beauty is the pleasure taken in the free play of the imagination with the understanding. Adherent beauty is a genuine kind of beauty, the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste.

III.

We have just seen why adherent beauty is a genuine kind of beauty, why the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste. As long as imagination imagines freely, in a free play with the understanding, and as long as our pleasure is taken in such play, we can pass a (pure or applied) judgment of taste and judge the object (free or adherently) beautiful.

Previously, in the first part of this paper, we had seen that the applied judgment of taste, the judgment of adherent beauty, can include the consideration of moral concepts. In the case of the beauty of horses and the beauty of buildings we cannot be sure that it does, even though we have good reasons to believe so, namely if we appeal to some of Kant's works other than his third *Critique* or if we imbue Kant's aesthetic theory with current major moral and political issues, such as the right to housing or animal rights. In the case of human beauty, things look crystal-clear – within the framework of Kant's theory, the beauty of human beings must be accordant with the visible expression of the moral.

Now, if my views are correct, that means that the applied judgment of taste can take moral issues into account – as a matter of fact, in some cases it must include the consideration of concerns of a moral sort.

And yet, it does not become a cognitive judgment, for imagination keeps imagining freely, in a free play with the understanding – and it is in such play that we take the pleasure that works as the determining ground of the judgment.[30] The applied judgment of taste is, in Kant's words, a partly intellectualized judgment of taste, a logically conditioned aesthetic judgment. It is a genuine kind of aesthetic judgment, a genuine kind of judgment of taste.

The fact that the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste is pertinent in many respects, namely within the history of aesthetics and Kant's own philosophical system[31]. For present purposes, this fact is of crucial importance because, as a judgment of taste, the judgment of adherent beauty instantiates aesthetic appreciation of morally and politically engaged works of art without dismissing – and on the contrary, considering – their moral and political engagement. As a judgment the determining ground of which is a pleasure taken in the free play of the imagination with the understanding, it has a disinterested nature. However, this does not mean it is of an uninterested sort, for it can include – and at least in some cases it must include – the consideration of moral and political concerns.

30 With regards to the specific case of human beauty, I therefore agree with Stecker, according to whom "Kant's point (…) is that the perception of the expression of moral character is *not* an instance of subsuming an object under a concept according to a rule. It is not a judgement *determined* by a concept. There is no rule for seeing moral character; rather it requires the play of the imagination as it scans face and figure. However, unless concepts (moral ideas) are being used in some sense, there would be no basis for seeing face and figure *as* having any character at all" (Robert Stecker, 'Lorand and Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 30 (1990), 71-74, at 72).

31 Kant's judgment of taste plays a crucial role in the emergence of aesthetics as a discipline, in the eighteenth-century – contra Burke and the empiricists, Kant argues that it is a universally valid judgment; contra Baumgarten and the rationalists, he maintains it is an aesthetic one. Such a judgment is also of great relevance within the framework of Kant's philosophical system: in short, it represents the possibility of throwing a bridge from the domain of the concepts of nature to the domain of the concept of freedom. In both contexts; – that is, in the ambit of the history of aesthetics and in the ambit of Kant's philosophical system – the applied judgment of taste has the merit of including within the scope of aesthetics anything the aesthetic value of which presupposes concepts (concepts of what the objects ought to be, as well as the perfection of the latter in accordance with the former), such as artistic beauty, the so-called fine arts, or, more generally, the arts.

If things are so, I suggest that we should avoid taking it at face value that Kant advocates for an aesthetic purism or that he would prefer foliage for borders or on wallpapers to any masterpiece of figurative art or to a cutting-edge, twentieth or twenty-first century art object. To be sure, such a picture of Kant has been used not only to criticize him, but also as an anticipation of the theses grounding the art for art's sake movement in the early nineteenth century, of the ones supporting aesthetic formalism in the twentieth, or even of the statements of the so-called theories of the aesthetic attitude[32]. Unfortunately, a significant part of both criticism and support of Kant's aesthetic theory has stemmed from a misreading of it.

If we read Kant's aesthetic theory the way I propose, that is, as one that includes the consideration of concepts of a moral sort at the core of (adherent) beauty, at the heart of the (applied) judgment of taste, we will be able to enrich current discussions in the fields of aesthetics, philosophy of art, and art itself, with an account of aesthetic appreciation that, although admitting that such appreciation can include the consideration of the moral and political engagement of artistic objects, yet it does not make it anything but aesthetic.

Neither taste nor beauty is at odds with moral and political issues, then. Perhaps the current avoidance of both just reflects our fears about ourselves, as Kathleen Marie Higgins holds, "perhaps we doubt that we

32 Understanding Kant as a precursor of the theories of the aesthetic attitude can be itself controversial enough. As Nick Zangwill remarks, "[t]he notions of an interested attitude or of interested contemplation (…) are all quite different senses of 'interest' from the one that Kant has in mind" (Nick Zangwill, 'UnKantian Notions of Disinterest', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 32 (1992), 149-152, at 151). In any case, I guess that not even such theories have been accurately described by their critics – with George Dickie at head. To be sure, as Jerome Stolnitz asserts: "aesthetic perception is frequently thought to be a "blank, cow-like stare." It easy to fall into this mistake when we find aesthetic perception described as "just looking," without any activity or practical interest. (…) But this is surely a distortion of the facts of experience" (Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1960), 38). For some insightful accounts of the aesthetic attitude, see: Sushil Kumar Saxena, 'The Aesthetic Attitude', *Philosophy East and West* 8 (1978), 81-90; David E. W. Fenner, *The Aesthetic Attitude* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996); and Gary Kemp, 'The Aesthetic Attitude', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 39 (1999), 392-399).

really do have enough of a heart to appreciate and transform at the same time. Obsessively aware of what is unbeautiful, we can only find beauty a threatening challenge."[33]

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33 Kathleen Marie Higgins, 'Whatever Happened to Beauty? A Response to Danto', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996), 281-284, at 283.

Chaosmopolitanism: Reconfiguring James Joyce's Cities of *Thisorder* and Exiled Selves

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> What went forth to the ends of the world to traverse not itself, God, the sun, Shakespeare, a commercial traveller, having itself traversed in reality itself becomes that self. Wait a moment. Wait a second. Damn that fellow's noise in the street. Self which it itself was ineluctably preconditioned to become. *Ecco!*
> James Joyce, *Ulysses*

> he forged himself ahead like a blazing urbanorb
> James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*

In two books (*Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*) that together took a quarter of a century to write, an itinerant-revolutionary-artist-city-dweller created, what I call, *chaosmopolitanism*, as a new kind of value in vision (which incorporates seeing and hearing) and experience. In colliding chaos with order (cosmos), the word "cosmopolitan" for the urban dweller is not sufficient. As is well known, James Joyce is both the local writer officially dedicating his art to a single city (Dublin); and the world author appropriating so many other facets of cities, languages and international cultural literary figures and motifs and weaving them into a revolutionary literature. In his work, he was a master of expressing the modern experience on a grand scale of fragmentation, reconfiguration, and the disorientation and reorientation of space (see Benal, 2002), time and identities in the city; in his life, he moved from one European city to the next: from Dublin to Pula to Trieste to Zurich, and then from Zurich back to Trieste and unto Paris, and then escaping Nazi-occupied Paris to return to Zurich where he died and was buried. I see *chaosmos* – a word that Joyce coined in *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce, 1999, p. 118) – as the expression of his art and vision and which emerges out of experiencing the myth, logos and life of the modern city and the exiled self of modernity. In this essay, I will

present this idea of *chaosmopolitanism* via three sections: 1) chaos and cosmos in the modern age; 2) cacophonies, symphonies and multiplicities of the city; and 3) the art and expression of the exiled wandering self.

1. Chaos and Cosmos in the Modern Age

Harold Bloom called the twentieth century to which its literature belongs "The Chaotic Age" (Bloom, 1995, pp. 343-479). It is the age of acceleration, rapid increase of the world's population, massive urban city construction, accelerated travel, new advanced pharmaceuticals, and widespread sharing of information; it is an age of technological global wars, totalitarian societies, mass human displacement, and the saturation and collapse of empires and colonialism. Amidst these tensions, erosions and fall of patriarchal systems, the cosmopolitan morphs into the *chaosmopolitan*. *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are both the products and pioneers of the Chaotic Age and of the *chaosmopolitan* self, giving voice to disillusion, disorder and reordering. On the two novels, Umberto Eco writes: "Joyce clearly thought of his novel [*Ulysses*] as a summa of the universe" (Eco, 1989, p. 33); and "If *Finnegans Wake* is a sacred book, it tells us that *in principium erat Chaos*" (Eco, 1989, p. 87). Words such as "microchasm" (Joyce, 1999, p. 229) and "pancosmos" (Joyce, 1999, p. 613) are chanced upon in *Finnegans Wake* – a book that is like a vast deep ocean, filled with an onslaught of intimidating sentence structures and strange new phrases and words of *bricolage* and portmanteau on every page. These two books embody chaos and order in one, and they are the ultimate anti-totalitarian totalizing novels[1]. This is the *chaosmos*: a deconstruction and interpenetration of contradictions and opposites; a destabilisation and undoing of antinomies and binaries; a disempowering of orthodox and patriarchal laws and systems; a fragmentation and reconfiguration of things and events into micro-totalities; a treacherous, heretical, and joyously subversive vision. In their final book together,

1 *Finnegans Wake* is described by Philippe Sollers as "an active transnationalism, disarticulating, rearticulating and at the same time annulling the maximum number of traces – linguistic, historical, mythological, religious", and that it "is the most formidably anti-fascist book produced between the wars" (Sollers, 1977, p. 109).

Deleuze and Guattari borrow Joyce's word to define art: "Art is not chaos but a composition of chaos that yields the vision or sensation, so that it constitutes, as Joyce says, a chaosmos, a composed chaos – neither forseen nor preconceived" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 204)[2]. At the beginning of his book *Chaosmos: Literature, Science, and Theory*, Philip Kuberski defines what he means by *chaosmos* which I follow:

> The structural and thematic focus of the book is the paradoxical coincidence of order and disorder, cosmos and chaos, apparent within the atom but also within analogous nuclear sites such as the self, the word, and the world. The term I have chosen to describe and dramatize these coincidences is taken from *Finnegans Wake*: by "chaosmos" I mean a unitary and yet untotalized, a chiasmic concept of the world as a field of mutual and simultaneous interference and convergence, an interanimation of the subjective and objective, an endless realm of chance which nevertheless displays a persistent tendency toward pattern and order. (Kuberski, 1994, p. 3)

Joyce is not a Cartesian in a post-Cartesian era such as Sartre and his protagonist Roquentin from the existential novel *Nausea* (published in 1938) were. Joyce's humanity embraces pluralities everywhere, and

2 In their earlier book, *A Thousand Plateaus*, where "the world has become chaos", *chaosmos* turns up again – as "radicle-chaosmos rather than root cosmos" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005, p. 6). Félix Guattari's final book is called *Chaosmosis: an ethico-aesthetic paradigm*. On the first page, he states that "Subjectivity is in fact plural and polyphonic [...] It recognizes no dominant or determinant instance guiding all other forms according to a univocal causality" (Guattari, 1995, p. 1). He explains his "chaosmosis" later on: "So chaosmosis does not oscillate mechanically between zero and infinity, being and nothingness, order and disorder: It rebounds and irrupts on states of things, bodies and the autopoietic nuclei it uses as a support for deterritorialisation; it is relative chaotisation in the confrontation with heterogeneous states of complexity. Here we are dealing with an infinity of virtual entities infinitely rich in possibles, infinitely enrichable through creative processes" (Guattari, 1995, p. 112). Curiously in *Chaosmosis*, Guattari never once mentions Joyce's *chaosmos* from *Finnegans Wake*, which he most probably borrowed the term and just added the letter "e" to make it *chaosmose* (translated as "chaosmosis" in the English edition).

includes life, death and ghosts, and myth in logos and vice versa in his novels. Joyce's city is not a refuge or asylum from nature as Roquentin's was[3]; rather his city is the pulse of nature manifesting all its indeterminate chaos and order. The self is no longer "an enclosed rational entity defined by the Cartesian *res cogitans*" (Kuberski, 1994, p. 53) nor is the world "a material and mechanical construct" (Kuberski, 1994, p. 53) as it was for Descartes, Locke and Newton. Joyce completely disrupts mind/body distinctions and separation; rather, everything is entanglement, interconnectivity and interpenetration. The exposition of the world and self that is now a *chaosmos* is constantly exploding: it is an "explosition" (Joyce, 1999, p. 419). In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce loves to create neologisms that contain opposite words or double or multiple meanings, such as *chaosmos*, *thisorder*, *collideorscape*, *apologuise*, *penisolate*, *stolentelling*, *escapology*, *explosition*, *nightmaze*, *meandertale*, *woid* and even *Finnegans Wake*.[4] These are forms of transgression, indeterminacy

3 In his book on *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, Robert Pogue Harrison wrote that "the city remains the ultimate fortress of any humanism whatsoever" (Harrison, 1992, p. 147). But again, unlike Sartre's Roquentin, Joyce's city is not a refuge or asylum from nature, but rather part of the expression and vitality of nature. Harrison gives an impressive analysis of the hangover from the Enlightenment via Sartre's *Nausea* (Harrison, 1992, pp. 144-148).

4 Joyce, 1999, pp. 118; 540; 143; 414; 3; 424; 428; 411; 18; 378. The last addition in this list – "Finnegans Wake" (of death and resurrection) – contains a myriad of multiple meanings and allusions which incorporates all the elements of Joyce's interpenetrative strategies and visions. *Finnegans Wake* is an Irish-American song about a hod-carrier who – like the egg oracle Humpty Dumpty – falls off his ladder while working and dies. "Finn" is also a name borne by countless legendary figures in Irish history and mythology. The most famous of them being Fionn mac Cumhaill – an Odysseus-like figure in Irish mythology who is a warrior, a seer, a hunter, lover, husband and leader. In the Irish language, Finn/Fionn can mean bright, clearing, fair or lustrous; *Fin* means "end" in French; and *Finne* means "to find" in Norwegian. And then we have the second part of Finnegan, which can be a negation (negan) and a repetition (egan alluding to "again", a repeat, a return). Thus, we have a title of "end-negating", "clearing again", "finding again", and "the coming again of Fionn the mythological hero". "Wake" implies the night before the funeral where the body or corpse is laid out for viewing for people to pay their last respects and be together; it is to wake up from sleep; and it can be the tracks on water on the sea or rivers that are formed from a boat passing through. Finally, there is no apostrophe in the word "Finnegans" in Joyce's title, which implies an imperative to all Finnegans – which is all of us – to awake us to the new and endlessly returning and recycling (a ricorso) vision of the book and of life and death.

and "exploiting the uncertainty principle" (Gibbons, 2015, p. 3) – which is at the heart of both faith and nihilism. Or as one of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms from the nineteenth century wrote: "Without risk, no faith" (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 209). That line in the penultimate episode of *Ulysses* – "ineluctably constructed upon the incertitude of the void" (Joyce, 2008, p. 650) – could well serve to be Joyce's definition of modernism, beauty, art and *Ulysses* itself.

Many initial readers of *Ulysses* saw *Ulysses* as nihilistic, "a heap of dung" or "literary Bolshevism", and later didn't even attempt to open *Finnegans Wake* which went even further in expressing *chaosmos*. For many bewildered readers, chaos as a manifestation of nothing had now gained the upper hand in the early twentieth century and had run wild in Joyce's last monstrous book[5]. A passage from Ernst Robert Curtius' 1929 article on *Ulysses* is worth quoting here:

> Joyce's work springs from a revolt of the spirit and leads to the destruction of the world. With implacable logic he presents in his Walpurgis-night amid larvae and lemurs, a vision of the end of the world. A metaphysical nihilism is the substance of Joyce's work. The word, macro- and microcosm, is founded upon the void… All this wealth of philosophical and theological knowledge, this power of psychological and aesthetic analysis, this culture of a mind schooled in all the literatures of the world, all these gifts serve but to spend themselves, to refute themselves in a world-conflagration, a flaming welter of metallic iridescence. What's left? An odor of ashes, the horror of death, sorrow of apostasy, pang or remorse – Agenbite of Inwit. (Gilbert, 1958, p. 226[6])

In 1934, Karl Radek, a leading Bolshevik and close associate of Lenin, Trotsky and then Stalin (before being executed in one of Stalin's purges),

5 Joyce wrote in a letter: "My eyes are tired, for over half a century, they have gazed into nullity where they have found a lovely nothing" (Joyce, 1966, pp. 359; 361f.).

6 This review was first published in *Neue Schweizer Rundschau Heft* I, January 1929.

described *Ulysses* as "a heap of dung, crawling with worms, photographed by a cinema apparatus through a microscope" (McSmith, 2015, p. 119). In this disdainful critique, Radek marvelously captures central aspects of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. For Joyce, "dung" (faeces and rot) and "worms" (animals that recycle organic material in the soils of the earth) are the very fabric of existence that are played out on on the same terrain as the art of Beethoven and Shakespeare are formed; the "microscope" alluding to the obsessive detail in and of space and time through the last two books; and the moving image alluding to cinema is exactly what Joyce was trying to capture.

Another review of *Ulysses* which was published only a few months after the publication of the book in that extraordinary year of 1922[7], comes from the other end of the political spectrum. Shane Leslie, the son of a protestant Anglo-Irish landlord, who converted to Catholicism and was first cousin to Winston Churchill, wrote this in his review: "As a whole, the book must remain impossible to read [...] [It is] literary Bolshevism. It is experimental, anti-conventional, anti-Christian, chaotic, totally unmoral. [...] (Leslie, 1922, i. 207). Joyce indeed embraces and encompasses the 'literary Bolshevism' as Leslie calls it, which is experimental, anti-conventional, dangerous, blasphemous, anti-colonial, anti-sexual repression. Before he began reading the book, Leslie had already heard of Joyce: Oliver St. John Gogarty was his closest literary friend in Dublin. In a letter to Gogarty, Leslie uses the word 'Bolshevik' again, and writes: "If we are to stand for a Gaelic and Catholic Ireland

7 1922 was the year that saw not only the publication of *Ulysses*, but also T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*, Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology*, the first part of *Sodom and Gomorrah* from Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, the first publication of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus* in an English translation, and when Rainer Maria Rilke wrote *Sonnets to Orpheus*. It was also the year the Irish Civil War began, when Mussolini marched on Rome and formed a Fascist government in Italy, and Stalin became general secretary in the Soviet Union. In exile in Vienna, Georg Lukács finished probably the most famous and influential work of Western Marxism of the twentieth century - *History and Class Consciousness* - which was then published in 1923 – the same year as Sigmund Freud's *Ego and the Id*. Lukács' biographer Arpad Kadarkay comments on these two publications (which could apply to nearly all the groundbreaking works of 1922 mentioned above): "Both works express, in their own way, the crisis of the modern soul, whose alphabet was written by war and revolution" (Kadarkay, 1991, p. 274).

Ulysses has to go by the board. It is Bolshevism applied to our unhappy literary movement—like the opening of the Cloaca maxima. It sweeps all the small fry before it in its muddy and rancid spate" (Rauchbauer, 2009, p. 164). Gogarty is immortalised from the first lines onwards in *Ulysses* as "Stately, plump, buck Mulligan" (Joyce, 2008, p. 3); and as for the "Cloaca maxima", it is Latin for "Greatest Sewer", and was one of the world's earliest sewage systems located in Rome.

One of the great observers of modernism and the urban landscape, Walter Benjamin, wrote that "it is a common feature of this literature [baroque] to heap up fragments uninterruptedly, without any well-defined idea of a goal, and, in the unremitting expectation of a miracle" (Benjamin, 2019, p. 189). Joyce is doing this in his two monumental works except that there is always paradoxically an order in the expression of chaos. And rather than a goal, there is a vision, and there is a celebration of the electricity of life – both literally and symbolically. If, in *Ulysses* – the book of the day, "history is a nightmare" from which he is trying to awake (Joyce, 2008, p. 34); in *Finnegans Wake* as the "book of the dark" (Joyce, 1999, p. 251) and "traumscrapt" (Joyce, 1999, p. 623) that "recorporated" (Joyce, 1999, p. 228) the nocturnal geographies of the world[8], history becomes a "nightmaze" (Joyce, 1999, p. 411), and a sham (as Anthony Burgess says: "*Finnegans Wake* is to demonstrate that history is a sham" [Burgess, 2019, p. 185]). Thinking and moving with Joyce, this word "sham" can allude to a number of words and meanings that help or muddle the reader into understanding or at least entering the *chaosmos* of both the artist and history. It is Joyce's "Shem the Penman" in *Finnegans Wake* who may be creating an alternative history (or various histories changing for the future). "Shem" alludes to sham, shame, same, shaman, James in Irish (Seamus), and even alchemist ("the first till last alshemist" [Joyce, 1999, p. 185]). It also means "name" in Hebrew; and it refers to the Shemites who were the tribe responsible for helping build the Tower of Babel – a story that fascinated the philosopher of deconstruction and inspired reader of Joyce – Jacques Derrida.[9]

8 Elsewhere in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce also refers to his book as "this nonday diary, this allnights newseryreel" (Joyce, 1999, p. 489).

9 Geoffrey Bennington writes in his text on Derrida in the section called "Babel": "To serve as a sort of emblem of this situation, Derrida chooses the 'example'

In *Ulysses*, the whole book has a spacial and temporal scheme; in *Finnegans Wake*, the author attempts to conquer space and time, conflating chaos and order into an "Immensipater" (Joyce, 1999, p. 342) of non-linear, non-sequential, non-teleological *chaosmos*. Before Joyce advances to create the *Ding an sich* in an artwork, in *Ulysses* Stephen Dedalus ponders on space and time: "I hear the ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry, and time one livid final flame. What's left us then?" (Joyce, 2008, p. 24). There is plenty left: the creation of *Finnegans Wake* or "work in progress", and the experience of the city with its infinite possibilities, fragmenting and reconfiguring, where the modern exiled self will wander.

2. Cacophonies, Symphonies and Multiplicities of the City

Certain masterly writers of European modernity are forever linked to the city of their birth, bringing to life the city by etching its street names into masterful works, giving voice to its denizens, and revealing its peculiarities. Such iconic examples of modernity are Pessoa and Lisbon, Dostoevsky and Saint Petersburg, Baudelaire and Paris, Kierkegaard and Copenhagen, Kafka and Prague, and Joyce and Dublin. Joyce devotes all his writings to Dublin but lives elsewhere throughout his entire adult life. Focusing on a defeated, colonized minor city of Europe, he captures the soul of modernism, and offers the world the "great symphony of cities" (Banville, 2001), the epicentres of modernism, the crowds of people and those crossroads of futurism and nostalgias of Baudelaire's

> of Babel, which ties together the themes of translation and the proper name. […] This story [the story of the tower of Babel], to which Derrida returns several times, fascinated […], contains resources we shall not exhaust here. The essential fact hangs on this: by imposing his name (confusedly perceived as 'confusion') against the name of name (Shem), God imposes both the necessity and the impossibility of translation" (Bennington, 1993, pp. 174-175). In a footnote in *Dissemination*, Derrida writes of "the whole of that essay [*La Pharmacie de Platon*], as will quickly become apparent, being itself nothing but a reading of *Finnegans Wake*" (Derrida, 1993, p. 88). In one of his essays on Joyce, Derrida admits further that *The Postcard*, *Glas* and his introductory essay "Scribble" are all indebted to and haunted by *Finnegans Wake* (Derrida, 2013, p. 27).

"Ant-seething city, city full of dreams, / Where ghosts by daylight tug the passer's sleeve [*Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves, / Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant*!]" (Baudelaire, 1997, p. 230). The city accommodates rising and collapsing cultures, conflates space and time, and contains a cacophony of human accents, dialects, languages and sheer noise. Joyce dedicates a whole section of *Finnegans Wake* to traversing the names of the world's great cities (see Joyce, 1999, pp. 532-554) which Joycean scholar John Bishop attributes to "distinguishing civic features and monuments" and giving "an evolutionary record of urban development" (Bishop, 1999, p. x). Joyce's city and the *chaosmopolitan* that wanders along its streets is not a facile globalization perspective, but rather combines parochial/cosmic visions of disintegration and renewal with the vigour of heresy and subversive joy. Joyce prioritises disorder by reordering ("thisorder") and creating at the same time a literature of presence ("Yet is no body present here which was not there before. Only is order othered. Nought is nulled. Fuitfiat" [Joyce, 1999, p. 613]).

"Eyes, walk, voice" (Joyce, 2008, p. 109) – these are the prerequisites for being on the city streets. God has dissipated into the "shout in the street"[10] (Joyce, 2008, p. 34) which Stephen Dedalus listens to for inspiration and sometimes in irritation in the "noise on the street" (Joyce, 2008, p. 475). In his book *All that is Solid Melts into the Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Marshall Berman connects Joyce's "shout in the street" with the modern city streets that are "experienced as the medium in which the totality of modern material and spiritual forces could meet, clash, interfuse and work out their ultimate meanings and fates" (Berman, 1988, p. 316). While in *Finnegans Wake*, "the man in the street can see the coming event" (Joyce, 1999, p. 583). The modern city is the landscape of the *flâneur* – alert, masked, nonconforming, that Baudelaire and Benjamin so marvelously evoked. Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus are the two great *flâneurs* of *Ulysses*: the former, an advertising agent with his all-seeing eye, infinite curiosity, intuitive responses and humble kindness; the latter, a young arrogant insecure

10 See also Luke Gibbons chapter "Shouts in the Street: Inner Speech, Self, and the City" in *Joyce's Ghosts* (Gibbons, 2015, pp. 53-78). Gibbons reads this expression as "the inner speech of the city" which is brought to life in Joyce's artistic project of transferring "thinking out loud" into literature.

poet with his ashplant and cerebral observations and guarded ambition. Never have the scientific and the artistic interpenetrated so well as in both these voyeurs of the city. Stimulus is everywhere in the urban landscape, and Joyce presents the decentering polyphonic[11] city of various opinions, colours, odours, sounds, lights, visions, movements, fashions, tastes and caresses. The cacophony of the five senses, all interwoven, is the symphony of the city. In the section on Shem the Penman (a thinly disguised self-portrait) in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce asks the question: "Do you hear what I am seeing?" (Joyce, 1999, p. 193). In *Ulysses*, the middle episode "Wandering Rocks" – with its representations of 'Blood' as the Organ of the Body, 'Mechanics' as the Art, 'Citizens' as the Symbol, and 'Labyrinth' as the Technic – is set on the streets where space, time and movement are all in flux. In the episode "Aeolus", occurring at midday, reporting and the newspaper are at its centre, where the city is caught up by the wind and each passage is accompanied by a headline as the prose shifts gears and conveys different newsreels and messages of the day. As John McCourt writes, this episode "begins with a depiction of a modern means of transport, the electric tram, and a celebration of a certain 'busy-ness' that is reminiscent of the Futurists' ideals of dynamism and speed" (McCourt, 2001, p. 163). In the city, time and space are always vivid. Dedalus struggles with them both in pondering on the words *nacheinander* and *nebeneinander* in the Proteus episode (Joyce, 2008, p. 37), and he begins to interlink space and time from his experimentation with language and with what he sees, hears and voices as he walks along the beach into Dublin city. *Nacheinander* literally means "one after another successively"; and *nebeneinander* means "next to one another, adjacent". These are distinctive characteristics of time and space respectively (as Stephen reflects: "A very short space of time through very short times of space" [Joyce, 2008, p. 37]). Joyce's final passage in all his published work is his famous soliloquy by the river-character Anna Livia Plurabelle, as she weaves her way through the city and out into the Irish Sea. It is Joyce's and the river's farewell, and they speak and hail

11 I am thinking here of "polyphony" that Bakhtin uses in analysing Dostoevsky, but I am also keeping with the word as it originally arose for describing two or more simultaneous lines of independent melody – given that *Finnegans Wake* and much of *Ulysses* are aspiring to be musical works through literature, where the demand of course is for them to be read aloud.

to the city as they make their final journey. And so the final soliloquy begins: "Soft morning, city! Lsp!" (Joyce, 1999, p. 619). There is always a reciprocal relationship between rivers and cities: European capital cities grow up by the river and that river is immortalized by human history. For example, there is Dublin and the Liffey; London and the Thames; Paris and the Seine; Lisbon and the Tagus; Rome and the Tiber; Berlin and the Spree; and Budapest, Belgrade, Bratislava, Vienna and the Danube.

Chaosmos exists rather than simply as a cosmos or chaos, as all things, language, people and events pass and disintegrate into ruins or faded memories and remerge again. They never remain the same or kept in place (cosmos); nor do they truly enter into oblivion (chaos) as the poet is nature's memory. In his brilliant essay on *Finnegans Wake*, Umberto Eco writes: "Here everything moves in a primordial and disordered flow; everything is its own opposite; everything can collegate itself to all the others [...] each event is simultaneous; past, present and future coincide" (Eco, 1989, p. 65). In the *Wake* itself, the author of "the Haunted Inkbottle" (Joyce, 1999, p. 182) writes of the book as "one continuous present tense integument slowly unfolded all marryvoising moodmoulded cyclewheeling history" (Joyce, 1999, p. 186). There are many examples of the almost mystical or biblical narrative of fading away and renewal. For a start, both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* end with this vision. Declan Kiberd writes that a "biblical narrative that comes out of chaos and returns to chaos suggests that evolutionary optimism offers little hope" (Kiberd, 2009, p. 215). The Irish writer James Stephens, who was a friend to Joyce (and holds a peculiar place in Joyce's biography, as Joyce once hoped that Stephens would finish *Finnegans Wake* for him[12]), captured every generation's relationship to their city (and ultimately to history), full of memory, forgetfulness and eternal recurrence: "No city exists in the present tense, it is the only surviving mass-statement of our ancestors, and it changes inversely to its inhabitants. It is old when they are young, and when they grow old it has become amazingly and shiningly young again" (Stephens, 1923, p. 42). The idea of the transience of the city is always evoked in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. In *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom reflects:

12 See Joyce's letter on 20th May 1927 to his patron Harriet Weaver on this matter (Joyce, 1966, p. 253 / Ellmann 1982, pp. 591-592).

> Cityful passing away, other cityful coming, passing away too: other coming on, passing on. Houses, lines of houses, streets, miles of pavements, piledup bricks, stones. Changing hands. This owner, that. Landlord never dies they say. Other steps into his shoes when he gets his notice to quit. They buy the place up with gold and still they have all the gold. Swindle in it somewhere. Piled up in cities, worn away age after age. Pyramids in sand. Built on bread and onions. Slaves Chinese wall. Babylon. Big stones left. Round towers. Rest rubble, sprawling suburbs, jerrybuilt. Kerwan's mushroom houses built of breeze. Shelter, for the night.
> No-one is anything. (Joyce, 2008, pp. 156-157)

It is very significant that in *Finnegans Wake* the only unaltered quotation in the whole book is a passage that beautifully captures the transience of space and time in the rise and fall of history and cities. The quote is from Edgar Quinet's introduction to his 1827 translation of Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* [*Outlines of Philosophy of the History of Man*]:

> *Aujourd'hui comme aux temps de Pline et de Columelle la jacinthe se plaît dans les Gaules, la pervenche en Illyrie, la marguerite sur les ruines de Numance et pendant qu'autour d'elles les villes ont changé de maîtres et de noms, que plusieurs sont entrées dans le néant, que les civilisations se sont choquées et brisées, leurs paisibles générations ont traversé les ages et sont arrivées jusqu'à nous, fraîches et riantes comme aux jours des batailles.*[13] (Joyce, 1999, p. 281)

13 Translation by Richard Ellmann (Ellmann, 1982, p. 664) of Quinet's passage from his *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire de l'humanité*: "Today, as in the days of Pliny and Columella, the hyacinth disports in Gaul, the periwinkle in Illyria, the daisy on the ruins of Numantia; and while around them the cities have changed masters and names, while some have ceased to exist, while the civilisations have collided with one another and shattered, their peaceful generations have passed through the ages, and have come up to us, one following the other, fresh and laughing as on the days of the battles."

Very significantly, this sentence also appears another five times in distorted form, including the beginning and end of *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce, 1999, p. 14-15; p. 117; p. 236; p. 354; p. 615).

Language is also an example of transience and of memory and forgetfulness in the city of the *chaosmopolitan*. Wittgenstein compares language to a city: "Our language can be seen as an ancient city; a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses" (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 8). Gibbons eloquently articulates what *Ulysses* has achieved in regard to the city and language: "*Ulysses* is a portrait of a city like no other in that, through an array of narrative strategies, language is not at one remove from reality but is stitched into the very fabric of the world it evokes" (Gibbons, 2015, p. xv). In the modern city we hear accents, dialects, and various languages; the city and Joyce's final works are the "panaroma of all flores of speech" (Joyce, 1999, p. 143). The neologism encompasses both the all-distinctive smells ("panaroma") and wide and expansive view in every direction ("panorama"); and the Spanish/Portuguese word *flores* alludes to both flowers and flaws. The city hosts a veritable Babel where language conceals and reveals the city's infinite secrets, there is "sintalks" (Joyce, 1999, p. 269) instead of mere syntax, and Joyce's knowledge of various languages unleashes his "verbivocovisual" (Joyce, 1999, p. 341) final book. The fourteenth episode of *Ulysses* is a *tour de force* in making language the main character. Known as the "Oxen of the Sun" episode, it takes place in the maternity hospital on Holles Street in Dublin city, and it is where Bloom spots Stephen with his dubious friends and worries about him enough to follow him, and where we witness the birth, evolution and return to the chaos of language itself. As Kiberd puts it, "'Oxen of the Sun' moves from the chaos of language at its opening to the chaotic medley of words and phrases at its conclusion" (Kiberd, 2009, p. 214). The evolving inventiveness and living contaminated material that is language is at the heart of the city and the *chaosmopolitan*. And as Anthony Burgess writes in his book on Joyce: "The greatest of man's achievements, after language, is the community, and Joyce's Dublin stands for every city-state that ever was" (Burgess, 2019, p. 184).

The cosmopolitan port city of Trieste plays a central part in all this talk of the *chaosmopolitan*. This is the city, "that absendee tarry easty, his città immediata" (Joyce, 1999, p. 228), where Joyce lived for fifteen years and where he wrote most of *Dubliners*, all of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, his only play *Exiles*, and parts of *Ulysses*. It is where he would befriend the Jewish Triestine writer Italo Svevo (the principal model for Leopold Bloom), teach at the Berlitz English school to students from all over the Hapsburg Empire, and where he would witness the collapse of that decentralized imperial rule and the rise of nationalism and separatism. Colonialism and cosmopolitanism, and de-colonialism and *chaosmopolitanism* often go hand in hand. At the age of twenty-one, Joyce and Nora Barnacle left Ireland at the height of the new Irish Revival and celebration of Yeats' Celtic Twilight of which the urbane Joyce later sarcastically referred to in *Finnegans Wake* as the "cultic twalette"[14] (Joyce, 1999, p. 344). Joyce seemed to feel at ease in Trieste because of its cosmopolitan yet eccentric feel, being an important port city (at the end of the nineteenth century, Trieste was the world's seventh busiest port, and second after Marseilles in the Mediterranean), its nightlife (as a line in the middle of *Finnegans Wake* goes: "And trieste, ah trieste ate I my liver!" [Joyce, 1999, p. 301]), its rich combination of commerce and culture, its crossroads status between eastern and western Europe, its multitude of languages, the tensions brimming there between empire and nationalism, and its size (not dissimilar to Dublin). Gibbons hones in on the cities that Joyce lived in before Paris: "[...] part of the attraction of Pola, Trieste, and Zurich for Joyce lay in the resemblance of these cities to Dublin, a divided city on the edge of a ramshackle empire" (Gibbons, 2015, p. 25). For a young polyglot, an exile and urbane poet with a sensitive ear, listening to the voices and sounds on the windy streets of Trieste must have been very stimulating. In his book *The Years of Bloom*, John McCourt writes that the language or dialect of "*Triestino* was essentially an inclusive force which, in each of its varieties, embraced different civilizations and became a living encyclopaedia of the cultures, nations and languages that had been assimilated by the city" (McCourt, 2001, p. 52).

14 As well as the allusion to celtic, cultic and toilet, in French "cul" means "arse", and "toilette" means "dressing".

This was a city that absorbed both reactionary and revolutionary traditionalism, expatriates and exiles, and which contained strong hints of both fascist and communist movements that would soon turn Europe upside down. Again, McCourt is helpful here as he writes:

> Trieste itself produced a number of writers whose world reveals all the typical stylistic features of Futurism – the destruction of syntax, the presentation of multiple images simultaneously, the abolition of punctuation, the use of "parole in libertà" (the free placing of words) – as well as its thematic obsessions, the conquest of time and space, the refusal of orthodox sexual morality, the celebration of war, of industrialization, of strength, daring and love of danger, of feverish insomnia. (McCourt, 2001, p. 159)

When we read evocative sentences of Paris in *Ulysses*, Joyce is sometimes thinking about Trieste. In *Ulysses*, he writes: "Paris rawly waking, crude sunlight on her lemon streets". Yet, previously, in his Triestine prose poem *Giacomo Joyce* which he left behind in Trieste, he writes, "Trieste is waking rawly: raw sunlight over its huddled browntiled roofs, testudoform; a multitude of prostrate bugs await a national deliverance" (Joyce, 1968, p. 8 / McCourt, 2001, p. 99).

The maritime spirit of the haunted city is a homecoming or quasi-*nostos* site for a *chaosmopolitan*. That other restless wandering poet and contemporary of Joyce, the heteronym poet Álvaro de Campos (which his creator described as "vaguely corresponding to the Portuguese Jewish type" [Pessoa, 2001, p. 258]), signed off his first three publications with: "March 1914. Aboard Ship in the Suez Canal" (for "Opiary"); "London, June 1914" (for "Triumphal Ode"); and finally, just his name and profession – "Álvaro de Campos, Engineer" (for "Maritime Ode"). These three sign-offs express the restless modernist spirit – of technological innovation; living on a boat; the commercial, cosmopolitan-colonial capital of the world; and the signing of a name and profession that expresses a declaration, a builder of machines, an invention of a persona, and a forgery (in the double sense). Joyce signs off *Ulysses* with "Trieste-Zurich-Paris 1914-1921", and with "Paris 1922-1939" for *Finnegans*

Wake. These are European cities of the *chaosmopolitan*, of the exiled modern self; and these are years of chaos and of extreme order trying to enforce new systems that will lead to global carnage. Amidst chaos and cosmos, totalitarianism and anti-totalitarianism, and disintegration and renewal in this age of extremes, the exiled innovator writes and forges his reconfigurations of the city and the self.

3. The Art and Expression of the Exiled Wandering Self

The title of Joyce's book of a single day is of course the latinized version of the heroic Greek *Odyssey*; it is set in a defeated, colonized peripheral city of a predominantly Catholic island; its central figure is a Jewish-Protestant "keyless citizen" (Joyce, 2008, p. 650) whose Hungarian father committed suicide, whose wife is committing adultery on that day with his knowledge, and whose only son died after eleven days of being born (ten years ago from the day *Ulysses* is set); and it is where a frustrated and precocious Stephen Dedalus moodily saunters about, ruminating on Aristotle, Shakespeare and himself, and wondering how to activate his weaponry of "silence, exile and cunning" (Joyce, 1999, p. 269). It is not for nothing that *Ulysses* has been described as the "Bible of universal homelessness" (Slezkine, 2004, p. 79). This is a Jew-Greek-Irish epic: the *chaosmos* and *chaosmopolitan* contains the motif of the Wandering Jew, the maritime Odysseus trying to return home, the culture of diaspora, a lost language and an emerging nation. Deleuze and Guattari's "excluded middle" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005, p. 22), Gillian Rose's "broken middle" (Rose, 1992, p. xii), and Joyce's "jewgreek is greekjew" (Joyce, 2008, p. 474) are expressed and magnified in Joyce's *chaosmos* and *chaosmopolitan*. The heretical Leopold Bloom is this "broken middle" who carries out acts of kindness "in orthodox Samaritan fashion" (Joyce, 2008, p. 569). See the conscious oxymoron here – as there is nothing orthodox about a Samaritan. Bloom, the advertising agent, has to adapt, and, as a result, is one step ahead of all the other characters in *Ulysses* in terms of curiosity, empathy, tolerance, self-questioning, flexibility, cosmopolitanism and love. Maybe, after all, this quintessential city dweller

is the ambiguous figure of possibility and capitalism that Deleuze and Guattari speak of: "The man of capitalism is not Robinson but Ulysses, the cunning plebeian, some average man or other living in the big towns, Autochthonous Proletarians or foreign Migrants who throw themselves into infinite movement – revolution" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 98).

Joyce's cities – Trieste, Zurich, Paris – provide refuge to strangers from foreign lands. On the eve of leaving Dublin forever with Nora Barnacle, Joyce writes to Nora in a letter that he "cannot enter the social order except as a vagabond" (Ellmann, 1982, p. 169). The stranger[15] – from the Wandering Jew to the *chaosmopolitan* – negotiates, adapts, negates and invents his or her identity in hostile territories. In the pub in the Cyclops episode of *Ulysses*, Bloom is mocked and treated with hostility when he says that Ireland is his nation to the jeering bigoted Irish nationalists' questions on whether he knows "what a nation means" and what his nation is (Joyce, 2008, p. 317). At the beginning of *Finnegans Wake*, Dublin appears as "Dyoublong" (Joyce, 1999, p. 13). The urbane Joyce's nomadic home is far off from the rural, bucolic dream of Heidegger's "dwelling"[16] place, in a sense that Joyce's law

15 Although there is neither the space or time here to discuss differences between the wanderer, outsider and stranger (which I hope to write about in the future), it is worth at least mentioning Georg Simmel's essay "The Stranger" (*Der Fremde*, 1908) where he differentiates the stranger from the wanderer. The first sentence begins: "If wandering, considered as a state of detachment from every given point in space, is the conceptual opposite of attachment to any point, then the sociological form of 'the stranger' presents the synthesis, as it were, of both of these properties. [...] The stranger will thus not be considered here in the usual sense of the term, as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the man who comes today and stays tomorrow [...]. (Simmel, 1971, p. 143)

16 See Heidegger's essay "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" (Heidegger, 1971, pp. 143-161). Heidegger concluded the essay: "Dwelling, however *is the basic character* of Being in keeping with which mortals exist. [...] The real plight of dwelling is indeed older than the world wars with their destruction, older also than the increase of the earth's population and the condition of the industrial workers. The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortal ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that *must ever learn to dwell*. What is man's homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not even think of the *real* plight of dwelling as *the* plight? Yet as soon as man *gives thought* to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer. Rightly considered and kept well in mind, it is the sole summons that *calls* mortals into their dwelling" (Heidegger, 1971, pp. 160-161).

or *nomos* and the modern city's *nomos* are nomadic, malleable and fluid, and he accepts this and feels at home in voicing the "noise on the street", the "chapter of accidents", the "the new womanly man", and the "nighttown" of the city where "we eat electric light"[17]. His and the city's vitality are always on a wayward pathway to *nostos* without ever achieving a complete reconciliation. Witness the end of *Ulysses* where Dedalus refuses Bloom's invitation to sleep at his home, and instead wanders off directionless into the dark night. There is some reconciliation between Molly and Leopold as he climbs into bed. She thinks of him with love and desire as she finally drifts off into sleep, even though she has had sex with someone else in that same bed earlier that day. It is these weak, unstable reconciliations and unresolved openings in *Ulysses* that angered official Soviet and Fascist critics and the guardians of English literature. Just as many nations, regimes and individuals were suspicious of the "planetary homelessness" of the Wandering Jew, it is central to the fluid, meandering pulse of *Ulysses*.

The Wandering Jew as a mythological symbol of despair in Western civilization really took root in the Middle Ages. The name of Ahasverus became synonymous with the Wandering Jew who never finds a place of rest. The motif of the Wandering Jew perhaps has become for many outsiders, revolutionaries, pioneers of art and literature, experimental thinkers in philosophy and science, cosmopolitan vagabonds, and heretics of theology and religion an identity they can feel at home with. George Pattison writes in a chapter called "Cosmopolitan Faces" in his book *Kierkegaard, Religion and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Culture*: "The fate of the Wandering Jew, condemned to a life without end or purpose, has to be seen as the fate of all who bear within themselves the condition of modernity" (Pattison, 2002, p. 95). The motif of the Wandering Jew in modern cities of multiple languages, crossroads and rootlessness is like the fabric of *Finnegans Wake* as a "whorled without aimed" (Joyce, 1999, p. 272). Modernity itself is the age of despair. It is helpful to note here that Kierkegaard, in his early notes (and which he subsequently wove into his published works) chose three mythological figures – Faust, Don Giovanni and the Wandering

17 See Joyce, 2008, pp. 475; 483; 465; 408; 514.

Jew – as the personifications of doubt and despair for the modern age. It is important to think of "despair" not only from the meaning in the Latin etymology of "without hope" (*de-spero*), but more precisely, in thinking of the challenges of living in the age of information overload and technology, in the etymology of the word in Danish and German (*Fortvivelse* and *Verzweiflung*) meaning literally "too much doubt" (*for-* [too/too much] and *tvivl* [doubt/two] (and which Kierkegaard analyses in his masterful late work on despair called *The Sickness unto Death*). Human freedom and anxieties, double-mindedness, recipients of the bombardment of consumer fetish advertising, a Godless world, nomadic lifestyles, an age of acceleration where nothing is permanent, and where the firmament of Kant's starry sky and moral law within are no longer solid, is another prevailing landscape of modernity. And, as Pattison writes, "*Modernity, in an essential sense, is urbanity*" (Pattison, 2002, p. 21). Two critics and innovators of modernity – George Lukács and Martin Heidegger – are situated in opposing political spectrums; yet on the eve of converting to Bolshevism, Georg Lukács captures the state of despair and "transcendent homelessness" in modernity in *Theory of the Novel* in his struggle to find a new meaning to live and die for in the twentieth century (Lukács, 1971, pp. 41; 61; 121); and Heidegger frequently speaks of "planetary homelessness [*Heimatlosigkeit*]" (Heidegger, 1998, pp. 257-259; Pattison, 2002, p. 244)[18]. More recently, at the end of the twentieth century, the Irish shamanistic philosopher John Moriarty ponders:

> The Wandering Jew is the born outsider. Civilization or culture can never claim him. Even when he is doomed to live within a culture he will not be domesticated by it. [...] Endlessly enduring, he will, given time, adapt to anything man or God can impose upon him. Given time he will adapt to the terrible Kalahari of Cartesian European. He will adapt to the most deeply burning brimstone of the deepest hell. In him totalitarianism, divine or human, runs into its own limitations. (Moriarty, 2014, p. 155)

18 See also O'Donoghue, 2011. I have written elsewhere on exile and homelessness as conditions of modernity. See, for example, Ryan, 2013; and the sections on "Homelessness" in Ryan, 2014, pp. 81-86; and p. 143.

Returning again to Joyce and that letter to Nora before setting sail for mainland Europe forever, we see the artist declaring his zest for the exiled wandering life, his link to the Wandering Jew whom he will find in abundance in his three cosmopolitan urban homes – Trieste, Paris and Zurich – and nurture into the two male urbane protagonists of *Ulysses* where "Jewgreek is greekjew. Extremes meet." (Joyce, 2008, p. 474):

> My mind rejects the whole present social order and Christianity – home, the recognised virtues, classes of life, and religious doctrines. How could I like the idea of home? […] Now I make open war upon it by what I write and say and do. I cannot enter the social order except as a vagabond. I started to study medicine three times, law once, music once. A week ago I was arranging to go away as a traveling actor. […] I spoke to you satirically tonight but I was speaking of the world not of you. I am an enemy of ignobleness and slavishness of people but not of you. Can you not see the simplicity which is at the back of all my disguises? We all wear masks. (Ellmann 1982, 169)

Joyce says to his friend near the end of his life: "You have to be in exile to understand me" (Ellmann, 1982, p. 693).

Many of the most innovative and influential radical European political philosophers and critical theorists of the twentieth century, and when Joyce was writing *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, were Jewish of some kind. Alongside Lukács, there is Rosa Luxemburg, Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno, and Leon Trotsky (who perhaps is the ultimate modern Wandering Jew who was without a visa for the last twelve years of his life). In the same period, modernist writers of Jewish heritage, examples of the "self exiled in upon his ego" (Joyce, 1999, p. 184), include Franz Kafka, Marcel Proust, Joseph Roth, Italo Svevo and Gertrude Stein; while the two totems of a radical new psychology and science were also exiled Jews (Freud and Einstein respectively). Yuri Slezkine's thesis for his book *The Jewish Century* is that the Jewish Age *is* the Modern age, in that what it means to be human in modernity is

that we have in all, in a sense, become Jewish in the twentieth century. What he means by this is that it is about "everyone becoming urban, mobile, literate, articulate, intellectually intricate, [...] learning how to cultivate people and symbols, not fields or herds" (Slezkine, 2004, p. 1). In the modern cities and in Joyce's colossal, *chaosmos* works *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, two works created in cities in "the Jewish Century", we begin to learn to decolonize our languages, people, sex, nations, identities, traditions, histories, religions.

But what of the meaning of "jewgreek is greekjew. Extremes meet"? I will close this essay with just a few remarks which link them to *chaosmos*, the city, and the exiled wandering self or often better to call it a persona, in my overall idea of the *chaosmopolitan*. As another example of the "twosome twimind" (Joyce, 1999, p. 188), Stephen Dedalus, as the jewgreek, is named after St. Stephen – the first Christian (and everyman) martyr; and Dedalus – the Greek artificer who invented and designed the labyrinth for King Minos on the island of Crete, and then later made wings for himself and his son Icarus to escape the labyrinth, but his son flew too close to the sun and his wings melted and he fell to his death. And there is also Leopold Bloom – the modern day Odysseus – now a kind of marginalised jewgreek, whose father was Jewish (which does not really make Leopold even officially half-Jewish), and whose mother was a Protestant Christian (a group which will soon be marginalised in the newly independent Free State of Ireland). In his book *Demythologizing Heidegger*, John D. Caputo – largely inspired by Derrida and thus also implicitly and explicitly by Joyce, brings up the "jewgreek is greekjew" motif to expose and critique Heidegger's thought which can allude to exclusion, purity and fascist thought. Caputo writes in the introduction that the "jewgreek is the miscegenated state of one who is neither purely Greek nor purely Jewish, who is too philosophical to be a pure Jew and too biblical to be a pure Greek, who is attached to both philosophers and prophets" (Caputo, 1993, p. 6). He explains that "demythologising Heidegger means disrupting this Greco-German myth of Greek purity, the myth of Heidegger's aboriginal and incipient Greeks, Heidegger's private Greeks, who fueled the flames of his private National Socialism" (Caputo, 1993, p. 7). In *Ulysses*, Heidegger couldn't be further away from Leopold Bloom's tastes; Spinoza is Leopold's philosopher of choice

to Stephen's (and the early Heidegger's) Greek Aristotle. Spinoza is the seventeenth century Portuguese exile born in the Jewish quarter of the mercantile city of Amsterdam, later excommunicated from the Jewish community, working as an optical lens grinder all his life while producing some of the most remarkable (and heretical) works in philosophy which beautifully epitomized freedom of thought, joy and excellence. He is explicitly mentioned six times[19] in *Ulysses* – all references intimately related to Leopold Bloom. As Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus traverse the chaosmos of the city captured in a single day in the novel, the former seeks to come to the aid of the latter, jewgreek, younger counterpart and poet.

Always haunted by Joyce's work, Derrida concludes his essay "Violence and Metaphysics": "Are we Jews? Are we Greeks? We live in the difference between the Jew and the Greek, which is perhaps the unity of what is called history. We live in and of difference, that is, in *hypocrisy* […]." (Derrida, 1978, p. 320). *Finnegans Wake* revels in these collapsing antinomies and antipathies that disintegrate and reemerge in new forms, as "thisorder" (Joyce, 1999, p. 540), "two thinks at a time" (Joyce, 1999, p. 583), "duasdestinies" (Joyce, 1999, p. 92), and on the first page – as "violer d'amores" (Joyce, 1999, p. 3)[20] – which can be a musical instrument, violent transgression or betrayal, and an expression of love all in one, much like the exasperating text itself. Perhaps the greatest description of the *chaosmopolitan* as exiled wandering self is to be found in the chapter on Joyce's Shem the Penman where the "twosome twiminds" is expressed: "[...] a nogger among the blankards of this dastard century, you have become of twosome twiminds forenenst gods, hidden and discovered, nay, condemned fool, anarch, egoarch, hiresiarch, you have reared your disunited kingdom

19 See Joyce, 2008, pp. 273; 327; 640; 661; 719; 897.

20 One can also see here the inspiration and influence of the Renaissance philosopher Giordano Bruno on Joyce throughout *Finnegans Wake* in the forging of these neologisms containing opposites. As Joseph Campbell writes on the vision of Bruno (and Hegel's dialectic of world history): "Everything can come to a knowledge of itself only though contrasts with its opposite" (Campbell, 2005, p. 184). Bruno was burnt at the stake in 1600 for professing similar ideas to Joyce. At one point of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus writes: "He said Bruno was a terrible heretic. I said he was terribly burned" (Joyce, 1992, p. 271).

on the vacuum of your own most intensely doubtful soul [...]" (Joyce, 1999, p. 188).[21]

In conclusion, the idea of the *chaosmopolitan* grafted from Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* is a complex and constantly unfolding and disruptive vision and experience. There are various ways to approach Joyce's two colossal works and, as he said himself on the eighteen episodes that make up *Ulysses*: "The task I set myself technically in writing a book from eighteen different points of view and in as many styles" (Joyce, 1966, p. 167 / Ellmann, 1982, p. 512). In order to conquer time, Joyce is even said to have worn four watches at the same time while writing the book (Kiberd, 2009, p. 230). We have travelled through the clashes, symbioses and interpenetrations of chaos and cosmos that epitomize modernity; and through the cacophonies, symphonies and multiplicities of the city; and finally through the art, experience and expression of the exiled wandering selves in attempting to present this *chaosmopolitan* figure. Stephen Dedalus' question rears its head again: "What's left us then?" I am suddenly reminded of Jan Morris's exquisite ode to the *città immediata* called *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere*. Here is a writer who knew a thing or two about local and global living, sexual identities, world wars, haunted cities and an exiled soul. At the end of her love letter to Trieste she comes to the conclusion that it is perhaps kindness that is "the ruling principle of nowhere" (Morris, 2001, p. 186), and that is where "Citizens of nowhere unite" (Morris, 2001, p. 187). McCourt recounts that Joyce once referred to Trieste as a "city of the many kindnesses" (McCourt, 2001, p. 26). This is not some whimsical gesture of hopelessness or sympathy, but rather perhaps is the invisible strength and heartbeat of the *chaosmopolitan* under scrutiny here. Kindness turns up in another polyphonic literary work largely set around one of the darkest and cruelest places of the twentieth century – in apocalyptic Stalingrad during World War II. This is a city that for almost four centuries was called Tsaritsyn, then changed to Stalingrad after its Soviet dictator, and during the de-Stalinization program became known as

21 An attempt of a translation could be: "a nigger among the white bastards of this dastard century, someone who has developed a dual or conflicting mind, going against the gods, condemned and foolish, containing elements of the archetype of the anarchist, egoist and heretic, and raising up your disunited kingdom upon the void of your own most doubtful or despairing soul".

Volgograd after the river. In his novel *Life and Fate* (which only first saw publication twenty years after his death), amidst the purges, genocides, mass starvation, executions, gulags, relentless battles, merciless freezing winter, and brutality and fear, the author Vasily Grossman writes of a "senseless kindness" and "an unwitnessed kindness" (Grossman, 2006, p. 392) that still exists. This is "a kindness outside any system of social or religious good" (Grossman, 2006, p. 392). It is this kindness that elevates Leopold Bloom (the character that is born and developed in Trieste) above everyone else in the city of Dublin. This everyman in the modern city can breathe life to the *chaosmos* of the senseless kindness "in the orthodox Samaritan fashion". The city of *chaosmos* rises, falls and rises again by the running river; and then the protean river of the "meandertale" begins, ends, and begins again in the city of "lovesoftfun at Finnegan's Wake" (Joyce, 1999, p. 607).

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Writing in First Person?

Tatiana Salem Levy

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At the presentation of my latest novel, *Vista Chinesa*, Brazilian critic Beatriz Resende commented that she finds in the literary production of contemporary women a preference for first-person narratives, and asked me if I had any guesses as to why. I had been thinking about the subject for some time—after all, autobiographical writing is at the heart of feminist thought—and talking about it for the first time gave substance to my ideas. I realised my path made sense when, at the end of the presentation, some women came to me to talk about their childhood and teenage diaries—the subject on which my response was based, and which constitutes the guiding thread of this text.

Almost every girl in my generation received diaries in their childhood, most of them with locks, to ensure that no one would have access to what was written there. Colourful, small, medium, or big, with or without stickers, with or without perfume, with or without illustrations, with or without sentences scattered across the pages—there was one for every taste. There we would write down our most intimate thoughts and acts, our little subversions, the secrets we wouldn't dare tell, not even to our best friend, trusting the power of that simple lock. We learned, from a young age, that our feelings are ours alone—and they must be told in the first person to an inanimate object: "Dear Diary…" And so we learned, early on, to hide our ideas, our sensations, and our bodies as well.

Until one day we grow up, drop the diary, and leave our bodies and writing locked away. Perhaps that is why, when a woman writes, she lets her childhood and teenage writing reverberate, a writing that was built in intimacy and in secret, that was built with a body which, much like words, was forced to withdraw, to retract. "In this room, there's no place for you, for your body's quirks, for your writing's glow," said the voice outside the bedroom where we wrote—that is, when we had a bedroom of our own.

With diaries, we learned—all girls, those who continued to write, as well as those who would never touch a pen again—that writing was about intimacy, about secrecy. We wouldn't write for others, but for ourselves. We wouldn't write to be read; on the contrary, we would write

not to be read. And we would go on like that, hiding, living in secret, in whispers, recounting only to ourselves, locking away what happened to us—the boy we liked, the first kiss, the fights with our parents, the world's incomprehension.

Despite the thesis I wish to put forward here—that of the relationship between diary writing during childhood and adolescence and the predominance of first-person writing in contemporary literature by women—my relationship with diaries is rather peculiar. Small, red, with a drawing of a Hello Kitty holding a cup of tea on the cover, the invitation: *Would you be free for a cup of tea?* and a now rusty lock, my first diary, which I got at the age of nine, has but a few pages filled in. Some are dated the same year I got it, others are dated the following year; after that, there is an entry from 1990, when I was eleven; two from 1993, and a few from 1994. In 1989, I apologize to the diary for going so long without writing. In 1993, I confess to being a terrible diary writer. I frequently abandon it, because, in all fairness, I never enjoyed writing diaries. I like the cuts, the time that goes back and forth, and a diary demands a linearity that doesn't appeal to me. I've never felt comfortable writing on the right days—of course I could find a way around it, I could forge them, play with the diary, but at ten or eleven or even at fifteen it simply seemed to me that the format didn't interest me, it wasn't my way of writing.

In 1998, I went on a trip to Turkey and Greece with my mother and my sister. My mother was very ill, she had just had chemotherapy, had lost her hair, and couldn't think of organizing such a trip. But it was something I really wanted: to go to Turkey with her, in search of traces of our family; to go to Greece with her, because she, Helena, had made me love the Greeks. So, I went to a travel agency—that's how it was back then—and booked the passageways, took note of the information, and sketched out a route. I insisted so much that my mother eventually gave in. I'm stubborn. So was she, and so is my sister, too. I don't know if stubbornness is inherited or learned, but I know in this case I don't regret it at all. A year and a half later, my mother would die. Seven years later, from this trip and this death, my first novel, *A Chave de Casa*, would come to life.

Before the take-off, I got my second diary as a gift—this time without a lock. Green cover, a girl in a ballet costume, her back turned,

her face in profile, hands over a dance bar, her hair tied up in a bun; on the top, in yellow letters, the words: *Unforgettable moments*. I believed that writing a travel diary would be easier—it would've made more sense—than writing some random diary. Each day that passed, so many new things, so much to recount. In the beginning, I took the mission seriously; but as time went by, it became clear that the mission was indeed a mission, and that recounting doesn't always have to do with writing. I turned out to be an equally failed travel diary writer. On February 15th, 1998, I note: "It has been nine days since I last wrote; I feel I haven't been able to write a travel diary."

After that, I never had a diary again. In total, I only wrote two failed diaries, not having been able to fill in even a third of their length. However, I ended up owning four, for I took over another two, which hadn't been written by me, but by a little girl who had lived her childhood in the 60s, and, years later, would become my mother.

One afternoon, when I had come back early from work, my mother came into my room and gave me her diaries as a gift. One of them, an ordinary ruled, spiral notebook, with a mansion on the cover and the words "Winner," narrated, from the first page to the last, the day-to-day of a wealthy 13 or 14-year-old girl in Leblon, Rio de Janeiro, respecting the linearity of time, the unfolding of daily events, the most intimate secrets. The other one, cushioned, had the title *My Diary* in gold cursive writing. It was the account of a boat trip through Europe she went on when she was 17, and it told in detail what she had seen, felt, and thought.

A few weeks before, I, who never spoke about what I wrote, had told her, almost distractedly, that I was thinking about writing a diary again. But I thought it wasn't going to go well because deep down I didn't like writing diaries, I didn't know how to write diaries. I remember saying I wanted to try it again, as a kind of practice, to see if I could get the hold of it, if I could learn to write diaries like the other girls. After all, that's what I wanted to do with my life, to write, but if I couldn't even handle a diary, while my friends were filling up pages and pages, how would I ever write short stories, poems, novels?

So, my mother showed up that afternoon and gave me her diaries. Filled from the first page to the last. In the following days, months, years,

I dwelt on those words countless times. They hadn't been written by me, but they could have been: the diaries I inherited from my mother, the diaries I chewed, devoured, swallowed, and which became *my* diaries.

When I told a friend I had decided to write about those diaries, she remarked, "What was your mother thinking, giving you those diaries when you were just a teenager!" I had such an umbilical relationship with her, so close and confusing, that I had never questioned her about such a gesture. On the contrary, I almost felt grateful that she wrote the diaries I couldn't write; the names were different, but what she said was what I wanted to say; what she felt was what I felt. My mother's secret side was just like mine. When I read her diaries, I grew certain of it. I felt even more connected to my mother than before, almost like the same person.

I think that's exactly what she wanted. To tell me that I wasn't the only one who felt the ugliest at school; the only one who didn't have a boyfriend while all the others did; the only one who spent her afternoons buried in books; the only one who felt so much anguish in the face of existence; the only one who cried over the death of loved ones in advance; that I wasn't the only one to fall for impossible stories; the only one who wanted to be free before understanding exactly what that meant. My mother wrote just like me. Or rather, I wrote just like her. Those diaries were exactly the diaries that I would write, if I happened to write diaries.

I took my mother's diaries as my own, I appropriated them and only wrote again during the trip to Turkey. If I wanted to access my intimacy, it would only take one page of any of her diaries. If I had a daughter one day, when she would become a teenager, I would hand her my mother's diary as if it were mine, and maybe she would feel the same as I did. This way, the diary would pass on from generation to generation, the secret side of the girls in the family repeating themselves with no need for rewriting. We would all be symbiotic, we would all feel the same amazement, we would all be intelligent, free and literature lovers, and, despite all this, or maybe because of all this, we would all suffer for impossible loves.

But since not everything in life—or almost nothing—goes according to plan, that was not quite how things went. Some years after I inherited the diaries, my mother died, on the 24th of August 1999, exactly thirty

days after the death of my aunt and godmother, Gilda. Three and a half years after my older sister, Djamila. At the age of twenty, I, who had grown up amongst so many older women, suddenly found myself alone with my little sister, and an enormous emptiness, an enormous pain—when I think of those times, I feel some relief for not inhabiting them anymore.

Very early on, I had my mind set that if I wanted to be a writer I would have to suffer; the sadder my life was, the more legitimate my path would be. An unfashionable idea in the 90s, but which I absorbed through the readings I had done at the time, the biographies I read of some writers, and it would become very hard to undo. As the disasters happened one after the other, and they happened early on, I interpreted them as a sign that that was it: I could go on writing.

I remember that, both at my sister's burial and my mother's, I felt as if I lived in the depths of my interior—I cried and cried, until my body couldn't take it anymore. But there was also a sense in which I felt in the exterior, as if I were a spectator, observing the funeral, observing the pain of others and observing my own pain. I suffered and observed. I suffered and wrote. I lived and I wrote at the same time. There was this kind of perverse, self-centered inversion of things, as if it were predestined that those women needed to die, that I needed to suffer, to be able to write. Without that pain, I would never be able to write, so all of that was happening somehow so that I could write, or because I was going to write. So I would observe, from the inside and the outside, present and absent, buried together with them and suspended in space. There would only be writing born out of loss, written after the loss, with the loss, about the loss, a madness that wouldn't let go of me for it had rooted very early on in my head, in my body.

For a while, after those deaths, I was reluctant to lay down on a couch, for I was afraid to be healed of the pain. If I were to heal, how would I write? When I read Nietzsche for the first time, when I read Deleuze for the first time, I remember thinking: I don't need all that suffering after all. I don't need to suffer in order to write. The women of my life didn't have to die in order for me to write. After all, literature has nothing to do with me, it has nothing to do with the writer's life; therefore, I can be happy and write. But the things one puts in one's head when one is growing up

are very hard to reverse. I could read all of Nietzsche. All of Deleuze. And a bunch of other philosophers, of other literary and joy theorists. I could even lie down on my couch for years. That being which had grown in me at fifteen was not going away so easily.

To a certain extent, writing remained, for me, forever associated with the idea of pain. Much in the same way the idea of a successful, accomplished woman, a woman who speaks her mind, who uses her body and her head freely, remained associated with the idea of failure in love. A woman could only be all of that if she were unlucky in love. And, very early on, I understood I wanted to be all of that.

When my older sister died, when my aunt died, when my mother died, what I heard the most were words of consolation that could be summed up in the famous expression: "Time heals everything." I would lower my head in a sign of agreement, tears coming down, because I couldn't disagree with who was there holding my hand, to give me a bit of the lap I had lost. But inside I felt so angry at that consolation, so angry at the time that had already passed, that would pass, and I didn't want it to pass. I didn't want time to pass unless it went backwards, to my women, to the women who took care of me, to the women who made me the eldest woman so soon, so ahead of time, which was all wrong, scrambled in its stupid linearity. Time, making me move forward at a constant pace, the time I wanted behind me or ahead of me, close to them and away from the pain. And I just kept telling myself: No time will fill that hole. No time will bring my sisters back, my aunt back, my mother back. No time will ever ease the pain, that was what I found in the Emily Dickinson verse I borrowed as the epigraph of my first novel. Writing *A Chave de Casa* was, unknowingly, part of the grieving process I thought was never-ending. I say I didn't know because writing about my mother's illness and death didn't make it hurt any less. I continued to think about her every day after that. I continued to cry over her death every day after that.

I write this now and it seems to me like I'm writing about someone else. I find it hard to believe: did I really cry every day? And when did that stop? When did I stop crying? When did time go by?

Because it was precisely that: suddenly, time had gone by. It is now twenty-three years since my mother died. It has been more years without her than with her, although this entire sentence is wrong. Both for the

obvious fact that time is experienced in a relative and subjective way—the time of childhood, for instance, is infinitely slower than the time of motherhood—and for the fact that grieving is not just about learning to live without the dead, but also, and foremost, to live with them.

I learned to live with my mother in many ways: in silence, out loud, talking about her to my children, in dreams, in writing, rereading her letters and her books, in photographs, befriending many of her friends, having endless laughs. However, there is one way that was snatched from me shortly after her death.

Due to a domestic accident, while moving from my father's home to the apartment where my sister and I would live together for seven years, a number of boxes with memories of our lives disappeared: all of my older sister's family albums; my mother's youth albums; letters from my mother, some clippings of mine and my younger sister's whose content I can't remember; a beautiful and big original picture of Manuel Bandeira with Elizeth Cardoso, that I used to hang on my wall; the pictures of my mother standing among Egyptian soldiers during the Yom Kippur war; and, without a doubt, the most painful one, her teenage diaries, that I had made my own.

It was a death within a death. Losing those diaries was like losing my mother a second time. It was like losing myself, like losing the legacy I would leave my daughter: the lineage of strong, free women, writers and unlucky in love. I've never fully accepted that loss. As I never saw the dead body—the diaries weren't torn, they weren't burnt—I've spent the last twenty years hoping to find them. Every time I decide to tidy the closets of my home in Rio de Janeiro, I'm seized by the hope of finding them. Who knows whether they survived the accident? Who knows whether I won't open their pages one day, feel their smell of old sheets, and let my eyes slide over my mother's cursive and almost incomprehensible handwriting?

Writing has been an endless conversation with those absences. Here and there, I try to recover the lost affection of my mother and the diaries that, due to an ordinary accident, disappeared. At my novels' presentations, I often confess that I start writing them in the third person. I have the strange desire to write a novel in a realistic fashion, with an omniscient and omnipresent narrator, but I fail every single time. There's

a first-person which always imposes itself. Not necessarily mine. It might be Joana's, Antonio's, Ana's, or Julia's. I've been thinking about her—and about her relationship with the teenager who did (not) write diaries. The teenager who learned, like all girls in general, that writing is born out of a very intimate place and must not be shared with anyone. The teenager who, finally, grew up at a time when many women, in different parts of the world, decided to expose such writing and assert that the personal can also be literary, and that literature is always political.

Translation: Madalena Quintela

II.
Film Studies

The Sea as a Border, the Sea as an Experience: Artistic Engagements with the European Migration Crisis in Three Films

Gabriele De Angelis and Emma De Angelis

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Introduction

In recent years, migration has become one of the most important issues in the political, media and cultural discourse across European countries. Contemporary European media and political discourses are often dominated by migration (Demos, 2013; Bauman, 2016: 88 -97; Chouliaraki *et al*., 2017). Increasing numbers of migrants are risking their lives – and often losing them – in their attempt to reach Europe from the Mediterranean's southern shores, as they flee violence, poverty and discrimination in their homelands (Andersson, 2014; European Parliament, 2017; and Basaran, 2015 for an analysis of how European legal frameworks foster indifference towards migrant deaths at sea).

This article looks at selected examples of how artists have approached and interpreted the so -called European migration crisis, one of the most controversial and crucial contemporary political and social debates, and focuses on three films. It seeks to answer the following questions:

- How have the selected artists represented the migration crisis?
- How do their works help us to better understand this phenomenon?
- And what role does the representation and the symbolism of the sea play in it?

In order to answer these questions, this article uses a conceptualisation of the idea of borders which embraces a multidisciplinary approach through the concept of "borderscapes" – the idea that borders are the product of a constant construction and reconstruction of institutional, political, cultural and social practices and discourses that shape the border as a physical and conceptual space (Dell'Agnese and Szary, 2015). Migration – and in particular, "irregular migration" – pushes against the borders that are the apparent physical manifestation of state authority over a defined territory and at the same time of the collective identity of the inhabitants of such territory vis -à -vis others. Rights, duties, ideas of belonging and exclusion are given their delimitation by these dividing lines; these borders, along with other intangible ones that

determine different dynamics of inclusion or exclusion, give order to our lives (Newman, 2006).

In their more traditional connotation, borders can be understood as static, physical lines, the product of political processes, territorial markings that could be redrawn through negotiation or war (*ibidem*). In fact, they are complex, negotiated processes of political, social and cultural construction, subject to constant reinforcement, re -inaction and negotiation – it is the act of bordering, rather than the border itself, that is at the heart of these dynamics (Brambilla, 2015). Borders can therefore be regarded as "highly mobile, diffuse, proliferating", a "process rather than product" (Mountz and Hiemstra, 2014). Rather than static, borders are mobile, and their mobility is tied to human mobility (*ibidem*).

The political act of bordering requires policies, practices and discourses to be constantly performed – even more so in a globalised age when these boundaries are constantly tested and stretched into new shapes. The spaces near and around the border – commonly known as borderlands – are spaces of negotiation whose representation, construction and interpretation vary depending on the individuals and groups involved.[1] Fundamental to these processes are cultural and artistic elements, which have led to the emergence of the idea of "borderscapes" to signify how "cultures of all kinds" have gone beyond a representational relationship to borders and bordering (Dell'Agnese and Szary, 2015: 4). This concept has led scholars to apply a new, multidisciplinary approach to the study of the cultural, political and social construction of the border as an idea and as practice.

In today's "migrant crisis", in particular in the Mediterranean, specific sites have undergone a process of bordering as small southern islands such as Lampedusa and Lesbos have become the destination of hundreds of thousands of migrants attempting to reach Europe, the result of which being that Italy, Greece and the European Union (EU) have moved their border operations to the islands (Collyer and King, 2016: 6-7; Tazzioli, 2016; Tsoni, 2016; Dimitriadi, 2017). The sea itself is both a physical barrier to human mobility and an element that connects lands

1 For first usage of the term "borderscape", see Rajaram and Grundy-Warr (2007) and Dell'Agnese and Szary (2015: 4); for a further conceptualisation, see Flint and Mamadouh (2015).

and continents. As will be clear from the subsequent analysis, the sea also represents a symbolic interface between the natural and the cultural dimension of the human being, and thus marks a difference, a "border" inside the human being itself, one that unites and separates its natural and cultural ways of being. Such a duplicity is inherent in the concept of the border, which is both a physical and a symbolic place.

The bordering and securitisation with their practices and narratives have given rise to artistic and cultural works that also shape yet at the same time challenge the wider discourse on borders and migration (Mazzara, 2016a; Ramsay, 2016). Giudice and Giubilaro (2015), for instance, contend that artworks can also be considered as "landscape interventions with a strong capacity for political influence". This raises questions about the relationship between art and politics, which is one of the themes explored in the analysis of the case studies below. These are:

- *4.1 Miles* (2016), 21'20", directed by Daphne Matziaraki, US: The New York Times Company (a short film);
- *Fuocoammare* (Fire at Sea), (2016) 109', directed by Gianfranco Rosi, Italy: 01 Distribution (a feature-length film);
- *Incoming* (2017), 52', directed by Richard Mosse, first shown as part of a wider installation including photographs from Mosse's series Heat Maps (2017).

The three films were shot at the height of the European migration crisis. The analysis aims at understanding what kind of "borderscape" is painted by each work. Borders, however, must be related to the socio-political context of globalization. Indeed, the "migration crisis" is the most striking aspect of contemporary globalization as a wider phenomenon that sees a mass movement of people migrating to study, work, and live in other countries – often but not always from more economically disadvantaged countries (Bauman, 1998: 77- 79; Demos, 2013: xiii- xiv).

Yet, as Bauman explains, this new openness also led to accelerated encounters between different cultures, belief systems, and ways of life, as well as creating an ever -widening awareness of the difference between

those relative few who were the clear beneficiaries of globalisation and the many who suffered mainly its negative consequences (Bauman, 1998). This in turn brought about a backlash of tension, mistrust, and retrenchment, not just between countries but also within them. What Bauman has identified as the reality of "liquid modernity" is one in which people identify such openness with uncertainty and fear linked to exposure to forces that they cannot fully understand or control; the open society is one that is exposed to "the blows of fate" (Bauman, 2007). The figure of the "illegal immigrant" has become one of the greatest embodiments of this fear.

We therefore expect borderscapes to be built around this tension between openness and closure, cultural encounters and separation. On this basis, the article next attempts to understand how the three case studies represent the European migration crisis, and whether and to what extent they contribute to the creation of a Mediterranean borderscape.

We opted to focus on three film- based case studies for two reasons. The first is given the dynamic nature of video, it is more able to immediately capture the idea of movement that is inherent in the journey of the migrants. Second, the case studies are also a more immediate counterpoint to the way in which the wider public accesses information about the migration crisis, which is via the footage broadcast by news outlets.

Our analysis highlights how an aesthetic treatment and re -creation of "borderscapes" offers innovative insights into the relation between those who are on different sides of state borders, and into the multifaceted gaps that borders create between an "us" and a "them". In the films under analysis, this comes to the fore through the dialectics of loneliness and separation. As we highlight in our analysis, the films in question introduce the viewer to the "borderscapes" through complex techniques of estrangement, and connect aesthetics and politics in quite an innovative way.

This allows the viewer to focus on a paradoxical result of contemporary "borderscapes", onto which the "migration crisis" brings our attention: the reduction of humanity to a form of nature, of "bare life", despite and amidst its very political and institutional form of life.

1. Case Studies: Representations of the Migration Crisis on Film 4.1 Miles

4.1 Miles

A short journey of 4.1 miles, the distance which inspired the title for the film, is all that separates the Greek island of Lesbos from the Turkish coast.

This apparently small distance is the final border facing those migrants who have reached Turkey across land routes from the Middle East and beyond (often, but not only, refugees from the Syrian civil war). They must cross here in order to reach EU territory, and they do so hoping to be able to move to the Greek mainland and, from there, to other EU countries. The film shows several rescue missions carried out by a Greek Coast Guard patrol boat in this stretch of water, led by Captain Kyriakos Papadopoulos.

At one point in the first scene, the captain turns to the filmmaker to tell her to put down her camera and help – a moment that sets the tone for the rest of the film: acutely tragic scenes of humanity on the cusp of life and death.

The most hard- hitting scene is perhaps the final, desperate and only partially successful rescue of a group of migrants from a sinking boat, already largely submerged by water. The migrants still on the vessel are standing with water up to their knees, while the shape of the boat itself is hardly discernible. The viewer can hear the crew's frantic calls, and the sound of bodies hitting the side of the patrol boat in the chaos of the moment as the Greek Coast Guard try to help them up with ropes and by hand. The crew can be seen, clearly distraught, in the attempt to revive a child and provide first aid to other survivors, as it becomes clear that the patrol boat does not have enough space to take all the migrants in a single trip (Del Barco, 2017). Throughout the film, Matziaraki's camera lingers on the Greek Coast Guard Captain, Kyriakos Papadopoulous, whose expressive, grim face is emblematic of the daunting task facing him and the isolation in which he carries out this task. It is this final rescue attempt that sheds light on the director's

remarks about Papadopoulos's heroism in the face of such a tragedy. Matziaraki has underscored the hardships encountered by the Greek Coast Guard when confronted with the scale of the crisis, one that they were entirely unprepared for, explaining in several interviews how the rescuers were, in fact, insufficiently trained or equipped to intervene in rescue operations of this magnitude.

Although the bulk of *4.1 miles* is dedicated to the rescues, the film also includes a conversation in a restaurant between the Coast Guard Captain and others, presumably locals, and then another between him and a shopkeeper. Far from being staged, these authentic conversations that Matziaraki captured on her camera offer a glimpse into the local context of the island and its inhabitants. Their doubts and concerns are brought up as they briefly discuss what should be done to deal with the crisis, with the editing depicting a quiet moment in- between patrols and rescues. Rather than using interviews or a narrator, *4.1 Miles* uses these voices, captured in their daily lives, to express the film's viewpoint, and in so doing perhaps is the case study that comes closest to Nichols' definition of the observational mode of the documentary film, "[which] emphasizes a direct engagement with the everyday life of subjects as observed by an unobtrusive camera" (Nichols, 2010: 31 -32).

Fuocoammare

Rosi's *Fuocammare* deliberately blurs the line between documentary and feature film, yet there are several reasons why the film cannot quite be defined as a documentary, its use of documentary material notwithstanding. It is neither shot nor edited with documentary techniques. Rather than a handheld camera, for instance, Rosi chose to use a tripod, framing his images to convey an idea of stillness. There are no voiceovers or narrators, and no interviews. The camera choice only changes in part towards the end, showing a long scene aboard an Italian navy ship that has just rescued a vessel – an only partially successful operation, as several migrants were already found dead on the ship. Yet Rosi also refrained from the more typical filming techniques of a feature, eschewing set -up dialogues with reverse shots, or the use

of multiple viewpoints. Everything is viewed through the single lens of the filmmakers' camera. The resulting film appears as a curious hybrid, where what is fiction is presented as a document, and what is a document is shot as fiction.

Set in Lampedusa, an italian island, *Fuocoammare* follows two strands that seem never to intersect: the daily wanderings of a local child, Samuele, and the migrants attempting to make their way from the North African coast across the Mediterranean, attempting to reach the shores of Europe's southernmost island, another gateway to the rest of the EU. Interspersed are other scenes that belong to these two parallel worlds: coast guards attempting to communicate with migrant boats at sea, and later carrying out rescue missions or conducting initial identification procedures on the island, and other local inhabitants going about their daily lives – the DJ for the local radio, some of Samuele's relatives and one of his friends, an elderly couple, and the local doctor.

The film's opening credits present the key facts about how Lampedusa has been impacted by Europe's migrant crisis: Lampedusa has seen 400,000 migrants land on its shores over the past two decades. Yet, immediately after giving the viewers these stark facts, the film opens with an apparently incongruous scene: young Samuele, making a slingshot in the wintery, ragged yet clearly southern island landscape, surrounded by low pine trees and barbary figs, under heavy clouds racing across the sky as night falls.

In immediate juxtaposition to these apparently carefree childish pursuits, Rosi cuts to an enormous radar dish circling on its axis, capturing a stilted conversation between an Italian operator repeatedly asking for coordinates and a man begging for help, clearly broadcasting from a vessel in distress. The following silent shots are of a searchlight on the dark waters. The Italian navy ship continues its search, the radars and searchlight searching for the migrant boat until the pre -dawn light starts to rise on the horizon, and three computer screens in the local radio station replace the radars on the ship's deck, as the DJ chooses the next track and an older lady in her kitchen sets about preparing a meal while listening to news of yet another shipwreck. These are the strands that the film will pursue over the course of its 1'49", as their characters each run their course, migrants and locals never quite converging.

At the heart of the film is the idea of the two worlds that do not meet; the only connection is, in effect, via the island's doctor, who looks after the local population and later talks about the migrants' plight while trying to communicate with a pregnant migrant woman during a scan.

Yet none of these elements is necessarily decisive in determining whether *Fuocoammare* can indeed be considered a documentary – in fact, even the director himself seems torn on whether the film can be classified as one:

> Since my first film, I wanted to break this barrier between documentary and fiction. When I start to film, I never think that I'm going to make a documentary or fiction; I want to make a film. I want to use the tool of cinema, the dramatization of cinema into reality. (Rosi, 2016)

This peculiar approach, blending the traditions of documentary and fiction, was recognised by the jury at the Berlin film festival as "a daring hybrid of captured footage and deliberate storytelling that allows us to consider what documentary can do" (quoted in *The Guardian*, 2016). His choice of using a tripod rather than an over- the -shoulder camera is a conscious decision to avoid having the viewer see the film through the filmmaker's eye (Rosi, 2017).

Finally, his editing is also essential not only to the pacing but to the narrative arc of the film, culminating as it does with the tragic scene of death, when the camera silently rests over the corpses of migrants piled one on top of the other on the lower deck of their boat, as it remains adrift in the sea after all the survivors – many so exhausted and dehydrated – are carried as limp as ragdolls onto the Italian ship by men in white hazmat suits.

At its heart, the film is about the loneliness of the human condition: young Samuele is often alone, playing or wandering about, and even his interactions with others are limited in both scope and communication. The DJ is alone in his studio at the radio station, itself a small and limited means of local communication, broadcasting small local news and news of global resonance (the shipwrecks, rescues and deaths at sea) as local chronicle; the woman listening to the broadcast is herself alone

in her kitchen; the sense of stillness and wintery landscape add to this sense of loneliness and isolation of the islanders. And the same sense of loneliness and isolation characterises the images of the migrants: boats alone at sea, searchlights in the night, radars turning to capture signals as if they were attempting to detect mysterious signals from the unknown of outer space. Even when in groups on the island, they are waiting to be processed individually, wrapped in thermal foil blankets.

The doctor is the only point of contact between these two worlds; he is also the only one to comment on his own experience of providing medical assistance to the migrants, at times recounting harrowing memories. There are some moments of communality, again, separate for the two worlds of islanders and migrants: Samuele playing with a friend and talking to a handful of adults; two elderly people drink coffee in silence; fisherman set off from the harbour. On the other hand, a group of migrants organises a football match, and in a different scene, one of them intones what sounds like an epic of their journey, as a chorus joins in the chanting.

The encounters between the migrants and their respective rescuers and first aid providers at sea, on the other hand, are quite different: some of the remarks overheard have compassionate undertones, but there is little room for more interaction when the rescuers need to process and triage those who are rescued to determine follow- up treatment. In the last scene at sea, the three officials stand on the deck of the ship, looking out at the sea in silence, as their colleagues make their way off the drifting boat where only corpses are left. The final scene goes back to Samuele, who is again playing alone, as night falls.

Incoming

Incoming is a multi-channel installation, with the film shown on three large 8- metre wide adjacent screens, starting first with a single one, then two, then all three, so that each screen shows scenes running alongside each other simultaneously yet out of synch so that the eye can shift from one to the other, or attempt to follow an order by focusing on one screen only (Barbican, 2016).

Mosse and his cinematographer Trevor Tweeten followed two of the major migration routes of the decade: one where migrants from Syria, the Middle East, and Central Asia make their way across land to Turkey and then across the Aegean Sea (the same crossing at the heart of *4.1 Miles*) to then make their way to the mainland and the rest of Europe, ending at the former Tempelhof Airport in Berlin, which has been turned into a refugee shelter. The second is the African route, where migrants cross the Sahara desert on their way to Libya, where they board boats to make the crossing to Sicily and from there to mainland Italy and other European countries – Mosse and Tweeten ended this journey in Calais, infamous for being the location of the Jungle Camp, which housed migrants hoping to make their way across the English Channel to the United Kingdom.

The monochrome film (everything is a shade of grey with white and black as the two extremes of the light spectrum, rather than a classic black and white) shows striking scenes that go from the everyday moments of people living in the refugee camps – with children playing, improvised football matches, individuals in quiet moments of prayer – to dramatic scenes of rescue and death on the shores of the Mediterranean, pathologists taking samples of DNA from drowned victims in body bags, and military personnel on the deck of an aircraft carrier as fighter jets take off.

Mosse's technique is unique and innovative, and from this point of view at least, his work is revolutionary, far more so than either *4.1 Miles* or *Fuocoammare*. Mosse and Tweeten shot with a custom -built camera which uses thermal recognition technology that can detect a human body from a distance of 30 km. This kind of imaging technology is only available as military grade equipment, and Mosse's camera was made by a defence and security company that manufactures technologies such as drones for surveillance, but that can also be connected to weapons systems to track and target the enemy (see Mosse, 2017b: 36). The Barbican's press release of *Incoming* described this as a camera that "sees as a missile sees" (Barbican, 2016) although it is too heavy for aerial usage and so it is used over land or maritime environments (Mosse, 2017b: 37). The camera is also "colour-blind, registering only the contours of relative heat difference within a given scene" (*ibidem*).

The images it produces appear in "a beautiful monochrome tonality; human skin is rendered as a mottled patina disclosing an intimate system of body heat" (*ibidem*); yet, Mosse remarks how the camera also "carries a certain aesthetic violence, stripping the individual from the body and portraying the human as a mere biological trace" (*ibidem*).

This unique technique required innovation just to be installed for exhibition: projectors in the gallery had to be modified to render very high image quality and high light contrasts to show even the smallest of details (Barbican, 2016).

Incoming has no voiceover and no dialogue – no spoken word as such. Its soundtrack, composed by Ben Frost, uses snippets of "ambient field recordings" that capture human voices, sounds of life in the camps, engine noise (Mosse, 2017b: 42). It is certainly a powerful, somewhat disorienting soundtrack, which adds to the viewers' sense of discomfort.

The title chosen for the installation reflects an intention to ascribe layers of meaning to the work. Mosse himself points out that "incoming" can be used in reference to incoming enemy fire – immediately referring to the technology employed in warfare and other military uses – as well as the influx of people arriving in a country (*ibidem*: 34). Both are familiar meanings of the word in two different contexts, yet both meanings are clearly imbued the title, signifying the securitisation of migration flows and the idea of borders being contested and crossed – the key concepts of the securised borderscape of Lampedusa as noted by Mazzara (2016a).

Mosse's camera also performs the interesting conceptual exercise of using a technology traditionally employed to detect bodies across land or maritime borders – and to prevent them from reaching and crossing those borders – to pointedly cross those borders and forge them in a different way. Rather than the physical borders at national frontiers, the border is recreated between the viewer and all of those on screen through the application of the thermal imaging technology. The idea that those on the "right" side have certain political and human rights granted to them by their citizenship status and that those who come across the borders do not have those rights (see Pezzani and Heller, 2013) is challenged by the equal eye of the camera that strips them of their recognisable features and goes to the basic essence of their humanity (and their mortality) – their body temperature.

2. Borderscapes
The Ethics and Aesthetics of Loneliness and Separation

Each one of the three films offers a very different approach to engaging the viewer with what each filmmaker sees as an urgent crisis in present-day society. What is most relevant here is how the aesthetic dimension mediates the film's political dimension, as opposed to each one's aesthetic qualities per se.

Fuocoammare has received many accolades, but it has also sparked controversy and sometimes attracted harsh criticisms, from both reviewers and scholars investigating how migration is represented (Mazzara, 2016a; Prospero, 2016; Ramsay, 2016). As previously noted, the film is about the loneliness of the human condition and shows locals and migrants as living in two separate worlds that almost never intersect or overlap.

It is precisely this separation that attracted criticism. *The Economist*'s critic is emblematic of this type of criticism directed at Rosi:

> "Fire at Sea" has been praised for offering an oblique, poetic alternative to a more conventional campaigning documentary, but if someone were to watch the Samuele sequences in isolation, they wouldn't have any inkling of what the rest of the film was about. Don't the refugees and their rescuers deserve a documentary of their own? (Prospero, 2016)

Yet, as Rosi (2016, 2017) himself has explained, this separation reflects how the everyday lives of Lampedusa's Italian inhabitants is disassociated from that of the migrants, who only transit through the island and whose time there is spent in the migrant reception centre, with little to no contact with the locals. In addition, Rosi also found it difficult to film inside the refugee centre, even when he was finally able to get access, the permission for which took months. As a filmmaker, it was easier for him to build relationships with the island's inhabitants over time. The migrants were only there for a few days before moving on to other

destinations in Italy. It was his presence during the rescue of the ship, which is the culmination of the film, that allowed him to form a bond with the survivors, who then invited him to talk. The ethical implications of filming such events are striking.

Aesthetics and Politics: Techniques of Estrangement

The "poetics" of the sea plays an important role in conveying the film's ethical and political message. In *Fuocoammare* the sea is calm and apparently unthreatening. Its quiet beauty contrasts with the human drama of rescue on the high sea and loss of life. This quietness characterises all natural elements in which human actions are inscribed. The director's choice favours the sky and the sea. It is exactly this contrast between the human and the natural that causes the viewer to feel more intense uneasiness when witnessing the loneliness and the drama of the human characters in *Fuocoammare*. It is precisely the quiet peace embodied by the natural elements which powerfully conveys the idea that something is deeply wrong with what we are witnessing, and which helps the viewer to overcome the "compassion fatigue" (Moeller, 1999) that befalls contemporary citizens who are spectators of never -ending, identical news reports that systemat- ically fail to trigger any ethical and political response that *Fuocoammare*'s aesthetics are attempting to stir up. Its aesthetics represent exactly that "counter -narrative" that many critics have said they missed in the film, as in *Incoming*, too.

Indeed, a fundamental criticism levelled at both Rosi and Mosse is whether one has the right to make art when its subject is such abject human suffering. "Does an artwork that sets out to challenge documentary tropes end up aestheticising human suffering by rendering it mere spectacle?", asks Seon O'Hagan in *The Guardian* in response to Mosse's *Incoming* (O'Hagan, 2017). And, if artists do choose to tackle such topics, then some, like Federica Mazzara, suggest that this should be done within a specific set of parameters – that of "producing a counter- narrative that is otherwise concealed by the hegemonic discourse of the narrative of crisis" (Mazzara, 2016b: 145). Her criticism

of Rosi's *Fuocoammare*, for instance, is that the film treats them not like individuals, but like masses, thus denying them as "subjects of power" (Mazzara, 2016b). The same criticism (already found in the review of the film published by *The Economist*) is picked up by Maya Ramsay (2016). Ramsay's main criticism is that Rosi portrays the migrants as "voiceless victims", and that they are "instantly objectified after having literally just beaten death" (*ibidem*: 222). Ramsay and Mazzara are explicit in their contention that art about the migrants should give them a voice, rather than "perpetuate the[ir] objectification and otherization" (*ibidem*). And a similar criticism could be levelled at Mosse's *Incoming* in which, after all, the camera "dehumanises" everyone but in the process creates captivatingly beautiful images. However, all three of the authors of these works emphasise that their primary goal is to raise awareness; it is not their responsibility to advance a political or even a policy solution. They are attempting to present a phenomenon that has been made so familiar through the daily onslaught of images in the media that viewers have mostly become "desensitised", and by shining a different light on the plight of migrants, perhaps they can once again appeal to those who have been overexposed and thus made numb to the victims' suffering by the sheer quantity of images and tales offered up for daily consumption in the mass media. In Mosse's words, "I wanted to use the technology to create an immersive and humanist art form so as to upend mass media narratives and approach the migrant crisis in a much more emotive and visceral format" (Mosse, 2017a). And, as Pipolo (2016) points out,

> Against those who think a serious subject is compromised by a handsome look, Rosi proves that "matching" subject to visual tone is another form of editorializing. If anything, the majestic beauty of the sea and the sky as the backdrop for the human saga unfolding around them, while not played up for facile irony, is a sober reminder of the blunt juxtaposition that the world itself offers beyond the contrived efforts of any documentarian.

Present in all three works is the desire to transform how the migrant crisis is viewed by depicting a different way of perceiving it.

Humanity as Nature

In *4.1 Miles*, the sea presents itself as an incidental scenario rather than a prominent element, as in *Fuocoammare*. It represents a medium that humans attempt to traverse, and at the same time to technically dominate and control, until they realise that it also represents a limit to their organisational response and control capacity. Through the very fact that it never moves centre stage, it represents the unknown, at times the threatening force that opposes human attempts to control nature through the drawing of geographical boundaries. Loneliness is not least the result of the frustration of human efforts.

In *4.1 Miles*, the sea also represents a different kind of barrier, all inside the world of humans: the barrier between those who are on solid ground and have their own, "natural" place there (like the Greek islanders), and those who first have to reach such a place that others can apparently take for granted. In that sense, the sea — and the corresponding "opposite", the land — also represent a barrier between human beings: a barrier that, although drawn by humans through their institutions, is to such an extent ingrained in our understanding of our geographical and political "place", that it now looks like second nature to us.

The alien -like quality of Mosse's *Incoming* is painted over everyone – all human beings are "others" to his camera, and there is a certain disturbing beauty that permeates every fragment and draws the viewer in to this otherworldly dimension where everyone is made equal in this shared difference.

Mosse very clearly articulates that one of his aims is to make the viewers feel a sense of complicity, responsibility and guilt when viewing *Incoming*. While he is not offering solutions, he is acutely aware of the political nature of the work and has infused his technical and aesthetic choices with political resonance. Mosse's reference to Giorgio Agamben is crucial to his connection between ethics and aesthetics:

> The camera seems to level all, representing each of us in term of "bare life", as a creature rather than an individual

> vested with essential rights, both legal and political, which Agamben identifies as the "limit concept" of the nation-state, elicits the crisis that pushes our liberal democracies over the threshold of totalitarianism. The tendency towards totalitarianism, the imminent and yet spectral crisis at the heart of liberal democracy, threatens to strip each of us of our political life (bios), potentially reducing all of us to "homines sacri", or, to deploy Agamben's phrase, "homo sacer" [accursed man], along with the stateless refugee. (Mosse, 2017c)

And thus, the camera used for *Incoming* applies the same process to everyone who is captured by its lens: regardless of role, ethnicity, gender, nationality, the camera strips them all of their humanity to turn them into alien -like creatures – "dehumanising them and then making them human again" (Mosse *apud* Seymour, 2017; see also Viveros -Fauné, 2017). Yet this is, in actuality, precisely the sort of jarring effect that Mosse sought to provoke in the viewer of *Incoming*:

> I always say that beauty is the sharpest tool in the box if you want to make people feel something. It raises an ethical problem when you have a beautiful photograph that tries to communicate human suffering, so photojournalists are often scared to go too far into that register, towards the beautiful. Aestheticising human suffering is always perceived as tasteless or crass or morally wrong but my take on it is that the power of aesthetics to communicate should be taken advantage of rather than suppressed. (Mosse, 2017a)

The paradox of finding or even injecting aesthetic beauty in images of human horror and suffering is justified, Mosse contends, because it is precisely this quality that manages to communicate to the viewer in a way that photojournalism is unable to achieve.

The secondariness of the sea in *Incoming* is compensated with a "naturalization" of the human, whose images "flow" over the screens, mingling with the natural elements around them, only separated by

degrees of grey, or a basic black and white that represent disquieting "extremes" in which the spectator's eye struggles to discern what is (culturally) human and what is natural. Again, this aesthetic effect is what actually conveys the key ethical message, representing the consequence of borders, i.e. of what is chiefly supposed to introduce geographical and political distinctions on the earth's surface, and what ends up, in fact, with blurring the distinction between the cultural and the natural, the "properly" human and the "merely" material. The apparent absence of the sea and of other natural scenarios, such as the desert, which are, in fact, very much present in *Incoming*, is actually an expression of how much the human element has itself become indistinguishable from non -human nature. Thus, the aesthetic qualities of the film are key in conveying the ethical message of the rediscovery of the "bare life".

Conclusion

How, then, have the selected artists represented the migration crisis – or, in other words, what kind of borderscape of the migration crisis do they represent, if any? And how do these films contribute to our understanding of the migration crisis?

There are certainly some interesting thematic parallels that emerge from a close reading of the three films. The first is the unsettling sense of isolation, loneliness, and powerlessness, which is present to varying degrees across all three. The second is the problematic relationship between the humans and their natural environment, chiefly but not exclusively represented by the sea.

In the end, however, although the films are about the migration crisis, they say much more about Europe and those privileged enough to be European citizens than about the migrants themselves, focusing as they are on the response to the incoming migrants, and on the significance of drawing borders, in particular. All three filmmakers want these films to raise awareness of the migration crisis by focusing on its human dimension and its implicit relationship to the natural dimension of human life, and in so doing, to spark a debate on our own culpability and complicity, our complex and controversial attempts to control

nature, be it land or sea, and use apparently physical barriers to build or strengthen barriers between human beings.

Yet all three directors refrain from taking an overtly "political" stance and, indeed, ideas of guilt and complicity belong to the realm of the moral, not the realm of the political. Matziaraki, Rosi and Mosse all seek to provoke an emotive response, perhaps that same emotive response that is forfeit when compassion fatigue sets in in the face of relentless media coverage (Moeller, 1999; Wright, 2000; Sinclair, 2016; *The Economist*, 2017). While the subject is certainly political, the films in themselves are not; they do not explore the causes of the migration phenomenon, nor do they offer a solution, or a path towards reaching a solution. Matziaraki very simply phrases the question that, in the end, is at the heart of each of these films: what kind of response are we prepared to give when witnessing the suffering of other human beings? They all assume that the viewer will already be aware that there is such a thing as migration and such a thing as a migration crisis: they are interested in showing explicitly what this actually looks like at the human level.

In that sense, the three directors send a message to the viewer, encouraging each one to engage in the first person with what is depicted in the films. Thinking about the European viewer as the addressee of the films, the borderscape they paint is one where the border is in our thinking and our clinging to the idea that there is such a thing as a border that can differentiate between "us" and "them", and in not realising or not drawing the consequences from the fact that we are responsible for the response to the migration crisis. They film the borders, and in all three films the natural border, represented by the sea, is actually a border we draw inside our sense of humanity: in *4.1 Miles*, the border lies tragically in the space between the Coast Guard vessel and those who can be pulled from the sea on board and those who will ultimately drown. In *Fuocoammare*, the border is in the space between Lampedusa's inhabitants and the migrants transiting through, but also, more importantly, in the solitude and silences experienced by both sides alike. In *Incoming*, it is in the alien -ness of all those on screen vis -à- vis the viewers. Yet, in all three cases, the border can be crossed, challenged, and, perhaps, erased by the emotive response that they wish to draw out of the viewer and that underscores our shared humanity.

Ultimately, these films about migration are films about the human condition. This is how, fundamentally, *4.1 Miles*, *Fuocoammare* and *Incoming* contribute to our understanding of the migration crisis: by painting a borderscape that ultimately shows us the contemporary migration crisis as a manifestation of the tragedies and paradoxes of the human condition.

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How to Mediate Reality: Thinking Documentary Film with Adorno and Horkheimer

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The responsibility lies with the How, not with the What.
Theodor W. Adorno, Prologue to Television, 53

To deny the reality of film in claiming (to capture) reality is to stay "in ideology" – that is, to indulge in the (deliberate or not) confusion of filmic with phenomenal reality.
Trinh T Min-Ha, Documentary is/Not a Name, 90

When Robert Kramer wrote, in 1991, that "[p]ower is the possibility to define what is real"[1], he was referring to the complex political and ideological potency of documentary formats. A documentary filmmaker himself, he was well aware of the political element of perception and the persuasive force of films claiming to address reality directly. And indeed, documentaries, especially those that are transmitted through official channels, are commonly considered as serious, trustworthy productions. Allegedly based on facts, they are supposed to document, explain, reveal that which matters in the actual state of the world – the real world, the one that we share with those that appear in the films and in which "issues of life and death are always at hand", as Bill Nichols puts it (Nichols 1991, 109). Therein lies the additional value and characteristic seriousness of documentary. And therein also lies its assumed authority: its direct association with the factual world grants it with a specific credibility likely to become ideology when it remains unquestioned. Thus, documentary formats are particularly susceptible for authoritarian instrumentalization, all the more so if they take on a neutral, affirmative stance and conceal the fact that the empirical reality captured by the camera necessarily goes through the subjective mediation of the filmmaker.

It was such authoritarian tendencies that Kramer detected both in American news coverage and official journalistic reports. As a critical

1 translated from French by the author.

response, he co-founded the New York Newsreel collective in 1967 in order to counter the alleged authority of official representations as sole suppliers of truthful information. Through independent experimental works, the members of the collective aimed to disrupt the consensual appearance of reality. They opposed subversive forms to the normalized standards of image production, so as to open up a space for discordant voices and emancipatory perspectives. Evidently, Kramer and the New York Newsreel collective were neither the first, nor the only filmmakers who engaged critically with the mediatic representations of reality delivered by the reigning institutions of society. Many independent artistic productions, activist videos, and essay films were and continue to be driven by the idea to challenge the hegemonic legitimacy claim of authorized versions – either by questioning the ideological impact of media, their subliminal strategies and the appearance of immediacy on which they rely; or by problematizing reductionist or misleading representations, and using documentary films to give a visibility to subjects and objects that "must be represented" (Rabinowitz 1994). However, such critical works are usually available only through specialized festivals, art galleries, more or less private circuits or the internet, and require insider knowledge to be found.

During the last decades, commercial productions have appropriated critical issues in order to convert them into "culinary"[2] entertainment products. Alongside with documentaries praising the beauty of allegedly 'authentic' nature, narrating the fascinating biographies of celebrities, exposing the newest technological inventions, ancient civilizations, or impressive discoveries, the offer of popular documentary formats featuring serious content is overwhelming. Hence, documentaries of all shapes are nowadays omnipresent in the sphere of what Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer have called, since the 1940s, the culture industry. When the two philosophers first problematized the potency of culture industry, the permissible content of media formats was still largely subjected to legal constraints. Political campaigns against fascism, communism or, on the other side of the iron curtain, capitalism, as well as moral restrictions as the (in)famous Hays Code

2 This expression, often employed by Theodor W. Adorno, stems from Bertolt Brecht.

in the USA, significantly limited the topics that could be raised in the public sphere. Meanwhile, the media landscape has been widely liberated from direct political and moral censorship, at least in those countries that have adopted the Western model of neoliberalism. Consequently, the situation of documentary film has radically changed. Besides officially authorized documentary formats on the one hand, and their subversive counterpart, independent productions, on the other, we are nowadays confronted with a great diversity of films that present themselves, as it were, as their popular synthesis. Claiming to be critical visions of reality, they nevertheless rely on documentary's persuasive agency, while being entertaining enough to suit for mass consumption.

Hence, big commercial productions like *An Inconvenient Truth* (dir. Davis Guggenheim, 2006), *Leaving Neverland* (dir. Dan Reed, 2019), *Blackfish* (dir. Gabriela Cowperthwaite, 2013), *Fahrenheit 11/9* (dir. Michael Moore, 2018), *Citizen 4* (dir. Laura Poitras, 2014) or *Inside Job* (dir. Charles Ferguson, 2010) are released in multiplex cinemas, available on public tv programs, internet platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo, or payable streaming services such as Amazon Prime, Hulu, or Netflix. More often than not, they disclose shocking scandals (be they political, economic, social, or ecological), uncover illicit practices or humanitarian atrocities, and constitute by themselves an intervention in the debate in question. Covering a wide range of miscellaneous subjects, documentary films present themselves nowadays as critical consciousness of societal evil and watchdog of ongoing or forthcoming crises. They are considered as an appropriate medium to address virtually any issue of contemporary society, including failures of state management or even the bias of media coverage – as long as it is spectacular enough to raise public interest, and thus promising enough to turn into a box-office success. Climate change, racism, the global financial crises, devastating wars, the malfeasance of capitalism, communism or the evangelist church, the Cambridge Analytica affair, the viciousness and egocentrism of the American or the North Korean president, the danger of terrorism and extremist groups, worldwide sex trafficking and horrifying abuse cases – broaching severe societal problems through compelling non-fiction formats has become as common a cultural praxis as watching action movies, soap operas, or quiz shows.

Admittedly, this does neither mean that everything shown under the sign of mainstream documentary is nowadays critically motivated, nor that truly every topic has since then come into the focus of the public sphere. Nevertheless, the broadened diversity of topics embraced in the media, together with their compelling presentation, affect the societal perception of reality significantly. The public exhibition of seemingly every issue nourishes not only the impression that virtually any aspect of the global society was potentially in the reach of everyone's grasp, but also the assumption that a comprehensive understanding of a respective topic in particular – or even a critical attitude in general –, could be attained simply by watching the right films. The problem is not only that it becomes more and more difficult to discern whether a documentary representation is based on thorough research, populist interests, or pure market orientation, but also that the idea of critique as something that could be smoothly consumed is misleading. What is more: such an idea hides in its folds signs of what Adorno et. al. called an authoritarian character trait (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, Sanford 2019). By inherently claiming to show "reality as it is", many commercial documentaries feed such an attitude, and thereby incite the viewer to subordinate herself to the authority of the provided information and its explanation rather than leaving space for her own interpretation and critical assessment. A critical behavior, on the contrary, requires "the ability to distinguish between what is known and what is accepted merely by convention or under constraint of authority" (Adorno 2005a, 282). Thus, it is fundamentally different from the compelling media treatment of a sensitive topic and its passive consumption.

This is not to say that popular documentary films inciting to adopt a genuine critical attitude rather than conformist faith cannot or do not exist beyond the margins of the public media space. It does not mean either that simply by watching conformist films, one necessarily loses the capacity for critical thinking. However, in order not to succumb to a relation of pure belief, it is important to understand how contemporary documentary films deal with the authority attributed to them, how they produce and legitimate certain effects of reality, how they relate to society as a whole, and how the forms through which contents are mediated shape and orientate our perception. The critical theory of Horkheimer

and Adorno can therefore provide a productive starting point. For even if they never addressed the authoritarian agency of documentary films directly, their insights on the representation of reality through the culture industry and its intimate relationship with authoritarian tendencies touch upon the genre in a particularly acute manner. This chapter aims at problematizing certain recurrent features of documentary films through the lens of the critical theory of the early Frankfurt school, in order to open up a critical space for the understanding of documentary formats today.

Dividing the Real: The Common Ground of the Culture Industry and Positivism

As already mentioned, the authority attributed to documentary films is related to its allegedly direct association with the objective world. The reason why they appear as truthful is that the representation of reality they provide is not only thought to be accurate because of the direct recording through a camera, but also because the complementary information is supposedly based on factual truth. Just as positivistic tendencies in the sciences, such documentaries thus adhere to the "cult of fact" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 119), which pervades the entire sphere of the culture industry. Both, positivistic science and the products of the culture industry, rely on the uncritical belief in the factual as an objective, neutral, detachable realm, and the conviction that this realm could be approached empirically, without relating it to the historically developed society from which it stems and in which it is imbedded. This underlying idea that factual truth equates truth *tout court* seems to be taken for granted. Horkheimer and Adorno vehemently criticized this assumption, and urged to scrutinize its social, political and epistemological implications. A short consideration of their argument might help to understand what makes an uncritical faith in the veracity of a documentary representation susceptible for authoritarian behavior.

The elective affinity between the culture industry and positivism consists in their tacit agreement upon the existence of two distinguishable spheres: the objective one understood as the real world of hard facts,

and the subjective one encompassing sensations, experiences, personal opinions, and individual biases. This division is presupposed to be naturally given. In science, it translates into an intentional exclusion of everything that is thought to be subjective, and a rigid definition of what is supposed to be relevant – the cold facts –, combined with an accurate system of classification which anticipates a specific category for any given element. In the case of the culture industry, this separation is already apparent in the categorization of its products into different genres, some of which are considered as serious because they address the objective realm (like the news and documentary forms), while fictional formats are usually associated with trivial entertainment (e.g. romances, comedies, dramas or action movies) that appeals to feelings such as love, hope, aggression, or distress. "These types have developed into formula", writes Adorno, "which, to a certain degree, pre-establish the attitudinal pattern of the spectator before he is confronted with any specific content and which largely determine the way in which any specific content is being perceived." (1954, 226).

Accordingly, many commercial documentaries not only claim to depict the factual real in its immediacy but also legitimate this allegedly direct link through their conventional formal constitution, which has become so familiar that its constructedness all too easily falls into oblivion. Yet, it is exactly because mainstream documentaries rely on generalized patterns and standardized approaches that they are taken to be credible. "Each statement, each piece of news, each thought has been preformed by the centres of the culture industry", writes Adorno in *Minima Moralia*. "Whatever lacks the familiar trace of such pre-formation lacks credibility, the more so because the institutions of public opinion accompany what they send forth by a thousand factual proofs and all the plausibility that total power can lay hands on." (2005b, 108) Through mechanisms such as the use of authoritative voice-over, talking head interviews with experts, victims, or other people who are directly or indirectly concerned with the respective topic, impressive 'authentic' media footage, participatory interventions, graphic depictions of alleged proofs, statistic data, or scientific diagrams, documentary films have adopted characteristic shapes making them recognizable as genuine sources of evidence. Contemporary commercial documentaries further

link their claim to truthfulness with depictions of powerful emotional responses to the factual events, e.g. through dramatic testimonies of victims, often accompanied by a dramatic music score – a stylistic means already criticized by Adorno in *Composing for the Film* for its stimulation of artificial inwardness when employed uncritically (Adorno and Eisler 1974). However, those different aspects are usually kept separated in contemporary documentary films. Each is associated with a particular function: while the factual data accounts for the veracity of the representation, the subjective add-ons appeal to the spectators' emotions and thus communicate its impact through an adaptation to the subject. Rather than dialectically relating subjective and objective moments, this division exacerbates their separation even further. The alleged authority of the representation is thereby endorsed: it fills all the voids, appeals comprehensively, but on different levels, to the viewers' emotions and discernment, without however leaving any space for personal interpretation or subjective experiences.

What is problematic in the division between an objective and a subjective sphere is that it fails to address the complex ways through which those spheres are interrelated. Knowledge cannot be reduced to isolated contents and is thus not merely a matter of methodological analysis, verification, and proof alone. For contents only become meaningful when they are dialectically related to the experiences and forms that mediate them. Neither content nor form are ahistorical, neutral, independent givens: both have been historically developed and continue to evolve with regards to each other, both are products of society, just as both affect, in turn, the actual constitution of this society. What is ignored by both, positivism and the culture industry, is thus, as Horkheimer puts it, that "[t]he facts which our senses present to us are socially preformed in two ways: through the historical character of the object perceived and through the historical character of the perceiving organ. Both are not simply natural; they are shaped by human activity […]" (2002, 200). Therefore, "[t]he very concept of 'fact' is a product – a product of social alienation; in it, the abstract object of exchange is conceived as a model for all objects of experience in a given category." (Horkheimer 2004, 56). Far from being a neutral conception of the objective world, far from being as disinterested as it is presented by those who dogmatically rely on

it, the idea of the factual, the social practices it engenders and the cultural productions that rely on it, are part of the reigning ideology.

Institutionalized science in a positivistic sense and its divulgation through popular formats are thus indeed related to all the other layers of society. Adopting an authoritarian stance by considering themselves as actual providers of knowledge – the only ones able to do so, as it is them defining the conditions for knowledge production – they are perfectly integrated in the reigning power structures of society. They perpetually reproduce the capitalistic principle of division of labor, consolidate its implicit value structure, and impose a worldview in which individuals are considered as passive receivers of information and its accurate interpretation rather than subjects capable of experiencing on their own. Through the products of the culture industry, "[e]xperience – the continuity of consciousness in which everything not present survives, in which practice and association establish tradition in the individual – is replaced by the selective, disconnected, inter-changeable and ephemeral state of being informed which, as one can already observe, will promptly be cancelled by other information." (Adorno 1993, 33) Rather than instigating the development of a critical awareness, many entertaining documentaries, even when they deal with serious topics, thus feed a consumerist attitude that is perfectly adapted to capitalism.

Becoming Cliché: The Homogenizing Agency of Culture Industrial Production

The problem we are faced with when we question the agency of commercial documentary film is thus wide-ranging: it is a matter of how perceptual habits are shaped and perpetually endorsed through the standardization of cultural expressions in modern capitalism. It is this normalization of the perception which facilitates that authoritarian presentations are not only established, but also pass almost unnoticed. Obviously, technically produced images and sounds play thereby an important role. Combining indexical images that seem to be exact copies of the empirical world, with the repetitive use of stereotyped patterns, frozen genres and rigid forms, films are likely to generate the internalization of benchmarks and

thereby to endorse the normalized values which underlie the current state of society. For the culture industry's "inherent tendency to adopt the tone of a factual report" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002, 118) operates as a means to blur the boundaries between reality and its replication. This is true for any product of the culture industry, but especially decisive when it comes to documentaries. What makes the appearance of the artificial world of the culture industry as immediate reflection of reality so strong is that its clichéd imagery imposes a strong and all-encompassing scheme which assimilates any element of the empirical world by converting it into a recognizable commonplace. "Reality becomes its own ideology through the spell cast by its faithful duplication", writes Adorno in *The Schema of Mass Culture*. "This is how the technological veil and the myth of the positive is woven. If the real becomes an image insofar as in its particularity it becomes as equivalent to the whole as one Ford car is to all the others of the same range, then the image on the other hand turns into immediate reality." (2001b, 63)

What Adorno articulated, prophetically, in the 1940s, has in the meantime become reality: nowadays, events, situations, objects, individual appearances or memories are often said to be akin to films or photographs. It is telling that many contemporary feature-length documentaries or serials, as well as various hybrid forms such as docu-drama, true-crime stories, reality tv and the like, have meanwhile converged with their fictional counterparts on many levels: like fiction films, they display intriguing characters and fascinating circumstances, rely on thrilling, often spectacular narratives and are provided with intense soundtracks and special effects, while keeping the aura of the factual intact. In the late 1980s, the recourse to fictional strategies and Hollywood-aesthetic in a non-fiction film like Errol Morris' *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) was still an extraordinary, subversive stylistic device with a strong, very concrete political impact[3]. Since then, it has developed into a widespread formula in documentary film-making. It seems as if the reality-effect of fiction films had superseded even reality itself – as if "real

3 Morris' film depicts the conviction of Randall Dale Adams for the shooting of a police officer. The documentary discloses serious inconsistencies of the official investigation, which led to the liberation of the accused one year after the film was released.

life" happened where the drama is and, in order to be recognized as such, required specific patterns that stand for its significance.

The problem is that when reality is automatically associated with the ubiquitous images that command the way of perceiving it, this very reality, in turn, appears as if it was as flat, consistent and univocal as the products of the culture industry pretend it to be, even if it takes on a spectacular look in their representation. For through their dazzling appearance, the products of the culture industry obscure the persisting antagonisms and structural contradictions of society by upholding an imagery in which it appears as coherent in itself. Rather than critically assessing conflicts in their substantial social and political dimension, they are treated in a particularistic manner, dissociated from their manifold imbrications with other layers of society, and isolated from the structurally related problems which facilitate their emanation. Documentaries today widely reproduce this pattern. It is particularly visible, for instance, in nature films such as *March of the Penguins* (dir. Luc Jacquet, 2005) or series such as *Our Planet* (prod. Netflix, 2019) which present savage animals as authentic creatures of nature completely disconnected from the global society. The occasional remarks about the precariousness of their living environment because of human destructiveness are thoroughly overshadowed by the stunning images of their intact surroundings and the moving stories of their peculiar ways of living, peppered with stirring sound tracks.

But this pattern is also visible, to a certain extent, in documentaries that aim at addressing critical issues. Recently, for example, a feature-length film about the Hollywood-mogul Harvey Weinstein (*Untouchable,* dir. Ursula Macfarlane, 2019), accused of severe and repeated sexual abuse on women at his mercy, resonates in several ways with a such a figure that Adorno already criticized in the mid 20th century as "the spurious personalization of objective issues" (1957, 485) – a figure that corresponds to one of the patterns analyzed in the comprehensive study on the *Authoritarian Personality*.[4] Adorno's (fictional) example relates to the representation of a dictator as "nothing but a bad, pompous,

4 In chapter XVII (written by Adorno), "Ticket Thinking and Personalization in Politics", personalization is mentioned as one of the formal constituents of fascist approaches to political thinking.

and cowardly man", while his wife is depicted as warmhearted, helpless victim and those who defend her and the "right cause" are "personally idealized". In *Untouchable,* several of the abused women and other people in his surroundings disclose terrifying situations of harassment, abuse of power and rape, and describe Weinstein as fascinating, but power-hungry and perverse, while physically unattractive and vulgar. However, by focusing on the personage and presenting him as an evil, all-mighty perpetrator, while the witnesses appear as his vulnerable targets, the film ratifies the stereotypical representation it aims, at the same time, to overcome. Rather than problematizing the structural conditions of the Hollywood-system, based on hard, merciless, misogynic business which not only perpetually reproduces stereotyped representations, but also generates both the unquestioned desire to become a star and the aura of those in power, in relation to the fact this this very system serves as a blueprint for society as a whole and is at the same time its glossy reflection, the film concentrates on one exceptional individual who seemingly degenerated and became a monster. This is not to say that the "real" affair – which opened a huge critical debate about women's vulnerable position in society and triggered the world-wide Me-Too-movement – was itself nothing but yet another repetition of a recurrent media scheme. Even if it is surely characteristic of contemporary society that such a subject gains attention precisely when it touches those who are already in a privileged position, it is still an emancipatory move to problematize the conditions of those who are subjected to the power of others. However, its coverage through a film like *Untouchable* reduces its impact to a Hollywood-like drama about Hollywood itself.

Another aspect of Adorno's statement, which is intimately linked with the elaborations above, touches upon the fact that through the culture industrial standardization of the perception of reality, any singularity is immediately superseded by familiar tropes, associated with generalized features, and thus absorbed by reproduceable patterns. Instead of appearing in its particularity, its irreducible otherness and complexity, any singular being or event is converted into that which makes it comparable with allegedly identical others. Even the most exotic feature thus loses its uniqueness, turns into a cliché and gets thereby associated with preconceived ideas. Any remote tribe turns into

an example of savageness or, inversely, of respectful unison with nature similar to many others of the like, when shown through the ever same formal devices; any individual history becomes ordinary when narrated in a conventional, stereotypical way.

This reduction to attributed traits also appears in many documentaries with humanitarian aspirations. In her book *Immediations,* Pooja Rangan (2017) demonstrates comprehensively how certain aesthetic strategies used in documentary in order to produce the impression of immediacy, authenticity, urgency, and commitment, rely on an authoritarian projection of consensual ideas onto their subjects that remain unquestioned. One of her examples is the award-winning film *Born into Brothels* (dir. Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman, 2005) about a group of children raised in an Indian red-light district. The filmmaker documents how she teaches them to use a camera in order to help them emancipate themselves from their social condition. Yet, she thereby reproduces not only the trope of "feral innocence" – the stereotyped representation of children as pure "figure[s] that exist[…] outside mediation and political economy" (Rangan 2017, 27), as opposed to the sheer cruelty of their mothers and the context into which they were born. She also reinforces the colonial fantasy of the superior humanitarian moralism of the Western subject over Third World barbarism. Rather than challenging the perception of these children in relation to the generalized context of exploitation of late capitalism, the film upholds the hegemonic world view of domination and thus sanctions the status quo.

Such an ambiguous dimension can also be found in the example given above, in which Harvey Weinstein himself, despite the focus on his personae, appears as the perfect stereotyped image of a repulsive, power-obsessive, very rich man. However, the message is double: the film suggests that such individuals are evil, but at the same time, they are well-off and thus remain societal models to follow in a society in which success largely determines the value of a person. Likewise, the representation of his victims in the film makes them resemble each other in their expressions and the way they tell their experiences, and thereby conform to the socially established way how victims are supposed to behave. Moreover, their physical appearance as shown in the film also

sets the beauty standards of contemporary society; their objectified bodies thus serve as ideal irrespective of the history they have gone through. Adorno calls this dimension of the culture industry its "hieroglyphic script" (2001b, 93), akin to the appearance of value as hieroglyphic in Marx's Capital[5] (Marx 1976, 167, cf. also Behrens 2003, 76), which is supposed to instill messages in a subliminal way that affect the spectator on a more unconscious level and are thus all the more powerful as they remain undetected. Adorno goes as far as to claim that "the hidden message may be more important than the overt since this hidden message will escape the controls of consciousness, will not be 'looked through', will not be warded off by sales resistance, but is likely to sink into the spectator." (1954, 221)

These underlying messages are all the more efficient because the overarching presence of all kinds of images that are, despite their apparent disparity, aligned through normalized patterns, does not leave much space for subjective appropriation, genuine experience, and the development of awareness. For it generates the spontaneous association of any image with a meaning, an emotion, a value, which supersede any deviant instinctive reaction. Hence, the problem raised by Horkheimer and Adorno is a structural one. It touches upon society as a whole, its self-understanding and the perceptional conventions it continually reproduces. The culture industry – understood as a principle of standardization based on market criteria rather than an ominous godlike power controlling the market – is thus much more than a mere means to sell entertainment products to the masses. The problem is that it provides an all-encompassing schema in the Kantian sense of the term[6], which directly links images with more or less inflexible ideas. "Kant intuitively anticipated what Hollywood has consciously put into practice: images are precensored during production by the same standard of understanding which will

5 In Capital, Marx writes: "Value, therefore, does not have its description branded on its forehead; it rather transforms every product of labor into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, men try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of their own social product: for the characteristic which objects of utility have of being values is as much men's social product as is their language." (167)

6 Briefly said, for Kant, a (transcendental) schema is that which relates non-empirical concepts to sensory perception (cf. Kant 1999, Book 2 chapter 1).

later determine their reception by viewers." (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 65) Thus, a normalized perception of society as a whole and of any of its respective elements is generated, which directly associates reality with unquestioned, seemingly consensual values. Yet, this consensual, inflexible view is problematic in itself. Claiming to represent 'realistically' the society as such, it facilitates authoritarian tendencies by cutting down the ability to develop critical awareness of society. As Horkheimer puts it with regards to the critical attitude he defends, "it is suspicious of the very categories of the better, useful, appropriate, productive, and valuable, as these are understood in the present order, and refuses to take them as nonscientific presuppositions about which one can do nothing." (2002, 206). Documentary formats which adopt the recurrent normalized schema intrinsically validate its pretention to represent the real, as if the association between specific contents with predetermined moral and political implications was a natural given rather than a socially formed, historically developed construction. But when the standardization of allegedly accurate forms automatically validates a representation as truthful, the mere application of such forms, in turn, facilitates the instrumentalization of such a representation for any political, ideological or populistic trend, as long as the underlying schema remains intact. Whence the importance to develop a sensitivity for the agency of forms, and to approach them through an immanent critique.

Non-identical Forms: That which Resists the Schema of Culture Industry

A thorough examination of that which distinguishes the products of the culture industry from their antipode – genuine artworks – can help grasp how different mediations of content through form correspond to different attitudes towards reality, and how critical approaches hold the potential to subvert authoritarian truth claims. Both, the products of the culture industry and genuine artworks, are according to Adorno social facts[7], both emanate from the same historically developed society

7 Adorno grasps genuine artworks through their double constitution "as both autonomous and fait social" (1997, 7).

and mediate it through artistic forms, and both address it in one way or another. As both are intimately linked with the society and thus subject to its perpetual transformations, Adorno refuses to provide any formal, material or topical criteria supposed to be eternally valid for either of them. "Because art is what it has become, its concept refers to what it does not contain", he writes in *Aesthetic Theory*. "Art can be understood only by its laws of movement, not by any set of invariants." (1997, 3). Hence, the fundamental divergence between genuine art and the products of the culture industry lies not in their aesthetic appearance as such, but in the stance they take on towards the social reality, its underlying power structure, and its conventionalized perception. This stance is expressed through their relation with their own material. While artworks follow their material as strictly as possible in order to carve out its inner truth content through a thorough formal construction, the products of the culture industry subordinate their material with the intentional purpose of producing effects, as we have seen previously. Thus, they are likely to adopt any fashionable form, regardless its relation to the content it mediates.

Genuine artworks, by contrast, are only able to deploy their critical potential by resisting through their formal arrangement to their total integration into the codes of society. "The unsolved antagonisms of reality return in artworks as immanent problems of form", writes Adorno. "This, not the insertion of objective elements, defines the relation of art to society. The complex of tensions in artworks crystallizes undisturbed in these problems of form and through emancipation from the external world's factual façade converges with the real essence." (1997, 7). Only by not conforming to conventionalized forms and formats that would immediately orient the meaning, only by subverting perceptual habits and frustrating the normalized expectations towards a given matter, can an object still be perceived, through its artistic mediation, in its singularity, instead of being seized through established criteria and thus absorbed in the realm of the return of the ever same. In order to allow contradictory elements to unfold in their dialectical movement, artworks must wrest their appearance from the veil of familiar consistency imposed by the culture industry. As Adorno, puts it: "Form works like a magnet that orders elements of the empirical in such a fashion that they are estranged

from their extra-aesthetic existence, and it is only as a result of this estrangement that they master the extra-aesthetic essence." (1997, 309). It is precisely in their unassimilable otherness that lies the autonomy of artworks and thus their utopian moment which foreshadows the possibility of a not yet fathomable, different social reality.

Accordingly, Adorno also insists on the fact that art is opposed to communication. Contrary to most products of the culture industry, art's inherent protest is all but a message: this is why Adorno rejects not only all kind of propaganda and advertising, but also the various shapes of artistic realism and committed art. "The notion of a 'message' in art, even when politically radical, already contains an accommodation to the world: the stance of the lecturer conceals a clandestine entente with the listeners, who could only be rescued by refusing it", he writes in *Commitment* (1974, 193). While the products of the culture industry consist of images meant to dissolve into signs associated with an accommodated signification, artworks, as "imageless images" (Adorno 1997, 379), immanently protest against the reality principle shaped by the societal logic of capitalism, in which every meaning is already determined in advance. The meaning of artworks eludes categorial prehension and defies unilateral interpretation; therein lies their singular enigmatic character.

Concerning films, Adorno was primarily critical about the medium and its potential as an artform because of its representational character and its perfect adaption to the culture industry. However, he also saw the possibility of emancipating film from its direct association with the tropes of mass production (cf. Adorno 2001c, Hansen 2012, Baumann). And indeed, the works of many independent documentary filmmakers resonate strongly with his critical elaborations. Instead of taking the indexical material as evidence of reality and concentrating exclusively on the content, they consider their artistic material to be the genre's inherent tension between its seemingly direct relationship with the empirical world on the one hand, and its aesthetic configuration through which it acquires its meaning, on the other – a tension already stressed by John Grierson in the 1930s when he famously defined documentary as "creative treatment of reality" (2016, 216). While many mainstream productions exploit the fact that the artistic mediation is all too easily

overshadowed by the film's appearance as immediate, artistically exigent documentary films unfold their form while taking heed of the complexity of their medium. Alexander Kluge for example – Adorno's disciple and friend – challenges in his hybrid films the "pseudo-realism of the culture industry" (Adorno 2005b, 141) by merging fictional elements, paintings, heterogeneous music scores, subjective narration, archival material and direct intervention into real situations, in order to produce a multiplicity of interrelations and contexts that refuse any unilateral interpretation. Mingling not only different modes, but also temporalities and perspectives, Kluge's films critically deconstruct the recurrent representation of reality through mainstream formats, re-inscribe it in its history and deploy heterogeneous layers of sense at the same time. Rather than stipulating a meaning by declaring it as truth, films like Kluge's interrupt the habits of perception and destabilize conventional preconceptions.

In a similar manner, the filmmaker Trinh-T Min Ha writes that in films addressing the real, "[m]eaning can […] be political only when it does not let itself be easily stabilized, and when it does not rely on any single source of authority, but, rather, empties or decentralizes it." (1990, 89) Hence, she refuses to provide clarifications on the people or situations appearing in her films, and develops an approach of "speaking nearby" her subjects rather than taking on an authoritarian perspective. Examples for artistic strategies to open up questions through formal devices rather than presenting contents as factual evidence are multifold. Some filmmakers disrupt the impression of conclusive coherence in their films by refusing to harmonize sound and images, or by abstaining from imposing a comprehensive narrative. Others undermine the appearance of immediacy of the images by taking on a reflective stance and exposing their materiality as such, or discursively disclose the precariousness of their own position. And still others problematize the ideological force of images by alienating them from their initial context and editing them together anew. For example, Angela Ricci Lucchi's and Yervant Gianikian's compositions of colonial film material (e.g. *Pays Barbare*, 2013, or *Images d'Orient – Tourisme Vandal*, 2001) or Susana de Sousa Dias' arrangements of propaganda films made during the Portuguese dictatorship (e.g. *Natureza Morta/Still Life*, 2015) bear a strange compelling quality. With the slow rhythm and the absence

of comments, the spectator is encouraged to sense that which hides in the folds of representation. For despite their link with a political agenda, those films make transpire a "mark of [the] society" (Adorno 2001c, 182) from which they originate, which exceeds the intentions of the filmmaker – Adorno alludes to this potential of medium in his text *Transparencies*. There are lots of independent films that carve out such a truth content of already existing images by recomposing them, estranging their initial aim and configuring them in subversive ways – Harun Farocki's critical filmic essays on the use of images in military or penitentiary contexts are particularly strong examples in this regard. Other artistic devices proceed for example through a radical change of focus which betrays the sclerosed stereotypical embedding of their subjects (e.g. Roberto Minervini's docu-fiction *The Other Side,* 2015, portraying a group of drug-addicts in Lousiana, Wang Bing's *Till Madness Do Us Part*, 2013 focusing on patients in a mental asylum; or Sergei Loznitsa's *Factory*, 2004, about a working day in a factory), or disrupt the common connotations of a representation through subversive formal intercessions. Marie Voignier's film *International Tourism* (2014) for example features videos she made during her visit in North Korea with a group of tourists. The images show what all traveler films of the otherwise inaccessible country show: captures of carefully selected tourist attractions, geographical sites, mass spectacles approved by the authorities in order to produce a specific image, as opposed to the demonized representations of the West. *International Tourism* neither tries to corroborate the official views, nor to present an alternative reality. Instead, the film interrupts the flow of perception through a thorough reconstitution of the sound track, which features all the environmental sounds but cuts off all the voices, thereby producing a strange distance which reverberates the spectator back on her own gaze. Otherwise disorienting is Lucien Castaing-Taylor's and Véréna Paravel's film *Leviathan* (2012), a documentary featuring a fish trawler by night. The film is constituted by a strange composition of immersive images produced by cameras attached on different objects, without any associated spoken comment. Here, the difficulty to identify what is shown by the images subverts even the understanding of what documentary film might be.

What such artistic documentaries have in common despite the heterogeneous formal devices through which they operate is that they challenge the normalized perception of reality by wresting the images out of their immediacy and undoing their direct association with a specific meaning. However, this subversive force can only deploy itself as long the forms retain their unfamiliar particularity which marks them as artistic rather than mainstream productions. For as both artworks and the products of the culture industry are intimately linked with the society in which they are embedded, their agency always depends on their position in and vis-à-vis the actual historically developed reality. And just as society is in constant transformation, so are the conventions on which its perception is based. The perceptive habits and schemes of the reality that artworks seek to challenge are molded by the products of the culture industry, while the latter strives to assimilate autonomous artworks and typecast their particularity as yet another pattern. Hence, the products of the culture industry as affirmative expressions of society and their subversive counterpart, genuine artworks, are also permanently mediated one through the other. Rather than two distinct spheres, they constitute opposed, but dialectically interconnected poles.

Therefore, autonomous artworks are likely to lose their subversive potential when they "age" (cf. Adorno 1988), when their formerly unique, idiosyncratic form turns into a generalized design applied on indifferent topics and integrated in the canon of the culture industry as yet another trendy novelty. While a documentary film as *Silverlake Life: The View from Here* (dir. Peter Friedman and Tom Joslin, 1993) showing the disturbing intimacy between a couple of two men suffering of AIDS and their camera until one of them dies still provided an unsettling account of private life in the 1990s, self-representations though reality television and documentary formats have become the norm today and largely provide material for mass consumption. At the same time, home-made video material and its large diffusion on the internet also facilitates that otherwise prohibited representations reach international audiences, as non-professional films made during the Arab revolutions comprehensively show for example. Once again, the problem needs to be faced dialectically with regards to society as a whole.

Not every documentary film shown on big screens is *per se* ideologically suspicious, and not every independent production necessarily subversive. What needs to be stressed is that "[d]ocumentary is always about something more or other than what it depicts", as Jonathan Kahana puts it. (2009, 7). Rather than blindly believing or straightforwardly rejecting what passes as immediate reality, as objectively real or undoubtedly true through documentary formats, the recourse to the critical theory of Adorno and Horkheimer leads us to question how a meaning is constructed, embedded, and mediatized in society. Only by considering the multiple mediations through which a content acquires its meaning, a form appears as trustworthy, and a societal issue as worthy to be addressed, can a critique of the documentary realm become at the same time an immanent critique of the historically developed society in which it acquired its significance, by which it is informed, and which it addresses.

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Kant and Burke's Sublime in Werner Herzog's Films:

The Quest for an Ecstatic Truth

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The Sublime in Herzog's Films

Timothy Treadwell is the protagonist of Werner Herzog's documentary film *Grizzly Man* (2005) and he presented himself as an environmental activist and 'bear protector' who, during thirteen successive summers, travelled to the *Katmai National Park* in Alaska, a grizzly bear territory, to camp in the wilderness and trying to "bond" with the bears, which he considered to be in danger. In addition to being a 'bear protector' Timothy was also a documentarist. He shoots over 100 hours of video footage showing the bears and himself often in a very danger proximity. A key element that stands out from this footage is Treadwell's aim to try and show that he could raise above fear and, in doing so, he would become as ferocious and undaunted as the wild animals. Treadwell seems to believe that, simply by showing no fear and trying to establish contact with the wild animals, he could obtain the bears' respect and even befriend with them. Says Treadwell talking directly to the camera, while some grizzly bears stand on the back:

> They're challenge everything including me, goes with the territory. If I show weakness, if I retreat, I may be hurt, I may be killed. I must hold my own if I'm going to stay within this land, for once there is weakness, they will exploit it, they will take me out, they will decapitate me, they will chop me into bits and pieces, I'm dead … so far I persevere, I persevere. Most times I 'm a kind warrior out here. Most times I am gentle, I am like a flower, I am like a fly on the wall, I'm serving, noncommittal, non-invasive in any way. Occasionally I am challenged and in that the kind warrior must, must, must become a samurai, must become so (pause for effect) so formidable, so fearless of death, so strong that you will win you will win. Even the bears will believe that you are more powerful and in a sense you must be (smile) more powerful if you are to survive in this land with the bear (*Grizzly Man*, 0'33")

And he continues,

> I will not die at their claws and paws, I will fight, I will be strong. I am one of them, I will be the master'. Then he turns to the camera smiling, then blows the bears a kiss saying: 'love you Rowdy". As he exits, the fantasies of grandeur return: 'That's what I'm talking about, that's what I'm talking about, that's what I'm talking about. I can even smell death all over my fingers.' (*Grizzly Man*, 2'12")

Treadwell's words, and attitude, at a first glance, seem to embody Kant's notion of the sublime (especially the dynamic sublime), as described by the philosopher in his *Critique of Judgement*:

> We may look upon an object as *fearful*, and yet not be afraid of it, if, that is, our estimate takes the form of our simply picturing to ourselves the case of our wishing to offer some resistance to it and recognizing that all such resistance would be quite futile. (Kant, 2007/, § 28, p. 91)

In fact, Kant's ideas about the sublime overlaps Treadwell's behavior: he believes that his humanity and rationality could grant him a position of control and safety and, most importantly, he acts as if the simple act of acknowledging the threat, but not succumbing to fear, could keep him safe and even reinforce his moral superiority. In this sense, Treadwell's attitude towards the sublime forces in nature is a very Kantian one: he seems to fully rely on his moral abilities and faculties to face threats and to defeated danger. His courage and moral strength, as well as his deep ethical sense, puts him in a privileged position to refute nature's claim to dominion over humans. All this echoes Kant's perspective that maintains that, in the face of the sublime in nature, we have two options: we can simply be crushed by fear and retreat to ensure our well-being and safety (although this would be to react as if we were sensuous beings alone, and entirely subject to natural causalities), or, as Crowther argues, we can, "against our natural inclinations, transcend fear and face destruction courageously—thus acting on the basis of the principles of moral conduct

that demonstrate our true vocation to the rational supersensitive beings" (1989, p. 111).

Unfortunately, Treadwell's confidence didn't prove to be sufficient in face of the danger. During what might have been just one more shooting session, something terrible happened. We were left only with audio register of what has occurred, since the camera lens were covered by the caps, but the reproduced sound did not leave room for doubts: Timothy and his partner were attacked and eaten by one of the animals they were trying to "bond" with, a big adult male bear, in whose digestive system were later found remains of human flesh and clothing.

Treadwell's terrible death and his final fusion with nature, however, not only represent a setback in Treadwell's aims and believes, but also raise important questions to Kant's notion of the sublime. For Kant, nature is sublime because it elevates the imagination to the exhibition of cases in which the mind can be made to feel the sublimity, even above nature, that is proper to its vocation (Kant, 2007/1790, § 28). Sublimity, writes Kant,

> does not reside in any of the things of nature, but only in our own mind, so far as we may become conscious of our superiority over nature within, and thus over nature without us (as exerting influence upon us). Everything that provokes this feeling in us, including the *might* of nature which challenges our strength, is then, though improperly, called sublime. (2007/1790, § 28 p. 94)

This kind of sublimity belongs to human freedom,[1] which is (by definition) unassailable to the forces of nature. As Clewis notes, "the sublime reveals freedom in the sense of the transcendence of nature (metaphysical freedom)" (2009, p. 29). This conception of freedom as being outside the order of nature, but demanding action upon that order, is the core of Kant's theory and of Treadwell's endeavor. If this is true, however, it is also true that Treadwell's death and the outcome of his sublime encounter with bears raises deep questions about the intimate connection between the sublime, nature, and the superiority of our moral faculties.

1 On the issue of the relationship between Freedom and the Sublime in Kant see Clewis, 2009.

The sublime in Herzog's work is a complex and extremely rich subject — one that simultaneously reinforces the Kantian view, but at the same time defies it. In considering this tensional relationship between Herzog and Kant regarding the sublime, I will here address two feature films, adding to the documentary form we find in Grizzly *Man*: *Aguirre, The Wrath of God* (1972) and *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), both of which were shoot in the depths of the Amazon rainforest.

Independently of depicting a fictional, historical, or a documentary action, all films portray, question, and even *embody* the overwhelming experience of the sublime and the tremendous consequences to humans when facing it. And they do it in several interconnected layers. At a first level, Herzog works with the events that had occur or that are being depicted. In *Grizzly Man*, it is Timothy Treadwell's self-documented story of his encounter with the bears and his death; in *Aguirre*, the true story of a group of Europeans, led by Don Lope de Aguirre who, in the 16th century, venture into the depths of the Amazon jungle in search of the legendary El Dorado; and, in *Fitzcarraldo,* the irrational enterprise of an European whose main desire it to building an opera house in the middle of the jungle, in Peru. Herzog, in a voice-over at the beginning of *Grizzly Man*, stresses an idea that applies to any of the three films

> I discovered a film of human ecstasies and darkest inner human turmoil. As if there was a desire in him to leave the confinements of his humanness and bond with the bears, Treadwell reached out seeking a primordial encounter. But in doing so, he crossed an invisible borderline. (Herzog in *Grizzly Man,* 4' 04")

On top of this first layer, Herzog builds one other that has to do with the filmmaking process itself, with the encounter with sublime nature on site, in the overpowering locations where the works were filmed. In this sense, the 'primordial encounter' to which Herzog refers also applies to the very act of representing, and filming, to the camera encounter with the sublime features of nature. Focusing on this latter aspect, Alan Singer (1986) contended that 'irony' is the fundamental issue of Herzog's sublime (p. 193).What Singer tries to demonstrate is that Herzog's

sublime is "committed to history as a vital form of cultural production" (p. 184) and, therefore, is more focused on temporality and history than on transcendence or the limits of human mind, offering a response to the transcendental bias that most scholars attribute to the sublime, placing Herzog as a direct heir of Romanticism and German Idealism.[2] However, I neither endorse Herzog's similarities to Romanticism, nor Singer's view of the "ironic sublime" as a historical and cultural production.[3] Rather, I discuss Herzog's sublime in relation to his notion of 'ecstatic truth', his convergences and divergences with Kant' and Burke's, in order to try and draw some conclusions upon issues of truth, morality, human and non-human interactions, and humanity's current relationship to nature. In defense of his notion of ironic sublime, Singer argues that

> "if the Kantian sublime may be described as an overparticularization of the sensuous world and the Burkean sublime as a departicularization of the sensuous world – both convergent in the eliding of temporal contingencies – it may make sense to speak of the unique mise-en-scene of Herzog's films as constituting a reparticularization of the sensuous" (p. 186).

Singer's idea is that by reparticularizing the sensuous world, representation creates a distance rational 'ironic' distance, placing the sublime experiences within cultural temporality and order that eludes the non-temporal perspective of the sublime and its liaisons with the idea of transcendence that he finds present in both Kant and Burke. The issue of the Kantian and Burkean sublime to the sensuous will be addressed later. For now, I would merely like to stress that, contrary to Singer's perspective, I believe that Herzog's profound focus in the empirical and the physical corresponds to a total merging with material world and that this material world encompass either the physiological body of the characters, the physicality of the landscape *and* the materiality of film

2 See, for instance, Peucker (1984), Eric Rentschler (1986); Prager, Brad (2003); Johnson (2016).

3 For a discussion on Singer's concept of the "ironic sublime" and Herzog's relationship with the postmodern sublime, see Carter (2012).

itself. As Richard Eldridge (2019) stresses: "The films themselves are often driven by a sense of an encounter with possibilities of meaning that are afforded by exorbitant images of temporality unfolding natural processes, despite the hostility of nature" (p. 60). This triple material dimensions constitute the primordial encounter that opens the path towards reaching an ecstatic truth. This ecstatic truth, thus, is neither transcendent, nor 'ironic'. It springs from the primordial encounters of the characters' actions on the one hand, and from the very act of filmic and representing, on the other. In this sense, the films' encounter with the sublime in nature makes them as permeable to the primordial forces in question, as the characters themselves and their actions. Let us see this aspect is some detail.

The three films begin with a clear distinction between humans and nature (or the cultural order and natural forces) with the protagonists and the camera aiming to prevail over nature, trying to demonstrate the superiority of their faculties in the face of the non-human environment. Treadwell is overconfident of his human capacities and of his moral superiority, Aguirre is arrogantly defying the landscape, aiming at reaching the *El Dorado*, for the purpose of extracting natural resources to his own benefit. Fitzcarraldo is sure that the human sublimity of opera will reveal superior to the wild sublimity of the jungle. In the same vein, the outstanding opening sequence of *Aguirre* begins with a long shot, the camera amongst the midst, looking at a distance at the vastness and might of the peaks of the Andes. The haunting music by Popol Vuh adds an ominous presence that moves upwards, towards the peaks of the mountains in the opposite direction of the downward movement pursued by the long line of people. The score is grandiose, transcendental, in its raising above the almighty green of the jungle bellow. However, as the films unfold, things begin to complexify. What seems to be a clear, self-possessed, and almost arrogant belief in the superiority of human faculties in the face of wild nature gives way, as the action progresses, to a gradual blurring of the distinction between humans and nature, with the latter becoming progressively all-encompassing. In this sense, the camera, and the shooting itself seems to accompany the characters' initial aim and self-confidence, their departure point for action and their subsequent descend into a claustrophobic almighty presence of the all-pervading green of

the jungle. In the inaugural scene of *Aguirre*, the camera movement accompanies that descend and, in several shots in succession is steadily, relentlessly downward, following an odd queue of humans, that seem dwarfed, and made insignificant by the scale of the mountains. We are now going beneath the clouds, immersing in the rainforest. As the films develop in the direction of getting closer to nature "the protagonists lose their rationality and begin to exhibit strange, weird behaviors, in some cases appearing insane – as if they have raised themselves to a dimension that was identical to the vast, virgin forests in *Aguirre* and *Fitzcarraldo*, or to the forces and power of the grizzly bears in *Grizzly Man*" (Castello Branco, 2021: 23) –, but also, the camera angles, its perspectives and shots, begin to abandon the normal human point of view. In *Aguirre*, particularly we are progressively plunging into odd camera angles and perspectives, faced with strange camera movements and close shots that embody claustrophobic circles. These formal features are reinforced the appearance of dreamlike and surreal images (such as the shot of a raft on top of a gigantic tree in *Aguirre*, or the images of a gigantic steamship climbing a mountain in *Fitzcarraldo*). The films' aesthetics, and the very act of filming, seem to embody the very same encounter with the sublime as it is experienced by the characters, with the filmmaking comprising some of the most hard and dangerous on-location shooting experiences in film history, even risking the life and sanity of the director, the actors and the crew.[4] Johnson (2016) stresses how in Herzog's images "there is something that exceeds our grasp, exceeds the boundaries of the frame that restrict our vision, and was prior to human activities and human 'states'." (p. 147) The protagonists and the camera's attempts to 'dominate' or to totally grasp nature, ultimately culminate by displaying that such aim is simple unreachable and even represents a real menace to our cultural and human condition. In this sense, Herzog's films initial confidence in the moral capacities of humans and artworks to "rise above nature" lead, not to the reinforcement of their humanity as Kant would have believed, but to pure ecstasy, which is, almost paradoxically,

4 On the making of *Aguirre* and *Fitzcarraldo* as an experience of the sublime see, the documentary films *Les Blank*. (1982). *Burden of Dreams*; Herzog. (1999) *My Best Friend*; and Herzog. (1978). *I Am My Films - A Portrait of Werner Herzog*. See also *Herzog* (2002).

accompanied by a feeling of terror, and ultimately, by the character's annihilation and death, on the one hand, and the reinforcement of the films' permeability to the very same forces.

And so, the films' ecstatic encounters with nature result in a total merging with the sublime: its characters, and its footage (where perhaps the most poignant example is the recording of Timothy death in *Grizzly Man*) not only experience the sublime in external objects seen at a distant, but they become, themselves, sublime experiences, embodying all the overpowered sublime features of the overwhelming natural landscape. What is in display in these works, then, is an *ecstatic* experience of the sublime that is absorbed and embodied in the action, in the character's body, and in the film's own body and endeavors.

Herzog and the Kantian Sublime

Traditionally, the sublime has been associated with awe-inspiring objects and is grounded in the magnitude of their size/height/depth; force (a storm); or transcendence (our idea of God). Kant divides the sublime into two kinds: the mathematical and the dynamical. In the former, we are confronted with such magnitudes that, even if they overwhelm the imagination or our capacities to understand them, they reinforce reason's superiority over the imagination or over nature because through them we experience this superiority (2007/1790, §25 and §28). Kant's examples of the mathematical sublime include the vastness of the heavens, seas, and mountains, but he also mentions St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and the Pyramids in Egypt (§26, 82.) In the case of the dynamical sublime, Kant refers to the power of nature when we experience nature as fearful. Kant's examples include overhanging cliffs, storm clouds, volcanoes, and hurricanes (§28, 91). For Kant, in sublime experiences, the imagination fails to aesthetically understand the vastness or might, and this failure awakens in us the feeling of a suprasensible faculty. The senses and imagination are pushed to the limits of their capacities when confronted with the overwhelming. The moment the imagination fails to apprehend the sensitive details of such vast quantities, we become aware of the ability of our suprasensible faculties to rise above nature.

Herzog's films, thus, embody both the mathematical and the dynamical sublime, his protagonists encountering "larger than life" milieus (Deleuze, 2004, p. 184), represented both by the landscapes in which they find themselves, and by their own actions and states of mind: "For me", Herzog says,

> a true landscape is not just a representation of a desert or a forest. It shows an inner state of mind, literally inner landscapes, and it is the human soul that is visible through the landscapes presented in my films. (2002, p. 136)

Note that Herzog's relation to the landscape involves searching for an encounter between and external overwhelming presence and our suprasensible faculties (to use Kant's terms). This notion of an encounter with the landscape extends beyond the three films discussed in this essay: the African desert in *Fata Morgana* (1971), the integration the technological sublime with the natural sublime in *Heart of Glass* (1976), the burning oil fields of Kuwait in *Lessons of Darkness* (1992), or the vastness of distant temporality in *The Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2010), just to name a few, all embody the idea that sublime experiences of vastness (in space or time) and of overwhelming forces giving rise to sublime experiences, which ultimately trace back to encounters between an external power and inner states of mind and artworks.

Despite their similarities, however, and as above-mentioned, the unfolding of Herzog's films raises deep questions about their relation to the Kantian sublime. It is debatable whether Herzog's characters reinforce our belief in human suprasensible faculties or, on the contrary, whether they demonstrate the vanity and impossibility of such a belief. Is the terrible fate of their entanglement with nature in a strong physical sense a direct consequence of their choice to abandon the security of their rational, suprasensible faculties? Or is it simply a product of their arrogant faith in human capacities and faculties? Is Kant's trust in the superiority of reason over nature and the sensible what explains the sublime aesthetic experiences at the core of Herzog's films?

Let us consider these issues in further detail.

The physical and the body

In Herzog's films the sublime experience arrives not only from a display of the incommensurability of natural forces, nor from a perception of its magnificence and force, but also, and on the contrary, from his characters' total immersion in and fusion with the sublime landscape. His films depict and explore the bodily and physical merging of the central character (and indeed of the film) with natural overwhelming forces and vastness. Klaus Kinski's strong physical performances in *Fitzcarraldo* and *Aguirre*, for instance, stress the importance of the primordial bond between the body of the hero and the body of the landscape, with the former eventually being completely absorbed by the latter. Kinski limps and creeps, his body becomes progressively distorted and unbalanced, twisted, staggering and grotesque, functioning as the place where the forces of human individuation and of nature collide. His movements seem to mirror the forces that pass through him: he moves as if he was being crushed or pulled into the heart of things, trying to resist the overwhelming force that pulls him down. Kinski's body seems to be progressively invaded by the natural forces that rule the jungle, to the point where he embodies the very same sublime characteristics he encounters in the milieu: his bodily postures, rhythms, movements, and expressions become sublime, bizarre, as terrifying as the natural environment.[5] These elements are reinforced by the camera's odd angles, strange perspectives and, as said above, also by its own spiral movements, as occurs in Aguirre's final scene: "A spiral is not a closed circle, but something that implies circumvention and pushes the individual upwards, in the direction of infinity, vastness and boundless." (Castello Branco, 2016, p. 36)

The spiral movements of the camera are alternated by close, claustrophobic shots. Likewise, Treadwell's horrifying final physical merging with the bears (where he is literally digested and becomes part of their flesh) embodies this idea. However, although it is true that in the three films the sublime arises from the greatness of the objects and the greatness of human actions, this greatness is experienced primarily in the

5 On the issue of Kinski strong physical performance and his spider movements see Castello Branco, 2016, 31-36.

characters' body (in which the individuals and the landscape merge) and in the process of filmmaking, and not through the protagonists', nor the camera's technological suprasensible capacities.

While Kant also describes feelings of exaltation in the face of sublime objects and situations, he believed, as pertinently highlights Shaw (2006), that "with the judgment of taste (…) the mind is liberated from its dependency on sensuous intuition: an aesthetic judgment is 'pure' precisely because it is not implicated in anything beyond itself" (p. 77). From Kant's perspective, we pass through an initial phase where the sublime "appears to frustrate judgment (…) and is presented as an affront or 'outrage', to our powers of comprehension" (78), but we soon experience the superiority of reason over the limitations of the senses, and so, "the sublime is on the side of mind" (p. 80).

By contrast, Herzog's radical gesture of abandoning his characters to natural forces results in a tremendous sense of annihilation of the self. These characters are subject to a progressive fusion with nature, one that is clearly mirrored in Klaus Kinski's progressively twisted body, but also in Treadwell's horrendous death and his final physical merging with the bears. Through the process of digestion, the bear transforms Treadwell's body, making him one with the bear, at which point he becomes a bear-man: a *grizzly man*.

Despite Herzog's own claims about the proximity of his films to Kant's sublime, I believe that this pivotal focus on the physical aspects exemplifies Edmund Burke's emphasis on the physiological as a central element of aesthetic experience. In both cases, the experience of the sublime is the result of an encounter with powers and forces that are greater than anything the individual can reasonably conceive. These powers are embodied in the characters and the natural landscape taking the form of a sensory agitation, a physical disturbance and imbalance—terror. In this sense, Herzog's films share important characteristics with the "physiological sublime" as described in Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1990/1757). [6]

6 On the issue of Herzog's relationship to Burke's 'physiological sublime' and its comparations to Kant and Longinus, see Castello Branco, 2016; and Castello Branco, 2020, where these arguments have already been discussed.

Burke and Kant in Herzog's Films

Burke's main aim is to understand the aesthetic experience, by drawing upon a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime, inspirated by the concept of the sublime, inspired by the concept suggested by the unknown author of *On the Sublime* (attributed to Longinus, 1st c. CE), who addressed the issue in nature and artworks, mainly in literary works. What I would like to stress in Burke's formulation is his focus on the sensorial effects provoked by the sources of the sublime. The aesthetic experience of the sublime is an overall sensorial involvement and Burke describes the causes of the sublime with reference to all the senses. He writes: "The eye is not the only organ of sensation, by which the sublime passion may be produced…in the case of vision, the color and brightness are responsible for the feeling of the sublime. But the sounds are in the process enormous power, as in most other passions." (1990, p.75) In this case, the sensations of absolute silence or extremely loud sounds may be responsible for the sublime, as can, Burke adds, smell and taste with their sensations of bitterness or malodour (p. 78). The sublime is the result of an agitation, or a physical distress, caused primarily by the senses. In addition, Burke maintains that the sublime always necessarily includes something that is terrible since it reveals the overlapping between pain and pleasure. And this terror at heart of the sublime is a passion that, "always produces delight when it does not press too close" (1990, p. xxi). This distance is what makes the sublime tolerable in artistic representations.

At this point, it is important to recap some ideas: first Burke distinguishes the beautiful from the by associating the latter with a "delightful terror" (…) that completely occupies the soul, and the former with a disinterested contemplation that produces a state of calm. Second, Burke claims that the sublime depends on images and sensations that produce terror, and that originate a state of strong bodily tension. Hence, the sublime can never result from a purely rational idea, as in Kant's view. Thirdly, Burke's physiological sublime has the potential to invoke a vastness that is beyond the mere self. The sensations of terror and pain establish an encounter that implies the existence of forces that play on the sensations of humans.

This association of the sublime with an overwhelming natural force is, however, not original. It was first maintained by Longinus's *On the Sublime,* which was admittedly of great influence on Burke and Kant. Longinus asserts that the sublime manifests itself in what was sufficiently disturbing to cause bewilderment, astonishment and even fear. The evident influence of Longinus in Burke's conception extends also to Longinus' description of the sublime as a primordial aesthetic value, stressing the power and the violence in its overcoming of the intellectual or rational. Longinus claims that the sublime does not persuade but rather leads us to ecstasy, an idea that will be crucial for understanding Herzog's work, in a process that totally dominances freedom and reason. Longinus writes,

> A lofty passage does not convince the reason of the reader but takes him out of himself. That which is admirable ever confounds our judgment, and eclipses that which is merely reasonable or agreeable. To believe or not is usually in our own power; but the Sublime, acting with an imperious and irresistible force, sways every reader whether he will or no. (1890, section I).

Working within this tradition, which stresses this forceful power of the sublime, Burke identifies the objective sources of the sublime and relates them to corporeal and bodily sensations, including terror, obscurity, power, deprivation, emptiness, vastness, the infinite, succession and uniformity, difficulty, magnificence, light, color, sound and silence, animal screams, bitterness, bad odours, and pain. Burke, therefore, associates the sublime experience with physicality, putting great emphasis on emotions and on the bodily effects of sublime experiences,

Unlike Kant, Burke's "physiological sublime" is primarily centered on sensations and emotions. Vanessa Ryan stresses that,

> Burke's aim is to show that the fundamental effect of the sublime is to exclude the power of reason and that the experience of the sublime is thus limited to sensation and to emotion arising from a tension in the nerves (2001, pp. 270-271).

In considering Burke's sublime and relating it to Herzog's films, some important conclusions can be drawn. Both address the idea of a loss of boundaries between humans and greater natural forces; both put great stress on the feeling of terror; and both acknowledge the immanence of the sublime, portraying it as a physical, emotional force. Equally, they both emphasize the physical and bodily responses that occur in sublime experiences. This is a break with Kant's views, which, even when acknowledging that the sublime is subject to empirical contingency and that we are embodied creatures with sensibility and feeling (and therefore still part of the natural world), believe, nonetheless, that we have the rational capacity to be independent of natural causality.

Herzog's approach to the sublime is even more radical, however: his films' immersion in a sublime totally tears down the boundaries between the human individual and the all-encompassing nature even at the level of their physical limits. The physical and the emotional erupt with a tremendous vitality in each of the films, which revel in disaster.

We can now ask: Do Herzog's films portray reason's inability to deal with nature's overwhelming power? Or, on the contrary, do they depict and reflect the consequences of totally abandoning reason, and surrender to natural forces, thus reinforce Kant's notions? A close analysis of the films shows that the protagonists ultimately display delusional behaviors; their irrationality is entangled with their feelings in the face of the overwhelming power of the landscape. The shattering of the boundaries between the rational and the moral self on the one hand and nature, on the other, results in Treadwell's horrifying death in *Grizzly Man*, in *Aguirre* and *Fitzcarraldo's* final moments, with death imminent, symbolizing the absolute brutal force of nature. The characters are annihilated by their experience of the sublime and face dissolution. Both Kant and Burke acknowledge the dangers of getting too close to the sublime forces of nature. Burke's response is to suggest that when it involves being exposed to terror and pain from a position of safety, the horror we experience in the sublime is attenuated and can be accompanied by delight. For Kant, by contrast, although we may acknowledge that an object or force has the capacity to destroy us, we can, from a position of security, imagine ourselves as morally resistant even in the face of destruction. Both Kant and Burke emphasize the extent to which those

who experience the sublime stand in a position of security, as opposed to being overwhelmed by nature. Herzog's characters' absorption by nature, leads us, on the contrary, to a progressive awareness of human's limits, and results, not in the strengthening of our humility and sympathy, as in Burke, nor in the reinforcement of our suprasensible capacities, as in Kant, but in hallucination, delusion, and annihilation.

Still, in line with Burke and Kant's perspectives on the safety of the subject in the experience of the sublime, Herzog introduces an important nuance, already referred above, that relates precisely to the difference between his characters encounters with nature and the experience of *representing* the sublime. This issue leads us directly to another: What is the difference between experiencing the sublime in nature and experiencing it in works of art? *Fitzcarraldo* addresses this issue in a very direct way. The protagonist's action has two components: he simultaneously experiences the sublime of the rainforest *and* responds to it through his obsession with opera. His efforts are a human response to the experience of nature's sublime forces, through the affirmation of a human form of sublimity: opera and music. Fitzcarraldo seems to believe that the only possible response to the sublime in nature is through the sublime in art. Therefore, we can say that in *Fitzcarraldo* we witness a kinship, or possibly, a competing relationship between the sublime existence of the jungle and the sublime experience of human artworks. Can the opera, in this case (or at least in Fitzcarraldo's mind), compete with the sublime of the jungle? Is there a difference between art and nature regarding the sublime? Is Fitzcarraldo challenging nature through his insane obsession with constructing an opera house in the depths on the Amazon rainforest? In what sense can the opera be compared to the film itself in this regard?

In Herzog's films, sublime experiences embody two related aspects: the proximity of the film's characters to sublime natural forces, and the sublime recorded and represented in film. This double experience of the sublime also captures the difference between sublime encounters in nature and sublime aesthetic experiences. Note that the latter also entails physical stress, emotional states and "a tension in the nerves", as described by Burke, which reinforce a sense of humility. In Kant, rational cognition of sublime objects can be achieved either by direct contact with

the sublimity of nature (a desert, vast mountains, or even a storm) or via the mere appearance or depiction of such vastness and powerfulness, which leaves open the possibility of experiencing the sublime through works of art (see Crowther, 1989, p. 149). Kant's solution is in fact much more radical: the vastness and the overwhelming power of the sublime object, whether encountered directly or depicted in a work of art, is not the real object of the sublime; instead, the sublime is the idea of reason which encompasses the concepts of absolute totality and absolute freedom. However vast the object, however powerful the natural force, it is fragile and minor compared to the idea of absolute rationality and freedom. As Burnham observes,

> The sublime feeling is therefore a kind of "rapid alternation" between the fear of the overwhelming and the peculiar pleasure of seeing that overwhelming overwhelmed. Thus, it turns out that the sublime experience is purposive after all – that we can, in some way, "get our head around it". (Burnham, n.d.)

The Sublime and Morality

In all their complexity, Herzog's films thus raise a deep philosophical question: does the experience of the sublime and the overwhelming power of nature—in its infinity, vastness, absence of boundaries—affirm and elevate our human existence, strengthening our sense of existence as subjects, our moral sense, or, rather, does it annihilate it? Ryan raises the same question regarding Burke's perspective on the sublime:

> In his distinctive refiguring of the sublime, Burke identifies its significance with the way it confronts us with our finitude. From the confrontation with finitude and limitedness there arises a strong sense of humility and sympathy that in turn animates our actions. Rather than leading us to an experience of self-presence or self-exaltation, Burke's sublime overpowers the self and our instinct to self-

> preservation motivates us to relieve our pain by relieving that of others. (2000, p. 277)

This aspect of humility, deriving from our confrontation with our own finitude, allows Burke to affirm the redemptive dimension of artistic representations of sublime experiences, for example in Greek tragedies. In the context of Kant's transcendental philosophy, however,

> these two forms of the sublime [the mathematical and the dynamical] are not narrowly circumscribed aesthetic experiences. Rather, each in its own way puts us in touch with our moral capacities, and reveals to us, through sensible experience, our capacity for freedom. (Brady, 2013. p. 59)

As noted above, in Herzog's films, sublime experiences are not that simple. Aguirre, Fitzcarraldo and Treadwell do not experience redemption, nor are they put in touch with their moral capacities to reveal a special capacity for freedom. And what of the filmic experience? Do Herzog's films prompt a feeling of humility, reinforcing our rational moral capacities? What do they tell us about our relationship with nature?

Herzog's views on nature are polemical and strange from our contemporary ecological perspective. In an interview in *The Burden of Dreams*, he observes: "nature here is violent ... I would see fornication, and asphyxiation, and choking. And fighting for survival, and growing, and just rotting away. Of course, there is a lot of misery, but it is the same misery that's all around us. The trees here are in misery. The birds are in misery. I don't think they sing, they just screech in pain. (The Burden of Dreams, Les Blanck, 1982)

These statements assume that the wilderness is violent, ruthless, cruel, that it is disturbing and menacing, horrible and terrible. In making such statements, however, Herzog is precisely describing, as a filmmaker trying to shoot a film in the rainforest, his own immersion in the sublime power of nature and its overwhelming indifference to human aims, desires, and morality. As Les Blank himself wrote of the project: "I'm tired of it all and I couldn't care less if they… finish the fucking film"

(1982). To Herzog, however, the difference between the experience of the sublime in artworks and its relationship to moral issues is even more complex. In part because in film, and particularly in Herzog's films, reality is recorded on site, and there is no imitation of the sublime in nature, represented from a distance or imagined, as occurs in such artworks that Burke and Kant could have in mind in the 18th century. But the important complexity of this relationship between the sublime in nature and in aesthetic experiences arises, neither from the fact that viewers can experience equivalent emotions and feel similar physical reactions (as in Burke), nor because judgements of sublimity do not presuppose to know whether the object is real, in addition to being overwhelming, vast and overpowering (as in Kant). The main reason for Herzog's disregard for the distinction between the sublimity of nature and the sublimity of art is that both lead to a fundamental ambition in his work: the encounter with *ecstatic truths*. Herzog seems to believe that, independently of whether they occur in nature, or in filmmaking and film viewing, sublime experiences have the potential to put us in contact with ecstatic truths.

Herzog and Ecstatic Truth

Herzog explains why the idea of *ekstasis,* which he borrows from Longinus, is central to his work (Herzog, 2010). Longinus links the sublime both to aesthetic experiences, such as the Greek tragedies, and to nature. To him, the sublime is grounded in a strong and enthusiastic emotion (*pathos*), a particular way of constructing figures, a form of noble expression, and the composition of dignified and elevated words. He describes how the sublime relates to magnitude and great things, explaining its elevating and expansive effects on the audience and its association with strong expressions and intense emotional responses. In fact, Longinus argues that the first two sources of the sublime depend on nature, while the rest also involve mastery of artistic technique.

Herzog attributes fundamental relevance to Longinus' conception of the sublime by the effect it has on audiences—*ecstasy*, which derives from "*ekstasis*, a person's stepping out of himself into an elevated state—where we can raise ourselves over our own nature—which the sublime

reveals "at once, like a thunder bolt" (Herzog, 2010). This idea is pivotal to Herzog's notion of ecstatic truth and its "illuminating effect".

Herzog directly addresses his ideas on the fundamental relation between the sublime and ecstatic truth: "We also gain our ability to have truly ecstatic experiences through the sublime, through which we are able to rise above nature." (2010). This idea appears to echo Kant's belief regarding our suprasensible capacities as a way of rising above nature. But Herzog's conclusions are not straightforwardly derived from Kant:

> Fact creates norms, and truth illumination. There are deeper strata of truth in cinema, and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylization. (Herzog, 1999)

Confronted with this affirmation, several questions arise: In what way, from Herzog's perspective, can the experience of the sublime lead to truth? How does Herzog's account of the relation between truth and sublime experiences relate to Burke's or Kant's conceptions:

> only in this state of sublimity [*Erhabenheit*] does something deeper become possible, a kind of truth that is the enemy of the merely factual. Ecstatic truth, I call it; (…) In the fine arts, in music, literature, and cinema, it is possible to reach a deeper stratum of truth—a poetic, ecstatic truth". (2010)

Herzog's perspective on truth as an ecstatic experience is, in fact, one of most debated and polemical issues in his work. Much has already been said on this idea, particularly in discussions on documentary film (see, Prager *&* Brad (2007); Ames, (2012); Van Wert (2014); Austin (2008)). Herzog does not distinguish between documentary and fiction, however, and the notion of ecstatic truth is equally important to both his documentaries and his feature films. Herzog observes:

> It is hard to me to accept the categories of "documentary" and "fiction". All of my documentaries are stylized. In the

> name of a deeper truth, a more ecstatic truth—the ecstasy of the truth—contains made up parts. Sometimes I can say that these are fictions in disguise. (2008)

The phrase *ecstatic truth* was first developed in his 1999 manifesto *Minnesota Declaration: Truth and Fact in Documentary Cinema*, which was mainly dedicated to challenging the *Cinema Verité* documentary style and philosophy. Broadly speaking, *Cinéma Verité* adherents believed that subjectivity in filmmaking could, and should, be prevented. They also naively assumed that, by merely presenting "facts", "truth" would naturally arise. Herzog emphatically rejects this, asserting that "facts create norms, and truth illumination. Facts are the truth of accountants, whereas in cinema we can reach a "deeper strata of truth (...) an ecstatic truth" (Herzog 1999). Against *Cinéma Verité*, Herzog takes a singular position on the relationship between cinema as an aesthetic experience and truth. Beyond mere "facts", he argues, there is a much deeper truth, an *ecstatic truth*.

Herzog relates this ecstatic truth very closely to the sublime: this proximity to the sublime allows us to experience moments of enlightenment, producing illumination. Ecstatic truth "is mysterious and can only be grasped with effort"; as Herzog observes, it is "a kind of truth that is the enemy of the merely factual" (2010) and that can be transmitted when one is in a sublime state. It arises in film as a searching that is placed "at the intersection of the imaginary and the factual" (Herzog, 2002).

Herzog does not simply propose the abolition of facts. Instead, his notion of ecstatic truth takes the form of an encounter between facts and perceptions, between inner visions and the material world, between personal experiences and the objects of the world. The pro-filmic world in his documentaries does not simply disappear: facts, realities, are a component of the *ecstatic experience* that must be related to "vision, style, and craft" (Herzog, 2010). This idea of truth as an encounter between the individual, the outside material world and illumination does not signify, however, that films should be an expression of personal interpretation. Ecstatic truth arises from the encounter between the world and the subject. It is a surplus of meaning that only occurs in

ecstatic states, an opening up to significance, a clearing, *un-concealment*, *unveiling*. *Fitzcarraldo* is a film about an opera staged in the rainforest. As Herzog describes it, "it is about the entire world undergoing a transformation into music (…) what happens in the plot is impossible, but the power of music enables the spectator to experience it as true" (2010). In the documentary *The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner* (1974), Walter Steiner, "a Swiss sculptor and repeat world champion in ski-flying, raises himself, as if in religious ecstasy, into the air. He flies so frightfully far, he enters the region of death itself" (Herzog, 2010). The religious ecstasy that Steiner experiences, due to raising himself into the air and facing death, is a sublime experience in which he glimpses the eternal birth–death cycle of nature.

Herzog believes that film can reveal a deeper truth. Film can ultimately embody the sublime through terror, fear, and even death and annihilation, in Herzog's view, but always with the aim of facing humanity's own limits, revealing humankind's mental and corporal conditions and its irrevocable fate as finite, and limited. In this sense, Herzog sees the overwhelming power of nature (and of great art) as a way of revelling in our deepest truths about human existence. His work is dedicated to capturing small glimpses of truth in environments, landscapes and/or human behaviour that can produce sublime experiences, which are not only intellectual, but mainly physical and emotional. The encounter with the sublime—whether in nature or in artworks—can produce illumination, unveiling brief glimpses of truth beyond mere individual certainties and beliefs.

Herzog and Ecstatic Truth

The account of the relationship between Burke, Kant and Herzog pursued in this article suggests potential future applications of Kant's aesthetics far beyond Lyotard's perspectives on the sublime and contemporary art and the possibility of relating it to contemporary fundamental issues, including not only the artistic dimensions of contemporary film, but also its ecological and moral repercussions. The relationship between nature, art and morality lies at the core of this essay and establishes a direct

dialogue with such urgent present-day issues as the nature/culture divide, human–non-human interaction, the exceptionality of humankind, the limits of illuminist faith in rationality, and the importance of the body in aesthetics. Herzog and Kant are both concerned with ideas of human freedom and with the co-relations between the sublime and morality. In Kant, sublimity, especially the dynamical sublime, belongs to *human freedom*, which is excluded from the forces of nature. Freedom is outside the order of nature, but nevertheless requires action within it.

Thus, while for Kant there is an undeniable empirical element to the sublime, the one who experiences the sublime must also be confidant in his or her rational capacities and consider morality a condition of freedom or, more generally, as a dimension of human beings that places them in an exceptional situation within nature and allows them to transcend it. The very same development occurs in Herzog's characters, who are fully armed with their own cultural, rational ideals, mirrored in Aguirre, Fitzcarraldo and in Treadwell's endeavors. In this sense, we can interpret Herzog's films as involving both faithful depictions *and* a deep questioning of Kant on the issue of whether the sublimity of our moral being arises fundamentally from our independence from the mechanisms of nature. In Herzog's films, we witness the characters' initial belief in their human rational and moral superiority over nature, and, at the same time, as the films unfold, we observe the absolute superiority of nature over human rational ideas and freedom, reflected on their gradual abandonment of their rational faculties and moral capacities. Herzog seems to draw on Kant's view that nature itself plays only a negative role in the experience, insofar as the sensible impulses of our natural being inhibit the workings of morality, culture, and individual human existence. At the same time, however, Herzog finds in the sublime a way to attain something that is of pivotal importance to the filmmaker: the ability to encounter ecstatic truths.

And here lies another significant difference between Herzog and Kant: although natural objects are central to Kant's theory, they do not themselves appear to be sublime. Sublimity is a suprasensible perception. In Herzog, however, nature is almighty and is indifferent to humankind, including humanity's illusionary belief that it can rise above nature. Herzog's characters are bodily and sensorially invaded by the physiological

and emotional aspects of sublimity, as in Burke's view. In Herzog's films, contact with nature's sublime dimensions causes the dissolution of the individual's rationality and freedom, especially if we come close to nature's power. For Kant, being human depends on the capacities of reason. Thus, Brady argues that the Kantian sublime is also humanistic and anthropocentric (2013, pp 67-68). In this sense, Herzog's films add a contemporary complexity to the issue of anthropocentrism and excessive humanism regarding the contemporary relationship between humankind and nature. Despite sharing some of Kant's premises, Herzog's work on the sublime arrives at a radically different result. Herzog reveals the impossibility of reducing the idea of the sublime to human faculties and the vanity and illusion of believing in human superiority over nature. In Herzog's sublime experiences, moral and rational human powers are ultimately obliterated. His account of the sublime is closely related to the notion of ecstatic truth, an eminently aesthetic concept that does not fit in Kant's theory.

For all these reasons, Herzog's films provide an opportunity to reconsider the Kantian sublime in light of the recent developments in philosophy and aesthetics: to rethink the anthropocentric modern approach to nature and to reject a conception of nature as a pure object placed before a suprasensible subject. In Herzog's films, experiences of the sublime can support and enrich our understanding and assessment of extraordinary natural phenomena, helping us to rethink our place in relation to art and the natural world. Drawing on Kant's approach to the sublime and developing it, Herzog's artistic aim is to produce encounters outside the human domain, *ecstatic* encounters. Perhaps this acknowledgment of ecstatic truth is more fundamental to the human condition in the current situation than anthropocentric faith in human superiority over nature. Herzog's horrific experience in the jungle and his view of nature may be surprising to some, in an age of ecological consciousness-raising and growing acceptance of the need to rethink our relationship with the planet, where natural species and ecosystems struggle for survival. Could the sublime that Herzog portrays in his films be one of enlightenment, a prompt to rethink these issues? If there is one permanent and unstoppable drive on the planet, it is death and suffering. From mountains, to viruses, to predators, to parasites, Herzog's films

demonstrate that nature will ultimately claim us all; attempting to fight it, like Fitzcarraldo, Treadwell and Aguirre, is pointless:

"Fog-panting and exhausted [the trees] stand in this unreal world, in unreal misery (…) I did not see God today. (Herzog quoted in Love, 2016, para 1).

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Archaeological Practices of Cinema: the Critique of Representation in Straub/Huillet and Farocki

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We will focus on the works of the Straubs (Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet) and Harun Farocki as examples of the possibility of carrying out an archaeological enterprise in the terms set by Michel Foucault. Approaching these filmmakers' practice from this perspective will help to demonstrate a cinema of critique of representation, beyond the division between a cinema of belief in reality and a cinema of belief in image.[1] Both cases put us in touch with a dimension of invisibility, of the supposed pro-filmic reality and of the images themselves, at the same time as they make clear the difficulty of separating "the process through which image becomes reality from the one through which [reality] becomes image" (Deleuze, 1985)[2]: on the one hand, cinema is used as the vehicle of "reactivation of ancient elements that survive" or "survivals", highlighting a multi-temporal dimension of History (and stories). We recognize the paradigmatic case of many of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's films, a cinema attached to the topography of places, where what is expressed is not reality as a state of affairs, but as "geography of thought" - what we see is not exactly what is there, urging us to imagine and remember, i.e. to read

1 See André Bazin (1967, p. 24).

2 For Gilles Deleuze, the movement of the image, more than the index of realism (the record of the true spatio-temporal relations, according to André Bazin), is the index of the process through which images become reality, and the objects, into which the movement is split, become images, as the French philosopher says about Pier Paolo Pasolini. In fact, Pasolini believes that cinema and reality are intertwined, not by a reflexive mechanism, i.e. mimesis, but by the organicity of a movement of thought that simultaneously involves cinema and reality, to the extent that only when linked can they make sense. Therefore, for Deleuze – as is clear in his arguments about André Bazin's comments on neorealism and the addition/supplementation of reality that it entailed – more than reality, the criterion of image are the relations that reality maintains with the imagined, the mental: "is it not rather on the level of the 'mental', in terms of thought" that the problem arises?, Deleuze asks. The reality reproduced by images is also what can be expressed by the signaling matter of cinema, free from the contingency of the here and now and permeated with thought processes, which are different for the movement-image and the time-image. (Deleuze, 1997, p. 1, p. 286)

images.[3] On the other hand, cinema is used as a tool for critiquing images, calling into question the prevailing paradigm, founded on a separation between the existential real and the movement that assumes its conversion into image. We recognize the cinematic work of Farocki, who by pointing out that every image is readymade, i.e. a citation of reality,[4] brings to the foreground the conditions of its fabrication. From this perspective, the image is no longer confused with simple reproduction and presupposes a distance from a supposed origin or external reference, an immediately reflexive folding, through which the expressive or functional mechanisms that determine it are introduced, thus becoming evident. In fact, alongside the prevailing view that sees them as representations or indexes of an external reality, images have acquired a life of their own since the 20th century. They have become circulating commodities, absorbing, in a reversal of imperceptibility, the rhetoric that has crystallized in them and the power that originated them, as well as the social reality and the human work that produced them. In this sense, Farocki is interested in exposing images as images, in their fragmentary condition, i.e. not only the inscription of a trace, but also a sign, not only the material of memory, but also the material of archive, diverted from any immediate relationship that they might

3 This stratigraphic condition of the landscape in modern cinema demands that we read the visual image, which then becomes simultaneously readable and visible. Reading, in this case, does not mean to link, but to relink: "images cease to be linked together 'naturally', […] it is as if the shots are themselves turning, or 'turning round', and grasping them 'requires a considerable effort of memory and imagination, in other words, *a reading*'." (Deleuze, 1997, p. 245)

4 Since the movement of cinema consists in overcoming the simple mechanism of automatic reproduction of the world, inherent in the apparatus, it is the equivalent of a psychic and spiritual movement that derives thought from images, partially negating them as crude fragments removed from the flow of life, in order to invest them with new creative and inventive forces. Neither the technique of indicial mimesis, nor the art of manufactured, added and expressive image, but, borrowing Godard's terms, "a poetics of citation". As stated by Jacques Aumont (1999, p.61), citation understood as the driver of cinema since Lumière, from the forced citation of reality, the immediately quotable sign painfully produced, to the swirling, carousel-like practice of *ad infinitum* citation, when it is no longer about directly quoting the world to restore movement to it, but quoting images to recreate the movement "from fragments that have fallen from the filmed world, previously recorded images, saturated with meaning and emotion". (Daney, 2002, p. 37)

have had with reality. This means that, for Farocki, a productive critique of images presupposes a critique of language, i.e. a critical work of examination and deconstruction of the networks of discourse and meaning that permeate images in their different ways of appearing, so that, delivered from current contingences of use, images may show themselves, instead of showing. In his films, images are abstracted from their original context and put into circulation as "currency", while being rigorously framed institutionally, in a process that elucidates us about how the archive operates, starting by the film archive. They shed light on the archive apparatus itself, understood as the condition of possibility of what is visible and sayable in a certain age, and, by extension, of its opposite, what is left out. The image appears as image, revealing the reproduced reality as studied, thought or expressed reality. At the same time, in moving from the thing represented to representation, Farocki's cinema allows us, in the limits of representation, to rediscover reality again, but now as the out-of-field that has been repressed or made dispensable by images.

We propose that, in the same way that for the Straubs it is not about the supposedly neutral restitution of History, the reconstitution of a place's or landscape's past, but of making vibrate, in the present, the forgotten or invisible marks of History's violence, opening documents up to the animist confrontation with the matter and weight of the things filmed, Farocki is not looking for the original referentiality of images, but is trying to reveal the documental value of contemporary images, precisely through the introduction of a deferral in relation to their mode of production and the power that originated them. In the end, it is also about using cinema to undertake the equivalent of the work performed by the new History, with its treatment of documents as monuments. In the Straubs as in Farocki, albeit through different avenues, we are faced with the same cinematic critique of representation, as the prevailing system and paradigm of image, as a way of perpetuating the idea that we live in the best of all possible worlds, of using the metalanguage inherent in every image to confirm reality as it is, of keeping everything the same (to borrow Straub's and Farocki's words).

This reversal of invisibility, not in the sense of an absence or lack, now reinforced by new invisibilities produced by the digital, as well as

the invisibility of what remains to be actualized as potency of History, poses a challenge to cinema: it asks cinema to stress the fabrication of images. By this we do not mean going to the source, i.e. using images to search for traces of the past and the origin of facts, but embracing, with and through them, constructions that allow the extraction of essential relationships that are not immediately visible. This is made possible through montage – not only the mixing procedures associated with it: reframing, photographic manipulation, slow motion, etc., but also the exploration of the possibilities of disjunction between statements and visibilities – to reveal, underneath the visible, the unsuspected stratigraphy of landscapes and images, and do justice, through them, to the absent archives, the silenced and imperceptible records of our time, the blank spaces of History and Memory, urging them to testify and speak critically about the present and its images.

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The questioning of the document is at the heart of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), by Michel Foucault, and leads to a re-evaluation of the historiographical inquiry itself. In order to examine the discursivity of the facts included in an "archive", Foucault (2001) no longer considers them as documents, but as monuments: "To analyze discursive facts in the general element of the archive is to consider them not as documents (of a concealed meaning, or rule of construction), but as monuments; it is – quite apart from any geological metaphor, without assigning any origin and without the slightest gesturing towards the beginning of an *arché* – to engage in what one may call, drawing on the ludic rights of etymology, something like an archaeology" (p. 736).

Contrary to traditional historiography, what we find here is not historiographical statements on "official" events, but monuments, i.e. something that was not immediately destined to testify or speak, speaks directly. In the past, archaeology, the discipline of silent monuments and objects without context, only made sense as a way of restoring a historical discourse. For Foucault, the goal of History should also be to describe the monument and no longer be satisfied with turning monuments into documents.

In contrast with a History that was the guardian of facts that it reported with total impartiality, the new History arises as a discursive practice, a moving and dynamic History that folds, unfolds and refolds itself. This History, whose direction is always unpredictable, chimes with gestures of thought and writing subsumable to the work of the archaeologist, as "the one who finds the documents that he does not know how to use beforehand, while the historian is the one who finds the documents that he needs" (Aumont, 2011, p. 162).

In Foucault's archaeological model, Deleuze finds the possibility of another History, where the unfolding of events, the cuts and breaks that determine the passage from one discursive formation to another, do not take place along vertical or horizontal lines, but derive from movements that are established crosswise between historical facts belonging to different sets and series, which in turn stem from movements of facts belonging to other sets and series (and so on). Archaeology would allow us to access, and go through, this combination of various temporalities and multiple spaces, inseparable from the historical appearance of discursive formations in their autonomy. The difficulty of such a History lies precisely here.[5]

It is the idea of diagonal that Deleuze highlights in Foucault's archaeological method, a movable line that presents History as a composition/construction through building blocks, movements. At the same time, the model distances itself from a linear conception of History, where historical knowledge is synonymous with a linkage of elements

5 Deleuze (1988) says about *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: "Whether discursive or not, formations, families and multiplicities are historical, [...] and when a new formation appears, with new rules and series, it never comes all at once, in a single phrase or act of creation, but emerges like a series of 'building blocks', with gaps, traces and reactivations of former elements that survive under the new rules. Despite isomorphisms and isotopies, no formation provides the model for another. [...] One must pursue the different series, travel along the different levels, and cross all thresholds; instead of simply displaying phenomena and statements in their horizontal or vertical dimensions, one must form a transversal or mobile diagonal line, along which the archaeologist-archivist must move. A comment by Boulez on the rarefied universe of Webern could easily apply here to Foucault (and his style): 'He created a new dimension, which we might call a diagonal dimension, a sort of distribution of points, groups or figures that not only act simply as an abstract framework but actually exist in space.'" (p. 22).

that cascade one after the other, in a linear fashion, a narrative perpetually fueled by new facts. Instead Deleuze underlines "the reactivation of former elements that survive" or "survivals", subscribing to a multi-temporal view of History, as it is conceived by Foucault's archaeology.

Foucault, at the end of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, posits that the archaeological method that he develops to analyze the discursive formations, the statements of knowledge in any given moment, may encompass visibilities, and therefore an archaeology of the arts. As Foucault suggests, a possible approach would be to see a discursive practice in painting, for example, in the techniques and effects through which it takes shape. But if it is not clear that the arts derive from knowledge, Foucault certainly did not intend to translate the facts of painting into linguistic statements. Therefore, a question that remains is knowing to what extent the arts, particularly cinema, derive from knowledge, and if that knowledge is discursive or not. Another question, which interests us more, is whether the arts can undertake, through their own means, an archaeological project like the one proposed by Foucault.[6]

In the chapter of *Foucault* devoted to historical strata and formations, Deleuze states that for that author the archive is audiovisual. According to Deleuze, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* distinguishes between two types of historical formations – some discursive or statement-based, others non-discursive or means-based – but it privileges the formation of statements, since that is the one that it sets out to define. Nonetheless, in Foucault, especially in his later work, we also see emerge an archaeology that extends from discourses to visibilities, i.e. non-discursive means, the historical formation of the visible, as opposed to what can be enunciated. For example, in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault studied the birth of prisons and the way in which their form differs from that of Penal Law and its statements, which appeared at the same time.

In Foucault's work, Deleuze associates discursivity with words and concepts, and visibility with things, institutions and sensibilities. In this sense, Deleuze says that the archive, for Foucault, is the combination of the things enunciated, but also visible by a certain time. It is audiovisual.

6 See, on this issue, Maniglier & Zabunyan (2011).

Also according to Deleuze (1988, pp. 64-65), Foucault's conception of the archive, what characterizes the two faces of knowledge of a given time, i.e. sensibility and intelligibility, the archive in its audiovisual dimension – the systems of the visible (light) and the sayable (*logos*) – echoes the specific way in which modern cinema dissociates the components of image, i.e. seeing and speaking: speech acts become autonomous, and the same is true of visual image. They fight and dialogue in the interstice, the interval that separates them.

It is precisely in light of this dissociation, which announces and foreshadows his view of the Foucauldian archive as audiovisual, that in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985) Deleuze theorizes on cinema as archaeology, namely through his interpretation of Straubian cinema, as primarily founded on a system developed and invented by them (or the desire for such a system), recognizable in the way in which they combine words that rise in the air as acts of resistance and images that sink into the ground – archaeological, stratified images that allow us to read the intolerable of what happened in a specific place.

After our incursion into Deleuze's *Foucault*, we will now return to cinema through this author, and hopefully to a clarification and examination of the idea of cinema as archaeology.

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It is the non-reconciled aspect of these two matters – words and images – that interests the Straubs, namely places, spaces and texts. It is not about using shots and their *mise-en-scène* to locate and stage the feelings of the characters mentioned in the texts, to inscribe their significance into space, as an adaptation would do – often these are precisely the psychological elements that the Straubs eliminate from the texts with which they work – but about giving primacy to the materiality of speech, as that which cannot be translated into representation or naturalized in and through representation. The shot draws on that essential disjunction between space and speech. In this sense, the space is not organized according to the visibility of what the speech links and unlinks, binds and unbinds in its mesh, but according to the essential invisibility that the speech utters and the landscape somewhat hides – the invisibility of political violence,

often literally buried underground, which the shots offer to us in the form of an enigma that needs to be unraveled. The story told by this disjunction is not a story in the sense of traditional fiction, nor does it correspond to the facts of History, but it is the story of the class struggle as a story of violence. The Straubian *mise-en-scène* describes the space that determines this struggle as a space of "clash and separation" (Séguin, 2007, p. 50), a condition of possibility of characters, when they exist, and in which they are inscribed; a space of division, exploitation, rebellion and emancipation, which the shot conveys through the distribution of bodies and words within it. Moreover, in those demarcations of space – an *a priori* condition of power (and the struggle that opposes it) –, places appear as testimonies of the intolerable, gathering and keeping in their depths, their strata, the traces and injustices of History. The speech utters these strata of images and activates them over the visible/sensible matter of images. It calls for an activism of History, similar to the activism of cinema, making History appear not as that which has ended in the past, but that which reminds us that we do not live in "the best of possible worlds"…[7] Therefore, History is not an inert entity, stemming from an accumulation of documents that matter inasmuch as they refer to an original time, already gone and irredeemably lost, but an instrument of intervention in the present. This interpretation of History resembles archaeology, or is equivalent to an archaeology, i.e. the investigation of the remains of human culture, activated in the present as a way of reading and reflecting on the society in which we live.

Therefore, if we return to the disjunction between audio and visual image analyzed by Deleuze in the Straubs, we find that it redirects precisely to

7 "So a political film must remind people that we don't live in 'the best of possible worlds', far from it, and that the present time, stolen from us in the name of progress, is going by and is irreplaceable… That they are ransacking human feelings like they ransack the planet… That the price people must pay, whether for progress or well-being, is far too high, unjustifiable. Not to mention that this system multiplies poverty – and let's not only talk about the third world, but of the unbelievable things we've learned about England, the very cradle of capitalism! We should make people feel that the price is too high, that the only thing worth defending is precisely the passing moment, that they should under no circumstances take flight into the future. So we must come back to what Benjamin said: revolution is 'also reinstating very ancient but forgotten things' (Péguy). Films that make you feel this way are political films. The others are *truffe*, scams." (Straub & Huillet, 2016, p. 111).

the condition of men caught in the middle of a torn, shattered History, among strata that cannot be made present. The Straubian image sets itself this archaeological task, in Foucault's sense: in it, non-contemporary and mismatched historical strata are made "co-present", readable as geological cuts overlaid in rock, whose lines appear to us with different degrees of definition. So, for Deleuze (1997), when we refer to a Straubian shot, we should speak not only of cinema, but also of geology: "What is a Straubian shot (…)? It is a section comprising the stippled lines [*pointillées*] of vanished *features* and the complete lines of those that are still touched. The visual image, in Straub, is the rock." (p. 244)

Nonetheless, this co-habitation of distinct and incompatible temporalities reflects the same division perpetuated in reality – the class divisions found in society are confirmed by historical strata. For example, in the Straubs, the recurring camera movements that sweep through the empty landscape trace the geography of what is buried underneath, the past of the immemorial exploitation of men and the eternal return of their sacrifice. In the empty and lacunary stratigraphic landscapes of Straub, "the camera movements (when there are any, notably pan shots) trace the abstract curve of what has happened, and where the Earth stands for what is buried in it: the cave in *Othon* where the resistance fighters had their weapons, the marble quarries and the Italian countryside where civil populations were massacred in *Fortini/Cani*, the cornfield in *Della Nube alla Resistenza* fertilized by the blood of the sacrificial victims (or the shot of the grass and acacias), the French countryside and the Egyptian countryside in *Trop tôt/Trop tard"* (Deleuze, 1997, p. 244). But Straubian cinema does not just make readable in the image what is hidden in the geological depths of History. Buried in the Earth are the concealed traces and marks of violence and oppression, but these demand to be redeemed. Speech responds to that need to interrupt the infernal cycle of massacres and domination and materializes it in the shot, through a break with the image. Here the possibility of a redemptive event comes through, bringing back as revolutionary potency that which History did not realize. This is what the texts and the voices that utter them tell us, as Deleuze (1997) explains, when he refers to the importance of the speech-act in the Straubs: "The speech act, the sound image, is act of resistance (…). It must be simultaneously maintained that speech creates

the event, makes it rise up, and that the silent event is covered over by the earth. The event is always resistance, between what the speech-act seizes and the earth buries" (p. 272). Therefore, if visual and sound images come together in the Straubs, that does not happen in the same image, or we would be before a flashback, the reconstitution of a temporality that has become non-representable, at least as reconstitution in the present of a past space-time. If sound and visual images coincide, it is not in resurrecting something from a past where they shared an equal measure.[8] There is an incommensurability between the two images – in Benjamin's words, the dialectical image of the encounter between the here and now, and the there and then, allowing us to see and read places as topographic archives. For Deleuze, in *Cinema 2*, this is what brings forth the archaeological unveiling, the stratigraphic image. Nonetheless, if the approach to what cannot be made present (and arises instead as absence) is dialectical, the dissonant elements, of image and speech, summoned to give it form, are re-articulated and re-linked in a common place. Straub and Huillet "overcome the opposition sound/image to reach a third term, but they do it by showing the chasm that separates these two elements from the outset. [In them], the chasm between sound and image becomes even more evident if we consider that they were meticulously captured together (…). It is in the earth itself – the third term and unifying instance – that the unity of sound and image is rooted, linked by the connection that they shared in a certain time and place" (Chion, 1988, 164). For example, in the many pan shots, around twelve, that run across the landscape in *Fortini/Cani*, we cannot see vestiges of the gory History of that Italian region, but that does not mean that it is not there, buried under the peaceful, rustic and mountainous landscape that we contemplate, and the natural sounds that accompany it. For Louis Séguin (2007), "The absence of History is exposed. Massacres are reduced to memory. Nothing of what is written on the monument opposite the church of Vinca is still visible. (…) But what also arises is the need for memory, for History, for the fight against oblivion. History is made of remains, but it also provides, as a counterpoint, a resource against absence, a discipline, as Benjamin said. It is written over the neutral, hilly background, in the

8 See Deleuze (28.05.1985).

inexorable appearance of speech" (p. 90). As Deleuze says about the Straubs, speech has to be torn from its written support (text, book, letters, or documents), from the pre-established, the dominant, the language of the masters, from that which resists becoming (as opposed to History). Not unlike archaeology, as understood by Foucault, it is about using the speech-act to write History differently, a history of silent monuments, of places that enunciate, even though they were not meant to testify or speak directly – if the actions and struggles of those who resisted and were exploited were concealed in the unfavourable game of historical force relations, their vestiges still reside in the landscapes and ruins. The work on text shows and points to this liberation of the exploited from a distance, turning the past, in its non-actuality and incompleteness, into a questioning of the present and the future. This involves recognizing what is left to redeem and reconcile by other possible reactivations, a reserve kept in the obscure layers of History and men.

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In Farocki's case, it is about composing fragments of cinema in the "building yards" of our recent History, composing films from fragments of speech and images as they penetrate into techniques and institutions that apparently have nothing in common, but that when compared through montage turn out to belong to a common logic. This logic involves the passage from industrial societies, founded on mass production provided by the labour of factory workers to service societies, which prompted a metamorphosis in the nature and organization of work and whose direct target is the workers' productive capacity. This calls for an in-depth reflection on the societies of control, in the sense that Deleuze (1992) distinguishes them from Foucault's disciplinary societies: "The disciplinary societies have two poles: the signature that designates the *individual*, and the number or administrative numeration that indicates his or her position within the mass. […] In the societies of control, on the other hand, what is important is no longer either a signature or a number, but a code. […] We no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become *'dividuals',* and masses, samples, data, markets, or *'banks'"* (p. 5).

On the other hand, normalizing and educating go hand in hand with "recognizing and persecuting" and no longer with "surveilling and punishing". In fact, Farocki works on the History of "technical images" (operating and operational) in their relationship with the West, with the History of modern civilization, particularly the way in which they seep into every sphere of life (and death), war, work, consumption. He is interested in understanding what makes them epistemologically useful for biopolitical ends and as a means of control. This History will also be told from Foucault's perspective on power-knowledge relations and the same thorough description of archives, in this case audiovisual, without resorting to a metadiscursive dimension. Referring to *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1988), Nora Alter (2004) enumerates the disciplines that interest Farocki insofar as they deal with the question of visuality, disciplines that began by using photographic processes, but that today rely on digital technologies: "fine arts, engineering, architecture, artisanal and assembly-line production, city planning and urban renewal, military science and practice" (p. 215). It is the aesthetic experience provided by these images as inseparable from their geopolitical functionality that Farocki investigates. Moreover, as in Foucault, it is about putting into practice the descriptive capacity of the digital and cinema, so that through the means of image one can peer into the audiovisual archive, both in the literal, material sense and in Foucault's sense, according to formal criteria and not the meaning of images. This exercise redirects us from images to systems of representation and technologies, from "technical images" to their program, as understood by Vilém Flusser. In other words, whether they are construed as "true images" or representations (given their seductive capacity), or whether they are merely informative (in this case, they extract and treat data for their performances of control and recognition of objects and movements), images contain and present the way in which they are used.[9] As Antje Ehmann (2016) observes, in Farocki we find an anti-hermeneutic relationship with images, which escapes identification by remaining close to the materiality of images, texts and words as much as possible (p. 24).

9 See Färber (2015, p. 105).

Contrary to Foucault, where statements are clearly privileged, we can say that Farocki's films signal the emergence of a new archive, a new episteme, where statements can no longer give an account of contemporary experience. It is about analyzing this new articulation between the statements and visibilities of a certain age, now giving primacy to visibilities, materialized, for Farocki, in non-discursive technological media. The new knowledge that is produced about man is inseparable from audiovisual technologies. Since the archive is now literally audiovisual, a new relationship between statements and visibilities emerges, disrupting the Foucauldian view where one dominated over the other. Therefore, images have a diagrammatic character and are ways of exerting power, i.e. ways of producing subjectivity. Farocki studies this particular interplay between image and power, and also its History.[10]

Farocki is interested in what we might now call the materialization and literalization of Foucault's notion of archive. Episteme, as the ensemble of "systems that establish statements as events (with their own conditions and domains of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use)" (Foucault, 1972, p. 128), became inseparable from the contemporary digital Archive[11] as a medium or means. In other words, what can be said and seen today is inseparable from the conditions created by the new modes of recording and inscribing memory, "as a flow of inscriptions ferried by no other medium than the processing that renders them operational". The new teletechnologies incorporate the power-knowledge of the Archive, which does not really belong to anyone,

10 The images are diagrammatic in the sense that they should be framed within the new post-linguistic and post-visual episteme prevalent in the societies of control, an episteme dominated by cybernetics and by a view of human communication made in its image, i.e. cybernetics treats human communication as communication between computers, analyzing it both in terms of signal transmission and feedback. The cybernetic paradigm reflects a culture based on life management and administered adaptation, on the transformation and tune-up of systems through an orchestrated feedback. The feedback in question corresponds to the collection of information and knowledge about individuals, in the form of diagrams that represent algorithms and workflows meant to enhance performance or produce an adequate assessment capacity.

11 The contemporary digital archive is now read based on the notion of apparatus, in Foucault's sense, as a whole that encompasses and informs everything that is part of the world, while also comprising, within that dominant whole, the figures of opposition to that domination.

but that "everybody uses on the world, on the others, on himself" and that is co-extensive to reality, a "disseminator of reality" (Perret, 2009, p. 46). The contemporary condition is, therefore, defined by the Archive, i.e. it is documental, in the sense that reality is inferred from the traces that remain and can no longer be conceived without them. Increasingly, for the modern digital Archive, what was construed as a document in the old archive, is now, paradoxically, what is negated in its materiality and functions instead as a mere symptom of the traceability of existence. For Farocki, as the philosopher Catherine Perret (2010) explains, the document primarily arises as an operating image, as the subjective point of view of an operational image, turned into signs of objectification of identities and existences (p. 696).

Therefore, the archive, in its new documental, digital and mediumistic condition simultaneously assumes a biopolitical role, of control of subjectivization and individuation – as Jacques Derrida (1995) says, "there is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory" (p. 11) – and a critical one – since there can be no critique, no public debate without archives. Consequently, besides access to archives, today the construction of History also depends on the possibility of introducing a certain delay or setback, an interval between record and reproduction, between record and inscription, that can break with the immediacy and instantaneity of contemporary space-time – a time that revolves around the here and now, and where actions, recordings, communication merge into a single click.

As a result of this, in its relationship with the Archive, cinema can be a valuable tool for exploring the document in its materiality, under the terms proposed by Foucault and his Archaeology. It allows us, for example, as in Harun Farocki's work, to demystify the document as a trace of origin. In other words, documents no longer trace back to the traditional archive, since they no longer constitute an archive in that sense. They are no longer inscribed and deposited in its own designated place, instituted as the guardian of an original experience that could be reconstructed through them.

Farocki's interest in operational images stems from here. If he chooses to work primarily on "images that are part of an operation", images that do not strive to reconstruct a reality, this more likely comes,

according to him (2015), "from the tedium of meta-language. Tedium of the everyday practice of re-mythologizing everyday life, and the multiple and many-channeled program of images that confirm the most banal thing: that the world is as it is" (p. 57).

Catherine Perret (2010) says that, in the case of photographic images, the eyes no longer recognize the ontological interval, detected by Walter Benjamin, between record and reproduction, to the point that we believe that the image reproduces the real, just as the optical device reproduces vision (i.e. we no longer recognize the interval that the production process creates between the temporality of the real and the inscribed image, which will be seen *a posteriori*). In the case of numerical images, given their transmission in real time, the eye does not detect the distance between operational and operating images (i.e. it does not identify the ontological interval between record and inscription: images are recorded, but do not aim at inscription – the operational aim to control a process and are not inscribed; the operating aim to be transmitted in real time more than inscribed). "The first localize. They suppose and, in that sense, subjectivize what they designate as *hic et nunc*. They derive from calculation." They are images taken from a position that cannot be occupied by a real person. They are "subjects-images" that do not see, strategic images directed at us. "They are blind. They are *repérages* meant to overlook a process. Operational images are not to be seen and are generally not seen." Hence the idea that they subjectivize what they designate: "They are deleted, and their support is reused. They document without becoming archive" (697-98). As Derrida (1995) refers in "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression", this stems from the fact that there is no archive "without consignation in an *external place* which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction, or of reimpression" (p.14). "The others 'remember': they displace and appear in the language of memory, i.e. they imply a rhetoric" (Perret, 2010, 698).

If Farocki is an archaeologist-filmmaker and not an archival one, as Georges Didi-Huberman (2010, pp. 108-131) mentions, that is precisely because he understands the archive in Foucault's sense. In the end, it is about using cinema to perform the same type of work as the new History and its treatment of documents as monuments, but now as a counterpoint

to the effacement of History, i.e. the possibility of remembrance that characterized the automatism of the Archive. If the Archive's cinematic *tekné* prolongs the age of cinema and "of a History made with traces that nobody chose", with documents that are monuments, since they "speak without words, instruct us without meaning to, carry memory inasmuch as they are only preoccupied with their own present" (Rancière, 1997, 55), never as today was it necessary to interrogate the "silent" origin of these traces, i.e. the recording techniques and the violence that they imply. In this way, the filmmaker becomes an historian-archaeologist, since to restore the documental value of these images of our time, presenting them to be read as monuments of a common contemporary thought, means not only to delete the rhetoric crystallized in them, so that what they express may speak and be seen, but also to grant them, through montage, a place of appearance that is separate from their source, i.e. "detached from the power that produces them" (Perret, 2010, 700). In the case of operational images, which are usually not inscribed, the montage, the new connections that it allows, (re)inscribe them in a plane of remembrance and restore them to a contemplative dimension. They return to the spectator invested with the possibility of meaning, of a critical folding that they did not possess in the immanent plane of their technical functionality (Blümlinger, 2004, 321). They are separated from their origin and it is through this deferral that they are inscribed and leave a trace. At the same time, this diversion gives visibility to the institutional power networks behind them and to the concrete place that they occupy within them, i.e. to their role in subjectivization processes.

We are confronted here with the works of Farocki that explicitly deal with the critique of image. Drawing on his faith in the potentialities of montage, after Jean-Luc Godard's "Montage, mon beau souci", we can interrogate the ontological status of the photographic and cinematic realism that underpins the age of the digital Archive. Films (and installations) such as *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*, *Workers Leaving the factory* (*Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik*, 1995), *Prison Images* (*Gefängnisbilder*, 2000), and *Eye/Machine I-III* (*Auge/Maschine I-III*, 2001), show us that the goal behind the production of "technical images", prefigured by photography, but extending beyond it, regardless of their scientific, military, forensic or aesthetic ends,

has been not only to record and preserve, but also to recognize and persecute, deceive and conceal (Alter, 2004, 218). On the other hand, today it is precisely this dimension of concealment and invisibility that is actively produced by digital images, not only as a lack of vision, but almost as a condition and limit of the visible determined by them. Paraphrasing Thomas Elssaesser (2017), this invisibility results from what Farocki calls "controlling observation", i.e. operational images, which are not meant to be seen, but acted on. They are "instructions for action (by machines), or sets of data for processing and translating into actions (by machines)" (p.219). The visuality that derives from them does not imply an external reality, nor does it depend on a human observer, but extracts reality and collects it in a set of data, with the goal of producing aseptic, hyper realistic and interactive worlds based on role-playing and instructions for life, in which absolute faith is deposited. In them, "the body and the senses – touch, hearing, motion, affect – have become the protectively and defensively invoked stand-ins or prostheses" (p. 221).

This is why a sequence of aerial photographs of Auschwitz in *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* [12] serves as a metaphor

12 This sequence centers on an aerial photograph of the Auschwitz concentration camp, taken by American bombers in 1944 and successively reframed by Farocki. The photograph is the product of a technology appropriated by a calculated machinery of death and annihilation.
Farocki is interested in the way in which the camera has become an inseparable element of the equipment of destruction. Destruction is only possible if one applies the military principle of reconnaissance and persecution, which is progressively intertwined with the use of automatic machines of visual reproduction, from photography to modern numerical images. In the same way, there can be no bombing or annihilation without these being recorded into images.
In April 1944, American pilots fly over Silesia looking for an armament factory and take reconnaissance photographs. When the pilots return to England, the analysts identify the industrial targets, but fail to see Auschwitz's sheds and gas chambers. The extermination camp in the image only becomes visible in 1977. This is an image organized around a blind spot, which more than questioning the relationship between natural vision and the artificially-constructed visible questions the relationship between natural vision and the dimension of opacity and invisibility inscribed in that visible. And, consequently, the mismatch, the disunity between the eye and technological seeing apparatuses.
What is preserved in the Auschwitz photograph is both the image of the actual destruction and that of the unrealized destruction that could have avoided it (Tom Keenan, 2004, 206). Therefore, the sequence simultaneously conveys a

for what is at stake in the work of Farocki, who, according to Elssaesser, investigates the relationship between the image and the progressively superfluous becoming of the world and reality.[13]

The realization that cinema's true question is not choosing between reality and the faith in image, but understanding that this division has seeped into society means, in Farocki's case, using cinema to dig into images and find a way among the layers and lacunary dispersion of images and sounds, allowing us to glimpse, in the limits of the visible, the direct presence of the world and the reality that they "hide". In other words, what "we see and experience every day may be nothing like the reality that actually affects our lives and determines our fate"

> feeling of danger and impotence in relation to the global view of territorial control: if destruction implies an image, hindered destruction will hardly find its answer in a land under surveillance, since there can be no answer, intervention or critique of destruction when vision and thought are mere products of machines that establish what is reasonable to question, together with science and military goals. To conclude, the blind spot in the aerial photograph of Auschwitz provides a reading of Farocki's work, by revealing the need to investigate a kind of positive unconscious of vision, which determines not what is seen, but what can be seen. The history of what is seen is linked to the history of what can be seen, of what is visible. Visualization, the scheme through which things are shown, belongs to the positivity of knowledge and power in a given moment. What Farocki's montage work reveals is that unnoticed scheme, its underlying concepts. This scheme, which determines the way in which people see, is rooted in a material existence that includes the techniques used to produce images. In this sense, the technological apparatuses for producing images are apparatuses of knowledge and power. If Farocki is interested in moving from images to their apparatuses, that is because he knows that, more than vision, they relate to a way of thinking that determines what should or should not be seen. It is, therefore, necessary to return to images to see what was not seen, to make visible the unseen spaces of vision. This entails making perceptible the material, mediated and anonymous practices through which images arise as visibilities, returning to them not separately, as wholes, but through montage, as fragments. Speaking about an unconscious in our culture's audiovisual archive is pointing out that inability to see the evidences that guide what is seen, said, done and consented, what is hidden in our reading of supposed knowledge, of opinion crystallized by a particular imaginary ordering of society.

13 "In an interview with me many years ago, Farocki conceded that he was, as a filmmaker and image producer, part of those whose task was to 'make the world superfluous', meaning that a world that puts its faith in the image can become careless about the fate of that world 'in reality'" (Elssaesser, 2017, p. 226).

(Elssaesser, 2017, p. 221).[14] A reality that is the material reversal of the apparent immateriality of contemporary operational images, i.e. "the harsh materiality and deadly consequences of a world that now lives by the simulated image" (Elssaesser, 2017, p. 225). This harsh and direct presence of the world is also what is condemned to invisibility and emerges as an absent "reverse shot" in many of Farocki's films.

Then we have his cinematic approach to speech: Farocki does not intervene; there is no previous text or apparent intentionality that guides the recording of images, acts, gestures and words. Moving seemingly naturally, the filmmaker becomes almost imperceptible to situations and people, allowing them to behave with spontaneity, as if the camera were not present. In these films, he studies the *langue de bois* of the new neoliberal world. The technologies of image and corporate/managerial beliefs are both in line with a fluid world anchored in the immediate circulation and communication of various data encompassing all human experience, in the sense of its biopolitical control and potential commercial exploitation. As with Foucault, it is about developing archaeological cinematic work to ascertain the way in which power is exerted, not the power of the State, but the one that stems from other institutions or forms of constraint, permanently oppressing everyday life. In films such as *A New Product* (*Ein neues Produkt*, 2012), management consultancy emerges as a strategic tool of corporate control. This phenomenon is not circumscribed to companies, in the sense of anticipating future economic trends and their impact on the work structure of a particular company, but extends to the whole work organization in our neoliberal societies, where the market is the organizing principle of the State and society. Its aim is to optimize management tasks, which consist in maximizing profits and share prices, and to incorporate market ideology, rules and goals into companies. In this sense, management decides the corporate culture that best promotes employee loyalty and motivation. This is the power mentioned by Foucault (1994). Even though it is not easily tolerated

14 "We only need to think of high-speed electronic trading, where billions of euros, pounds or dollars shift continents within nanoseconds, or the invisible footprints we leave whenever we go online with our laptops or smartphones" (Elssaesser, 2017, p. 221).

and produces a *malaise* that affects the social body, it is not explicitly construed as a demonstration of power, nor is it questioned as such. This power is exerted "within the social body, through extremely different ways, channels, technologies and institutions" (p. 82). We no longer accept to be ruled by the government, but we are ruled by these men who decide our everyday lives, through direct or indirect influences, e.g. the media and these technologies of corporate control. "I didn't realize the euphoria, the exuberance with which new models of life and work are constructed in firms like this" (Möntmann, 2014).[15] *A New Product,* but also *The Creators of the Shopping Worlds* (*Die Schöpfer der Einkaufswelten*, 2001), *The Interview* (*Die Bewerbung*, 1996), among others, belong to this second group of films, where, for Farocki, more than the politics of image (as in the first group), it is about working on speech, in the sense that people perform their work through speech. These are all observational films, where language plays a central, focal role, as Antje Ehmann (2016) shows us (p.30). What stands out is the language and not the men and women who use it, since it is about showing that anonymous rumour, the language that is already there, which also interested Foucault. The language present in these films is that of role-playing games and it extends to the body, gestures and facial expressions, as the other facet of the aforementioned creation of simulacra of experience and reality. These films abstain from a sociological or biographical explanation of the people portrayed. They settle into work contexts linked to continuous training programs that adapt workers to the demands of modern societies, without providing any kind of background, contrary to mainstream cinema. This allows them to address the transitivity of language (and speech acts), which more than belonging to anyone in particular, speaks itself. "Farocki's dream always was to document processes in reality that give the impression, when presented in film, that they cannot be 'true' – that we are watching a fiction film. His goal was a level of hyperrealism that might be nearly a jump into futurity" (Ehmann, p. 34), but that ultimately directs to the imperceptible in our world, to what is absurd or aberrant about it.

15 Harun Farocki in conversation with Nina Bittcher and Radek Krolczyk, *Jungle World, 27,* 2012, quoted by Nina Montmann (2014, p. 15).

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In both of the filmmakers mentioned, we are close to the conception of archaeology developed by Michel Foucault, in the sense that images (the disperse archive that corresponds to them), as part of the mass of documents produced by man in a certain age, are not conceived as inert materials or ways of reconstituting the past, but as documental materiality that should be worked on and developed from within, as Foucault proposed in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

From this perspective, the images of cinema should be read as engrams of memory: the inscription and retention of reality and events is only the first stage of thought, which montage tries to partly negate. Montage is the movement that selects from this memorial fund composed of the archive of images of the world, the cinema archive itself, and the contemporary digital archive. Cinema offers both a refuge from time, by mummifying the present, to paraphrase André Bazin, and, through montage, a way of emancipating these morsels of reality from their subordination to fictional stories and to factual and documental History, as Godard said about his project *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*. Following *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, a different relation to the past and memory, and also to modern archives, can serve as a model for a new (audio)visual thought and knowledge. Images open themselves up to all kinds of connections, unleashing unexpected virtualities, in a departure from the articulations suggested from the outside by traditional History, understood as the restitution of a historicity stemming from a causal explanation of events, in the image of cinematic fables, with their representation of the reasons behind actions, their idea of dramatic progression as the assemblage of actions geared towards ends, to paraphrase Jacques Rancière. For traditional History, regardless of the events one considers, transformation is conceived and explained in chronological time, in the passage from one state of affairs to another. On the other hand, cinematic thought and practice, inasmuch as it echoes this archaeological work, entails a transversal communication of elements (voluntarily or involuntarily summoned) that form unstable series. If we consider the paradigmatic *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*, for example, excerpts from the same film return multiple

times, each time meaning different things, depending on the links and associations that they form.

What matters are constantly mutating relationships where, each time, it is never the same part of images that returns; what matters is montage at a distance, the correlations between discontinuities in various series, or the co-variation of a set of series,[16] precluding the establishment of homogeneous totalities and categories, of stable continuities and ruptures. Inversely, no series exhausts the event that it makes visible, which can thus return under a new approach. At the same time, images are considered not as simple traces of reality, as supposed evidence, but as monuments. It is not about restituting an absolute or mythical origin evoked by images in their relation to the world – *archê* – but letting them insinuate themselves through a life of their own. Via montage, a series of associations (totally fabricated and somewhat invented) engender a different aesthetic experience, negating images as only readable through the representation paradigm. We move from images as signs of something else, transparent elements through which we pass to reach what is manifested or hidden in them, to images as practices with specific rules and functions, images that do not efface themselves – so that the past may return in its purity – but that are practiced as rewriting and transformation of what was.

16 For example, in Farocki's *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1988), the word *Aufklärung* carries a double and triple meaning and brings together many different elements. Its potential suggests connections in the real world, as well as in the visual and discursive material of the film. The film presents it as a term through which one can create a set of different series. *Aufklärung* does not refer to a single meaning, but to the set of discontinuities that make up what we understand by it, according to the terms and series of instances to which it relates at any given moment.

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What Is It like to Be in the Land of Silence and Darkness?

Werner Herzog and the Paradox of Representing the Unrepresentable

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Modern and contemporary philosophy are characterized by a radical awareness of the fact that our experience of the world is profoundly subjective. According to the young Nietzsche of *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*, «insects and birds perceive a quite different world from that of human beings» and «the question as to which of these two perceptions of the world is the more correct is quite meaningless, since this would require them to be measured by the criterion of the *correct perception*, i.e. by a *non-existent* criterion»[1]. Nietzsche's critique of the correspondence theory of truth (there is no adequate expression of an object in the subject) developed over the years into a radical perspectivism, according to which it is hopeless to attempt to figure out what it would be like to perceive the world through a different sensory apparatus from our own[2]. Thomas Nagel reached a similar conclusion in his well-known paper *What Is It like to Be a Bat?*. According to Nagel, I can imagine what it would be like for *me* to behave as a bat behaves, but I cannot imagine what it is for a *bat* to be a bat. Indeed, in trying to imagine this, I am restricted to the inadequate resources of my mind provided by my own experience[3]. Note that both Nietzsche's and Nagel's scepticism is not limited to interspecific relations but extends to intraspecific ones. As Nagel puts it: «The problem is not confined to exotic cases, however, for it exists between one person and another. The subjective character of the experience of a person deaf and blind from birth is not accessible to me, for example, nor presumably is mine to him»[4].

1 F. Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*, in Id., *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, p. 148.

2 As Nietzsche puts it in the fifth book of *The Gay Science*, «we cannot look around our corner: it is a hopeless curiosity to want to know what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there *might* be» (F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001, p. 239).

3 T. Nagel, What Is It like to Be a Bat?, in «The Philosophical Review», 83 (Oct., 1974), no. 4, p. 439.

4 Ibi, p. 440. Philosophers have often referred to blindness in order to address epistemological problems. A well-known example of this is Locke's discussion of Molyneux's problem in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (bk. II, ch. ix, §8), later debated by other philosophers.

Werner Herzog's 1971 documentary film *Land of Silence and Darkness* (German: *Land des Schweigens und der Dunkelheit*) addresses precisely this philosophical problem by focusing on the way in which deaf and blind people experience life and communicate with each other and with sighted people. In particular, Herzog follows Fini Straubinger, who, having lost her sight and hearing as a teen due to a terrible fall, devotes her life to reaching out and helping other blind and deaf people. Although this film explores fundamental themes of Herzog's cinema, such as human perception, communication (or failure to communicate), language, solitude, and social isolation, it has received relatively little critical attention. Drawing on the few previous studies dedicated to *Land of Silence and Darkness*, my aim is to show how this film engages with the following question: to what extent is it possible for a sighted person to imagine what it is like to be in the land of silence and darkness? In order to answer this question, I will consider the way in which both Herzog and Fini Straubinger represent the condition of the deaf and blind. To this end, I will pay special attention to Straubinger's metaphorical language, on the one hand, and to Herzog's use of filmic images and sounds, on the other. With regard to the former aspect, it should be noted that little to no attention has been paid in previous studies to the original German language in the film, the richness of which is distorted in the English subtitles. In a film in which language is a main theme, it is of fundamental importance to pay careful attention to the language used in it – be it spoken, signed or filmic.

Before turning to the analysis of *Land of Silence and Darkness*, however, it is necessary to consider an obvious problem originating from the contrast between the nature of the filmic medium and the nature of the experience of the deaf and blind. As Randall Halle puts it: «how do you use the audio-visual medium to convey experience that is exactly outside the audio-visual?»[5]. One could in fact claim that this problem

5 R. Halle, *Perceiving the Other in the Land of Silence and Darkness*, in B. Prager (ed.), *A Companion to Werner Herzog*, Blackwell, Oxford 2012, p. 495. The same question is posed by Emmanuel Carrère in slightly different terms: «How can you shoot a film (which is audio-visual by definition or in any case by necessity) on characters who have been deprived of their sight and hearing without remaining a stranger to them [sans rester purement extérieur]?» (E. Carrère, *Werner Herzog*, Edilig, Paris 1982, p. 25; my translation).

does not arise given that, as Getrud Kock argues, Herzog is not interested in translating the empirical-sensory condition of the deaf and blind into filmic images and sounds[6]. I will consider whether this is really the case in sections 4 and 5 below. At this stage, I would instead like to bring attention to a fundamental distinction. Even if Herzog is not interested in translating the empirical-sensory condition of the deaf and blind into filmic images and sounds, this does not *ipso facto* mean or imply that he does not make any attempt to explore or convey certain aspects of their experience – that is, of what it is like to be in the land of silence and darkness. On the contrary, what I want to suggest here is that not only is this precisely Herzog's intention, but in trying to do so he faces a central paradox that emerges in all attempts to represent that which, for different reasons, cannot be represented.

1. Representing the Unrepresentable: A Paradox

There is little doubt that the unrepresentable lies at the heart of the history of Western art and aesthetics. Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam* is perhaps the most famous example of pictorial representation of the unrepresentable *par excellence*: God the Father, who according to the Pauline tradition can only be known *per speculum et in aenigmate* ("through a mirror and in enigma" or, to use the English translation of Bergman's 1961 masterpiece, "through a glass darkly"; 1 Co 13:12). Also well known is Kant's depiction of the sublime as formless, and therefore as unrepresentable. As Kant puts it in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: «what is properly sublime cannot be contained in any sensible form, but concerns only ideas of reason, which, though no presentation

6 G. Koch, *Blindness as Insight: Visions of the Unseen in Land of Silence and Darkness*, in T. Corrigan (ed.), *The Films of Werner Herzog. Between Mirage and History*, Methuen, London and New York 1986, p. 77. According to Koch, Herzog is rather interested in re-sacralising the aesthetic sphere by returning to a neo-Benjaminian para-sacred aura. Herzog's primary concern is not «to give sensual expression to the inner world but to realize the elevation to the "spiritual"» (p. 78). Accordingly, «all manifestations of sensual perception end in the sphere of transfiguration into the spiritual» (*ibid*.).

adequate to them is possible, are provoked and called to mind precisely by this inadequacy [*Unangemessenheit*], which does allow of sensible presentation»[7]. Attempts to represent the unrepresentable are also typical of the seventh art, especially but not exclusively of what Paul Schrader has defined as *transcendental art*, «art which expresses the Transcendent in the human mirror»[8].

Since the Second World War, the unrepresentable has been increasingly associated with the Shoah. In this case, the gulf between what is to be represented and its representation is considered unbridgeable not for metaphysical reasons, as in the case of God the Father, but rather for moral and/or epistemological reasons. This association has become so common and so frequent that it is now possible to call it a *trope* – together with that of the unspeakable, the unthinkable, and the unimaginable[9]. In this context, Adorno's claim that «to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric» is often quoted, although frequently decontextualized[10]. Claude Lanzmann is also invoked as an authority. In an article published in *Le Monde* in 2005, Lanzmann explained that in the eleven years that it took him to complete his documentary film *Shoah* (1985), he was unable to even decide on a title for his work. There was no possible name for what could not be named (*l'innomable*)[11].

The alleged (moral and/or epistemological) impossibility of representing the Shoah has been called into question in the last twenty years in particular by authors such as Giorgio Agamben, Jean-Luc Nancy,

7 I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002, p. 129.

8 P. Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film. Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer*, University of California Press, Oakland 2018, p. 38.

9 E. Alloa, The Most Sublime of All Laws: The Strange Resurgence of a Kantian Motif in Contemporary Image Politics, in «Critical Inquiry», 41 (Winter, 2015), no. 2, pp. 368-369.

10 T. W. Adorno, *Cultural Criticism and Society*, in Id., *Prisms*, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 1983, p. 34. Less well known is Adorno's partial revision in his late work *Negative Dialectics*: «Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream; hence it may have been wrong to say that after Auschwitz you could no longer write poems» (T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, Routledge, London and New York 1973, p. 362).

11 C. Lanzmann, Ce mot de "Shoah", in «Le Monde», February 25, 2005.

Jacques Rancière, and Georges Didi-Huberman, among others[12]. While this is not the place to discuss these views, I will nonetheless highlight interesting aspects of the debate on the unrepresentable character of the Shoah that are relevant to my analysis of Herzog's *Land of Silence and Darkness*.

In trying to narrate their experience, survivors of the camps were caught in a paradox: on the one hand, they felt that what they had experienced exceeded the bounds of what could be put into words; on the other hand, they felt a compelling need («an immediate and violent compulsion», as Primo Levi puts it[13]) to share their experience with those who had not experienced the horrors of the camps. We find a clear expression of this paradox in the following lines, written by Robert Antelme in 1947:

> Two years ago, during the first days after our return, I think we were all prey to a genuine delirium. We wanted at last to speak, to be heard. We were told that by itself our physical appearance was eloquent enough; but we had only just returned, with us we brought back our memory of our experience, an experience that was still very much alive, and we felt a frantic desire to describe it such as it had been. As of those first days, however, we saw that it was impossible to bridge the gap we discovered opening up between the words at our disposal and that experience which, in the case of most of us, was still going forward within our bodies[14].

As this passage makes clear, the problem for Antelme is that of *inadequacy* (that is, the impossibility of providing a linguistically

12 See G. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz. The Witness and the Archive*, Zone Books, New York 1999; J.-L. Nancy, La répresentation interdite, in «Le Genre humain», 36 (2001), no. 1, pp. 13-39; J. Rancière, S'il y a de l'irreprésentable, in «Le Genre humain», 36 (2001), no. 1, pp. 81-102; G. Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All. Four Photographs from Auschwitz*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 2008.

13 Preface to the Italian edition of Levi's *If This Is a Man*. See P. Levi, *Se questo è un uomo&La tregua*, Einaudi, Turin 1989, p. 9.

14 R. Antelme, *The Human Race*, The Marlboro Press/Northwestern, Evanston (IL) 1992, p. 3. I owe this quote to Alloa's paper, mentioned above (see footnote 9).

adequate representation of the experience). In this sense, he is in good company, for the inadequate character of representation is stressed, in different contexts, not only by Lanzmann but also by Kant, Nietzsche and Nagel. This should not be surprising. Indeed, at the root of the moral prohibition against representing the Shoah lies a problem that is epistemological in nature, namely the unbridgeability of the gap between the (extreme) experience of the camps and the (limited) means available for representing it. In this sense, any attempt to bridge this gap runs the risk of betrayal, reduction, distortion, and exemplification – in a word, *falsification*.

Central to the debate on the impossibility of representing the Shoah is the contention that those who have not gone through this extreme experience do not have access to it of any kind. Although this can be said *a fortiori* of the experience of the Shoah (because of the radical nature of its evil and suffering), the same can be affirmed of any extreme experience, as is clearly pointed out in Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima, mon amour*, in which, in response to Emmannuelle Riva, who maintains that she has seen everything in Hiroshima, Eiji Okada famously replies: «Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima [you saw nothing in Hiroshima]».

Despite the moral and epistemological considerations that speak against the possibility of representing the Shoah, however, writers, poets, artists, and filmmakers have always sought to represent and somehow convey the experience of the horror of the camps. Indeed, if on the one hand there is a moral prohibition against representation, on the other hand there is an equally, if not even stronger moral imperative commanding the preservation of memory from silence, oblivion and forgetfulness. It is precisely to this moral imperative that Didi-Huberman's famous "in spite of all"[15] (French: *malgré tout*) alludes: in spite of Auschwitz, in spite of our inadequate understanding of it, in spite of the radical character of the experience of the Shoah, in spite of the gap between this experience and its representation, and in spite of the limits of human language. Reformulating the expression coined by Didi-Huberman, we could thus say: representations in spite of all.

15 See footnote 12.

2. Metaphors in Spite of All

Despite the radical differences between their experiences, survivors of the camps and the deaf and blind seem to have one thing in common: as much as they try to convey their experience, it is doomed to remain uncommunicable. In other words, the representation of their experience cannot but be *inadequate*. This clearly emerges from a passage in Helen Keller's *The Story of My Life*.[16] Asked why she is impressed by the wonders and beauties of Niagara Falls (because of her condition, she can neither see the cascading water nor hear its roar), Keller replies that although the waterfall means everything to her, she is unable to properly put into words why this is so: «I cannot fathom or define their meaning any more than I can fathom or define love or religion or goodness»[17]. This passage clearly testifies to Keller's inability to give adequate linguistic expression to her inner states and thoughts. Because of this inability, her experience seems to be irremediably inaccessible to us.

As in the case of survivors of the Shoah, however, this inadequacy does not lead to a refusal to attempt representation. On the contrary, in spite of the awareness of these difficulties, Helen Keller repeatedly attempts to convey her experience to the reader through metaphorical language. Particularly significant is her description of her condition before she learned tactile signing:

> Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding-line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship

16 Helen Keller was born on June 27, 1880, in Tuscumbia, Alabama. At nineteen months old, she contracted an acute illness that left her deaf and blind. Anne Sullivan tutored her, and Keller eventually graduated from Radcliffe College. She was dedicated to helping the blind and the disabled and wrote several books, among which is *The Story of My Life*, her autobiography, which was later adapted by Arthur Penn as *The Miracle Worker* (1962).

17 H. Keller, *The Story of My Life*, Bantam, New York 2005, p. 52.

> before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding-line, and had no way of knowing how near the harbour was.[18]

Given the impossibility of providing an adequate picture of her empirical-sensory condition, Helen Keller opts for a metaphorical and poetic representation, using a scenario (a ship at sea in a dense fog) with which the reader is likely to be familiar, or at least able to easily understand and conceive.

The pressing need to share one's experience, that is, to communicate what it is like to be in the land of silence and darkness, leads Helen Keller to search for adequate metaphors for her condition. Equally metaphorical is Fini Straubinger's depiction of the fate[19] of those who are deaf and blind in the following central scene of Herzog's film:

> If I was a divinely gifted painter, I would depict the fate of deaf-blindness in the following way: Blindness as a dark stream, which flows melodically, slowly but steady, towards a slope. On the left and right there are beautiful trees with flowers and lovely singing birds. The other stream coming from the opposite direction would have to be totally clear and transparent [*durchsichtig*]. Also this stream would have to flow slowly, but silently downwards. And then at the bottom would be a dark and deep lake. At first there would be rocks on both sides where the two streams flow into the lake, on which the water painfully hits and foams and whirls, after which slowly and cautiously flows together into this dark basin. And this water would be totally still,

18 Ibi, p. 14.

19 Translated in the English subtitles as "condition", the German word *Schicksal* actually means fate, destiny, lot. This word is repeatedly used by Fini Straubinger to describe her companions-in-fate. Else Fehrer is described as a *Schicksalsgefährtin* (a companion-in-fate; *Gefährte* literally indicates the one who takes a journey with another person) and *Schicksalsschwester* (a sister-in-fate), whereas Joseph Rittermeier is referred to as a *Schicksalskamarad* (comrade-in-fate). The use of the word *Schicksal* has a strong existential, almost metaphysical connotation.

> and would have to drizzle from time to time: this would have to represent [*darstellen*] the power of the soul of deaf-blindness.[20]

Like Helen Keller, Fini Straubinger is well aware of the limitations of her *Darstellung* (representation) of deaf-blindness. At the end of her vision, she acknowledges that there is a gap between the experience of deaf-blindness and its linguistic depiction: «I cannot represent it differently», she says, «It is inside, but one does not quite manage to put it into words»[21]. Exactly like Helen Keller, however, Fini Straubinger does not abandon the aim of conveying her experience through metaphorical language. In both cases, the logic of Nietzsche's *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense* is reversed. While for the young Nietzsche the adequate expression of an object in the subject is made impossible by the metaphorical and poetic character of human language[22], for Helen Keller and Fini Straubinger metaphorical and poetic language is precisely what makes possible, if not an adequate expression of their experience (something that is deemed impossible), then a symbolic representation of their inner thoughts and feelings that can be communicated to and understood by the addressee. It is not difficult to see how this attempt to communicate trough poetic and metaphorical language appealed to Herzog, who similarly used the filmic medium to convey what he later defined in his *Minnesota Declaration* as a «poetic, ecstatic truth»[23].

20 I here follow André Fischer's translation, which is much more faithful to the original German than that of the film's English subtitles. See A. Fischer, Deep Truth and the Mythic Veil: Werner Herzog's New Mythology in *Land of Silence and Darkness*, in «Film-Philosophy», 22 (2018), no. 1, pp. 53-54.

21 Ibi, p. 55 (slightly modified translation).

22 In this posthumous writing, Nietzsche famously defines truth as «a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations which have been subjected to poetic and rhetorical intensification, translation, and decoration» (F. Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*, p. 146).

23 W. Herzog, *The Minnesota Declaration. Truth and Fact in Documentary Cinema*, in P. Cronin, *Werner Herzog – A Guide for the Perplexed. Conversations with Paul Cronin*, Faber and Faber, London 2014, p. 476. For a detailed analysis of the relation between representation and metaphor, see E. Cornell Way,

3. Communication vs Isolation

In order to convey her experience, Fini Straubinger makes use of both metaphorical, poetic and non-metaphorical, descriptive language. Having described how she became deaf and blind and how this condition led her to spend nearly 30 years in bed, Straubinger makes the following clarification:

> People think that deafness means complete silence. Oh, no! That's wrong. It's a constant noise in one's head, from the faintest humming, perhaps like the noise of sand trickling, to cracking sounds, to a steady droning, which is the worst. You never know which direction you should turn your head. It's a great agony for us. […] It's the same thing for blindness. It's never complete darkness. You often see rather peculiar tones. Black, grey, white, blue, green, yellow. It depends.[24]

As has already been pointed out by previous studies, the designation "land of silence and darkness" (used by Fini Straubinger on the occasion of her fifty-sixth birthday party) does not characterize the empirical-sensory condition of the deaf and blind, but rather symbolically alludes to the condition of social isolation caused not so much by their disability as by the inability of the society they live in to address and cope with the problems that derive from their condition[25]. It is revealing that Fini Straubinger uses the metaphor to refer not to her deaf and blind companions-in-fate, but rather to Mrs Meier, who is not completely blind. Straubinger urges

Knowledge Representation and Metaphor, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht 1991. On the relation between cinematic metaphor, experience and affectivity, see C. Müller, H. Kappelhoff, *Cinematic Metaphor. Experience – Affectivity - Temporality*, de Gruyter, Berlin/Boston 2018.

24 My translation.

25 G. Koch, *Blindness as Insight: Visions of the Unseen in Land of Silence and Darkness*, p. 77. See also R. Halle, *Perceiving the Other in the Land of Silence and Darkness*, p. 499: «It is not being born deaf and blind that generates silence and darkness, rather it is isolation and this is a repeated lesson of the film».

Mr Forster, Mrs Meier's companion, to always translate what is being said, adding: «This group as well must be taken care of [*betreut*], so they are not suddenly pushed into the land of silence and darkness [*in das Land des Schweigens und der Dunkelheit hineingestoßen werden*]»[26]. This sentence is particularly significant for various reasons. By applying the metaphor of the land of silence and darkness to a different group than her own, Straubinger seems to imply that this fate is not limited to the deaf and blind but can also be shared by other outsiders – as *Handicapped Future*, Herzog's film about physically disabled children in Munich, clearly shows[27]. Furthermore, the use of the passive form of the verb *hineinstoßen* (to push into) indicates that the land of silence and darkness is not a permanent condition (that derive from one's particular handicap), but rather a temporary one into which one can be pushed if denied proper *Betreuung*, that is, care and assistance[28].

If one can be pushed into the land of silence and darkness, however, one can also be helped to find a way out of it. This is precisely why Straubinger spends her adult life seeking to establish contact with other deaf and blind people and to communicate with them, constantly searching for their hands. Maintaining hand contact means proximity and solidarity; breaking hand contact means distance, margination and isolation: «When you let go of my hand it is as if we were a thousand miles apart», reads one of the film's intertitles. Randall Halle rightly points out that «in *Land* there is an inversion of the existentialist dictum

26 My translation.

27 *Handicapped Future* (*Behinderte Zukunft*, 1971) is a kind of predecessor to *Land of Silence and Darkness*. Despite their several differences, both films pay attention to the feelings of isolation and solitude experienced by disabled people. A scene in *Handicapped Future* features a teacher showing how these feelings emerge in some of the children's drawings, in which prison is a recurring motif. As Herzog points out, at the time, the feeling of being isolated from society was common to many disabled people (see P. Cronin, *Werner Herzog – A Guide for the Perplexed. Conversations with Paul Cronin*, p. 88).

28 This is precisely what happens to Fini Straubinger. Her seclusion from society begins when her teacher tells her to go home because she cannot see well enough. It then continues when people promise to visit her but do not come, or when they come and do not interact with her. When she tries to interact with them, her mother tells her to be quiet and says that she will tell her later, thus preventing her daughter from accessing life, «from grasping something of life [*etwas vom Leben erfassen*]», as Straubinger herself puts it (my translation).

that hell is other people. Certainly other people can make life hellish, however, it is only through other people that we can feel ourselves to be human, that we can realize our humanity»[29].

Isolation and loneliness can be broken through communication and language: this is the main lesson that Herzog's *Land of Silence and Darkness* teaches us. Noël Carroll's claim that in Herzog language «is associated with practical and instrumental reason, with science and bureaucracy, with religion and civil society»[30] thus seems to overlook the fundamental role that language plays in fighting social margination and seclusion, a role that Herzog himself emphasizes[31]. This holds both for *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974) and *Land of Silence and Darkness*, the two films on which Carroll's analysis of Herzog's view of language mainly focuses. In the first case, it is not language *in its entirety* that is being refused («the theme of the film is unmistakable – language is death», Carroll claims[32]), but rather a *specific kind* of language: the mendacious and pretentious language of the circus director, the theological language of the pastors, the logical and scholastic language of the professor, the artificial and pompous language of Lord Stanhope, and the bureaucratic and technical language of the scribe. On the other hand, however, language is also what allows Kaspar to break out of his condition of solitude and isolation, to express his inner feelings and thoughts, to describe his dreams, to write his autobiography, and even to pass judgment on his existence («Well, it seems to me that my coming into this world was a terribly hard fall!», Kaspar confesses to Daumer).

29 R. Halle, *Perceiving the Other in the Land of Silence and Darkness*, p. 507.

30 N. Carroll, *Herzog, Presence, and Paradox*, in Id., *Interpreting the Moving Image*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 288.

31 A similar reading is also defended by Richard Eldridge, according to whom «Herzog equates communication with convention, bureaucracy, routine, and admistered order, against which he poses subjectivity as a locus of unexpressed powers, owing to handicap, victimization, madness, or narcissism» (R. Eldridge, *Werner Herzog. Filmmaker and Philosopher*, Bloomsbury, London 2019, p. 113). Although Eldridge is certainly right to point out that in Herzog communication is often equated with convention, bureaucracy, routine, and admistered order, like Carroll he seems to overlook the fact that communication is also what can allow for the expression of one's subjectivity, especially the subjectivity of marginalized members of society.

32 N. Carroll, *Herzog, Presence, and Paradox*, p. 289.

In *Land of Silence and Darkness*, Carroll maintains, language is viewed in a better light, as a cohesive force in the deaf-blind community and as a means of communication. Nevertheless, one cannot avoid feeling «an irrepressible sense of alienation from the language of the deaf-blind»[33] and recognizing the disparity and otherness of their phenomenological experience of the world. In other words, Carroll concludes, «language remains serviceable between us and the deaf-blind, but when it comes to the thoughts and feelings, or better, the associations attending such discourse, we sense a radical problem of translation»[34]. With that said, it is also possible to interpret the film as revealing precisely the opposite: in spite of the irreducible phenomenological difference between our experience of life and that of the deaf and blind, and notwithstanding the inevitable limitations of attempts to represent the condition of deaf-blindness adequately, language is what makes it possible to break down the barriers that confine the deaf and blind to the land of silence and darkness. Or, to put it differently: without language (metaphorical or non-metaphorical, linguistic or non-linguistic), the limited access we have to the otherness of the deaf and blind would be permanently shut.

This is not to deny the several difficulties that are inherent in attempts to communicate with the deaf and blind, especially with those who have been deaf and blind from birth. As the teacher of Harald and Michael (two young boys born deaf and blind) explains, it is extremely difficult (although not impossible) to teach them abstract concepts. This is done by way of practical examples (*kleine Geschichte*). In order to explain the moral concept of "good", for instance, the teacher says: «Harald gets up, Harald learns, Harald helps Sabine, Harald is good», whereas in order to explain the opposite concept, he says «Harald hits Sabine, Harald pulls Sabine, Harald takes something away from Sabine, Harald is bad [*böse*]». It is admittedly difficult, if not impossible, to know what kind of moral concepts of good and bad Harald and Michael will end up forming through these examples. Still, it is thanks to the communication that the teacher has established with them that Harald and Michael may some day learn such complex and abstract concepts as moral concepts.

33 Ibi, p. 291.

34 Ibi, p. 292.

4. Breaking Barriers

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, according to Getrud Kock, Herzog is not interested in translating the empirical-sensory condition of the deaf and blind into filmic images and sounds. His primary concern is rather elevation to and transfiguration into the spiritual[35]. Carroll places a similar emphasis on the «indescribability and inexpressibility of the experience of the deaf-blind»[36]. Likewise, André Fischer argues that «with the exception of the first frame, Herzog is not trying to find direct visual expressions for the deaf-blind experience and shows instead the deaf-blind as deprived of their senses and relying on touching»[37]. What these interpretations have in common is that they read Herzog's *Land of Silence and Darkness* as not being *primarily* concerned with the representation of the condition of the deaf and blind. The representation of this condition instead serves as an opportunity for Herzog to realize the elevation to the spiritual (Koch), to convey an experience of presence (Carroll), or to create new primal and mythic imagery (Fischer). In order to show that Herzog is not *primarily* interested in representing the fate of the deaf and blind, these authors place emphasis – in different ways and to different extents – on the radical difference between our experience of the world and that of the deaf and blind. This latter experience is so different from our own, so indescribable and inexpressible, as Carroll puts it, that Herzog does not attempt to mediate or convey it (because of the abovementioned «radical problem of translation»[38]). Although I do not deny that a concern for the spiritual and the metaphysical may *also* underlie *Land of Silence and Darkness* (as is common in Herzog's films), in the last part of this paper I would like to show that the representation of the fate of the deaf and blind is not a secondary issue for Herzog. On the contrary, in spite of his awareness of the radical difference between

35 G. Koch, *Blindness as Insight: Visions of the Unseen in Land of Silence and Darkness*, pp. 77-78.

36 N. Carroll, *Herzog, Presence, and Paradox*, p. 292.

37 A. Fischer, Deep Truth and the Mythic Veil: Werner Herzog's New Mythology in *Land of Silence and Darkness*, p. 52.

38 N. Carroll, *Herzog, Presence, and Paradox*, p. 292.

their and *our* experience of the world, Herzog nonetheless attempts, through the cinematographic medium, to reduce this gap and to convey to the viewer particular aspects of how the deaf and blind experience, understand and relate to reality.

Land of Silence and Darkness begins with the repeated juxtaposition of a vision narrated by Straubinger (we hear her voice against a black screen) and the subsequent translation of her words into images. The four sequences – black screen+voice over (1), image (2), black screen+voice over (3), image (4) – are connected by music, Boccherini's *Cello Concerto No.2*[39]. Straubinger's first vision (supposedly a memory from when she could still see) is of a path that leads across a continuous field with clouds floating quickly by in the sky. As mentioned above, this vision is related against a black screen, which not only places the viewer, although only momentarily, in a position of visual impairment (like that of the protagonists of the film), but also prepares the audience for a "different" sensorial experience, in which vision goes along with hearing and, as will be shown, with touch[40]. The vision is followed by its visual transposition, an image in sepia tones, the use of which may have a symbolic function, representing the fading of a distant memory or the gap between the narrated memory and its filmic representation. As Randal Halle points out, this image only partially restores the viewer to a normal state of vision, for the representation is a stylization, and the golden brown sepiated tones of the image are unusual[41]. The quality of the film is poor, and visual elements such as grain and scratches give a peculiar texture to the image, thus recalling a condition of visual impairment.

After this image, the viewer is again plunged into darkness, and Straubinger's voice relates another memory. When she was a child and could still see and hear, she watched a ski-jumping competition. This, she says, and especially how the ski jumpers floated in the air, is a recurrent memory («*dieses Bild kommt mir immer wieder in den Sinn*», in the peculiar German phrasing). She paid special attention to their faces,

39 See A. Fischer, Deep Truth and the Mythic Veil: Werner Herzog's New Mythology in *Land of Silence and Darkness*, p. 51.

40 It is not an irrelevant detail that the viewer becomes acquainted with the main protagonist of the film first by hearing her, and only after by seeing her.

41 R. Halle, *Perceiving the Other in the Land of Silence and Darkness*, p. 496.

Straubinger explains, and concludes by hoping that the viewer («*Sie*») will also have the chance to see it some day. In so doing, she inverts her relation to the sighted viewer; it is the latter who lacks the particular *Erlebnis* (that is, the direct experience) of ski jumping. Right from the beginning, a philosophical point is thus made: while the deaf and blind can only have mediated access to the world of sighted people, the opposite is also true – both lack unmediated experience of the other's otherness.

The viewer can only have a mediated experience of ski jumping, that is, through its representation on the screen. This representation consists in a filmic image, this time in full colour, of a memory-image (Straubinger's *Bild*, German for image). We are thus presented with montage of ski jumpers floating in the air, which directly calls to mind Herzog's later documentary film *The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner* (1973). In reality, although the viewer is led to believe that the filmic image is a translation of a memory-image, the truth is that Straubinger never saw the ski jumpers, and the whole sequence is a pure invention. It was Herzog who wrote the lines that Straubinger speaks[42], in full accordance with his conviction that «the boundary between fiction and "documentary" simply does not exist»[43] and that a deeper truth can be reached through fabrication, imagination, and stylization[44].

Koch interprets the image of the ski jumpers as a means of transportation into the spiritual[45]. Similarly, Fischer claims that Straubinger's vision «connects her to the realm of the supersensible or metaphysical, which remains invisible to us»[46]. While it is certainly true that this image presents the viewer with a moment of intensified truth, Herzog actually chose to add it to his film because he felt «that the solitude and ecstasy of the ski-jumpers as they flew through the

42 See P. Cronin (ed.), *Herzog on Herzog*, Faber and Faber, London 2002, pp. 240-241.

43 Ibi, p. 240.

44 See W. Herzog, *The Minnesota Declaration. Truth and Fact in Documentary Cinema*, p. 476.

45 G. Koch, *Blindness as Insight: Visions of the Unseen in Land of Silence and Darkness*, p. 78.

46 A. Fischer, Deep Truth and the Mythic Veil: Werner Herzog's New Mythology in *Land of Silence and Darkness*, p. 52.

air was a great image to represent Fini's own inner state of mind and solitude»[47]. Likewise, the line quoted at the end of the film and attributed to Straubinger («If a world war were to break out now, I would not even notice») is something that Herzog wrote in order to encapsulate «how someone like her might experience the world»[48]. In both cases, the emphasis is thus not so much on the spiritual or metaphysical dimension, but rather on the possibility of conveying to the viewer particular aspects of the deaf-blind person's inner state of mind and experience of reality.

The four sequences described above are followed by an intertitle, which reads: «It is such a shock [*Erschrecken*] when somebody touches me. Years go by in waiting». The intertitle, an oxymoron of sorts, summarizes the existential condition of the deaf and blind, who fear unexpected contact with the other on the one hand, while on the other hand, yearning for this contact, which for them means the possibility of communication and a break from isolation. The emphasis on touch (the German verb used in the intertitle is *berühren*) introduces the following scene, in which Straubinger and her friend Julie relate their personal impressions of a visit to the zoo. The fact that the scene opens with a close-up of Straubinger's and her translator's hands (one of the several close-up shots of hands in the film) leaves no doubt about the central importance of hands in *Land of Silence and Darkness*. Indeed, it is through hands that the deaf and blind communicate with each other and with sighted people (through tactile fingerspelling, the so-called Lorm alphabet) and primarily experience the world. Thus, Straubinger's account of her experience of the zoo is based on tactile sensations: the skin of the roebuck was wonderful; the hares were jumping and sitting, which one could feel (*abtasten*); the beaks of the birds and the feathers of the pheasant were long. The focus is therefore shifted from vision (the sense we tend to use most often in zoos) to touch.

That Herzog gives special attention to the way in which the deaf and blind have access to and experience the world is also shown in the next scene. This begins with Julie and Straubinger touching the plane,

47 P. Cronin (ed.), *Herzog on Herzog*, p. 241.

48 Ibi, p. 240.

on which they will soon take their first flight. When Straubinger's arm stretches to the rudder, the music, Bach's *Air on the G String*, sets in, and the next shot is taken from inside the plane, which is already high in the sky, the wing in the foreground and the snow-covered Alps in the background. According to Koch, this sequence clearly illustrates Herzog's interest not in mediating the sensual experience of the deaf and blind, but rather in breaking away from the earthly dimension into the spiritual: «When the camera sets free the gaze that blind are debarred from, when the soundtrack switches over to music, then the viewer is carried off to an unreal realm, in which he hears and sees what the individuals on the screen cannot hear and see»[49]. Although Koch is right to underscore the emphasis that Herzog puts on the ecstatic joy on Straubinger's and Julie's faces, her analysis seems to overlook the fact that most of the two-minute sequence focuses on the women's hands and on the way they use them to communicate with each other. The viewer is thus not carried off to a metaphysical realm but remains inside the plane, watching how Straubinger and Julie experience their first flight.

Herzog uses exactly the same music later in the film when Harald, one of the boys born deaf and blind, is asked by his teacher to walk alone through the swimming pool and to plunge his face into the water (Herzog explains that Harald was deathly afraid of water and that it took a year for him to trust his instructor enough to step into the pool). This suggests that in both cases, Herzog wants to emphasize a similar aspect, namely the opening of the human soul to a new experience, be it a first flight or the overcoming of a mortal fear of water[50]. The act

49 G. Koch, *Blindness as Insight: Visions of the Unseen in Land of Silence and Darkness*, p. 79.

50 According to Koch, «the swimming pool scenes disagreeably call to mind those unfortunate German traditions of physical training, Prussian toughness, tests of courage and initiation unto death» (G. Koch, *Blindness as Insight: Visions of the Unseen in Land of Silence and Darkness*, p. 82). The description of the scenes she gives is oriented toward lending support to her thesis: the swimming pool is «gloomy», the teacher wears «Spartan black bathing trunks», the ideals behind the «program» are «macabre», and, above all, the water is «cold». As Halle points out, however, water therapy sessions are usually conducted in warm water, since «the goal generally is to create a safe environment for the development of neglected motor and cognitive skills and not cold shower "hardening" of the temperament» (R. Halle, *Perceiving the Other in the Land of Silence and Darkness*, pp. 502-503).

of opening oneself to a new experience is itself a universal experience shared by every human being, and it is precisely for this reason that the flight sequence (and that of the swimming pool) is one of inclusion, not exclusion, as Koch argues.

5. Haptic Images

Herzog's attempt to explore and convey the experience of the deaf and blind is most patent in the extreme attention he gives to hands throughout the film (a sequence is even dedicated to the explanation of the tactile alphabet). Hands are so important within the economy of the film that *Land of Silence and Darkness* can be placed alongside Bresson's *Pickpocket* when it comes to the prominence of touch in the film, as Deleuze points out in *Cinema 2*[51]. At the film's premiere at the Mannheim Film Festival, Herzog himself referred to it as «a monograph on the hands of a deaf-blind woman»[52]. A brief comparison with a sequence from *Handicapped Future* can help to make clear how Herzog's attitude towards the tactile is much more "engaged" in *Land of Silence and Darkness*. This sequence features an interview with Monika's mother. In the interview, Monika, a little girl with no arms, brushes her doll's hair with a comb held between her toes. The sequence is particularly interesting because it shows how Monika relates to the world with her feet (a following sequence shows her drawing a picture with her foot). During the whole sequence, which lasts about two and a half minutes, the camera closes up on the doll and Monika's feet for only a few seconds, leaving them outside the frame for thirty seconds.

Land of Silence and Darkness gives a completely different form of attention and importance to hands, which are often placed by the camera operator, Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein, in the centre of the frame or in the fore

51 G. Deleuze, *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1989, pp. 12-13. Deleuze refers to Carrère's study, mentioned above. According to Carrère, Herzog attempted to approach tactile sensations by depicting characters touching and caressing objects so intensely and intimately that we are not far from experiencing the sensations they feel (E. Carrère, *Werner Herzog*, p. 25).

52 See E. Ames, *Ferocious Reality. Documentary According to Werner Herzog*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2012, p. 21.

with close-up shots. The frequent act of zooming in on hands (among other subjects) becomes an essential way to approach and draw near to the other's alterity. Eric Ames rightly points out that «acts of translation are absolutely central to the film»[53]. As already mentioned, as long as (tactile) communication is maintained, the deaf and blind are not pushed into the land of silence and darkness. This is why Fini Straubinger is constantly shown looking for the hands of her sighted companions and communicating with her companions-in-fate. Conversely, her sighted companions continually make an effort to translate what they see or hear through the tactile alphabet, as occurs, for instance, in the case of the concert that follows the president's speech, when Straubinger's companion *translates* the music for her (its rhythm, the variations in its intensity). The concert sequence is a clear example of the emphasis that Herzog and his camera operator place on hands: the camera passes from the musicians (1), to Straubinger's and her companion's hands (2), and then back to the musicians (3) without any cuts. The shot in the middle (2) is held for thirteen seconds, and one is given the impression that the whole sequence is included in the film precisely because of the importance of this peculiar act of translation.

Acts of translation are not limited to the characters in the film. As Ames points out, Straubinger's on-screen presence is «a constant reminder of the work of translation that the film itself is doing»[54]. The most evident example of this can be found in the sequence depicting a visit to the botanical gardens, during which the deaf and blind are encouraged to touch the plants. At the end of the sequence, Schmidt-Reitwein wanders freely with the camera through the dark green ferns and palm leaves, which brush up against the lens. The viewer is made to feel disorientated and completely immersed in the lush vegetation; indeed the mimetic movement of the camera is so powerful and realistic that the viewer is tempted to stretch out his or her arms to brush the branches aside. This also holds for other scenes in which the camera closely follows hands that touch, explore, communicate, and caress – above all in the closing sequence, when Herr Fleischmann gently touches,

53 Ibi, p. 27.

54 Ibi, p. 28.

almost embraces, the branches of a tree. As Ames puts it: «The entire film works to elicit bodily responses to the image that implicate the viewer so that the boundary between the film and the viewer begins to collapse»[55].

What Deleuze writes with reference to *Pickpocket*, namely that the eye's optical function is matched by a haptic one[56], can be thus also said of *Land of Silence and Darkness*. In Herzog's film, the viewer's eye is transformed into an imaginary hand, and vision becomes "a palpation with the look", to use Merleau-Ponty's words[57]. The images on the screen invite us to touch and feel what Straubinger and her companions and acquaintances touch and feel. This haptic function of the eye is widely recognized by scholars, who variously speak of «an attempt to approach tactile sensations»[58], «seeing the haptic»[59], «the haptic quality of the images»[60], «touching images»[61], «a type of bodily relationship to the image that can be best described as "haptic"»[62], «connective seeing»[63], and so on. The tactile or haptic character of the images, of which *Land of Silence and Darkness* is composed has fundamental relevance for the question of the possibility of sharing in the experience of deaf-blindness. Indeed, not only is touch the sense through which the deaf and blind primarily experience the world, but, as Ames rightly points out, it also remains «a shared sense and a potential means of communicating» between sighted persons and the deaf and blind[64]. This does not mean that the sense of touch gives us access to the world of the deaf and blind, but rather (and more modestly) that thanks to this shared sense we can have

55 Ibi, p. 25.

56 G. Deleuze, *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*, p. 13.

57 M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1968, p. 134.

58 E. Carrère, *Werner Herzog*, p. 25

59 R. Halle, *Perceiving the Other in the Land of Silence and Darkness*, p. 498.

60 A. Fischer, Deep Truth and the Mythic Veil: Werner Herzog's New Mythology in *Land of Silence and Darkness*, p. 52.

61 E. Ames, *Ferocious Reality. Documentary According to Werner Herzog*, p. 20.

62 Ibi, p. 23

63 Ibi, p. 25.

64 Ibi, p. 25.

an idea of what it is like to primarily experience the world through it. It is in this sense that, as mentioned above, *Land of Silence and Darkness* fosters inclusion, not seclusion. Or as Ames puts it: «*Land of Silence and Darkness* becomes a site of encounter, indeed, a site of contact between disabled and nondisabled bodies»[65].

Conclusion

Herzog's *Land of Silence and Darkness* shows that it is impossible for a sighted person to *know* what it is like to be deaf and blind. The experience of deaf-blindness is so radically other that one would have to be a divinely gifted painter (*Gottbegnadeter Mahler*), as Straubinger puts it, to represent it. Either because the resources of language are inadequate or because the gap between the *Erlebnis* (the subjective experience) and its representation can never be bridged, the fate of the deaf and blind cannot be put into words – or at least Straubinger does not manage to do so. Even more desperate is the attempt to understand what those who are deaf and blind by birth, like Harald and Michael, feel and think (an attempt that becomes almost hopeless with the 22-year-old Vladimir Kokol, who, having never had any special training, sits on the floor blowing spit bubbles and hitting himself on the head with a stuffed soft ball). As their teacher explains, most of the time it is only possible to make conjectures (*Vermutungen*). The same holds for their understanding of abstract concepts: «What they actually understand as "ambition", "hope", or "happiness", will always be a mystery to us [*wird uns immer verschlossen bleiben*]», Herzog remarks in the film.

To be sure, one could question whether this «radical problem of translation», as Caroll puts it, arises only between deaf-blind, and able-bodied persons. Indeed, how can we be sure that our experience of the world (*qua* sighted persons) can be *adequately* conveyed to other sighted persons? As Wittgenstein puts it in *Remarks on Colour*: «When blind people speak, as they like to do, of blue sky and other specifically visual phenomena, the sighted person often says "Who knows what

65 Ibidem.

he imagines that to mean" --But why doesn't he say this about other sighted people?»[66]. In other words, how can I *know* that other people have the same «private experience» of the blue sky as mine? Is this, above all, verifiable[67]? With these questions, we return to the initial point of this paper, namely to modern and contemporary philosophy's radical awareness that human experience and perception of the world are profoundly subjective. The above analysis has hopefully shown that this radical awareness is not Herzog's end-point, but rather his starting point. As much as the experience of the deaf and blind remains radically different from ours, Herzog (and Fini Straubinger with him) does not give up on trying to convey certain aspects of it to the audience. In doing this, Herzog achieves a typical yet paradoxical aim of art, or at least of certain art works: the representation of what is, for different reasons, unrepresentable.

Land of Silence and Darkness is not a sceptical film about human communication, nor does it aim to convey a pessimistic picture of the fate of the deaf and blind. Admittedly, many of the deaf and blind people visited by Straubinger (Else Fehrer, Joseph Riedmeier, Vladimir Kokol, and Heinrich Fleischmann) seem to be irremediably excluded by human society and cut off from the world[68]. Furthermore, the last minutes of the film seem to put emphasis on the unavoidable solitude to which the deaf and blind are subject (in the last scene before the final intertitle, Straubinger is left alone under a tree, a sad adagio stressing her loneliness). As incommunicable and inaccessible to us as the experience of deaf-blindness may be, however, and as inadequate as its representation inadequate must remain, Herzog's film attempts to

66 L. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour*, Blackwell, Oxford 1977, p. 56.

67 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Blackwell, Oxford 1977, p. 95: «The essential thing about private experience is really not that each person possesses his own exemplar, but that nobody knows whether other people also have *this* or something else. The assumption would thus be possible– though unverifiable–that one section of mankind had one sensation of red and another section another».

68 In his film, Herzog gives much attention to deaf and blind people who are secluded from society. This attention can be read as an indictment of society (which is unable to take care of them) rather than a sign of Herzog's scepticism about the possibility of establishing a connection with them.

convey at least certain aspects of this experience. The gap between the experience of the world of the deaf and blind and our experiences is thus reduced not only through metaphorical and poetic language, but also, and above all, through the cinematographic medium: black screen + voice over, the visual transposition of Straubinger's vision, the peculiar tones of the image, stylization, the invention of experience, intertitles, zooming in and close-up shots of hands, a shift of focus from vision to touch, haptic visuality, etc. Reducing the gap means breaking barriers. At a time when physical and social barriers are on the increase, *Land of Silence and Darkness* remains, after almost fifty years, a hymn to the discovery of the other's otherness.

Cinema, the City, and Manoel de Oliveira's Logic of Sensation

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Film and Painting

Gilles Deleuze left an important theoretical legacy in the form of a conception of a cinema of the senses and his thoughts on the affective intersection between images and sounds, broadly understood as blocks of sensations and blocks of space-time.

The theme of the senses and the visual arts has had a strong impact on sensory documentary films on the works of renowned artists such as Alain Resnais's *Van Gogh* (1948) and *Le mystère Picasso/The Mystery of Picasso* (1956) by Henri-Georges Clouzot. These types of films are directly addressed to the problem of creating new aesthetic sensations, non-human affects and percepts (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994), in particular those related to films on painting and art works. From this perspective, a central question concerns how the filmmaker imagines the sensations of the painter and how the film expresses and supports those new sensations.

Within this line of inquiry, and before I explore Oliveira's film in more detail, I wish to briefly consider André Bazin's thoughts on film and painting, which are part of a longstanding debate on the quality and suitability of films on art in which film, with its automatic and unhuman techniques, was often seen as a betrayal of the spiritual, unique, and subjective efforts of the painter. In his most famous essay on the topic, "Painting and Cinema", Bazin (1967, p. 164–169) states that these types of films have educational and aesthetic value since they bring together high culture and popular culture.

Bazin highlights several problems that the "impure medium" of cinema encounters and that form the foundation of his criticism: 1) film's form as a horizontal montage that disturbs the extensive, in-depth perspective of the painting's 'time'; 2) an editing technique that fragments and creates new synthesis, new connections; 3) black and white images that betray the features of the painting and cinema's general inability to be true to colour; and 4) the problem of space, the extent to which the frame of a painting, its canvas, delineates a pictorial space that is destroyed by the film screen. In short, according to Bazin, the representation of time, space, and colour is problematic in film, due to its very nature.

Following the typical Bazinian conceptual framework, Angela Dalle Vacche observes that "[c]olor in painting is geological and centripetal, hence even more alien to the centrifugal nature of film and its screen" (1996, p. 306). Indeed, film, with its centrifugal screen, changes the nature of the other art form, which is characterized by its centripetal canvas; film imposes its spatiotemporal qualities on any art form it portrays. As for the transition from the painted canvas to moving images, the Bazinian perspective clearly highlights the *dominant* and *transformative* nature of film in relation to painting. Even so, with this problematic relation in mind, at the end of his essay Bazin argues that the encounter between the two art forms can create a "newborn aesthetic creature, fruit of the union of painting and cinema", and that films such as Alain Resnais's *Van Gogh* and Pierre Kast's *Goya, Disasters of War* "are works in their own right. They are their own justification" (Bazin, 1967, p. 168).

Rather than comparing the differences between the two art forms (film and painting), including their ontological differences, I wish to pursue this affirmative line of thought – the idea that a new creature is born in films about art. Indeed, *The Artist and the City* reinvigorates this longstanding debate by introducing new problems. The first is the question of its genre. How ought we to classify *The Artist and the City*? As a documentary film it aims to depict the work of a watercolorist, Antonio Cruz, and as a city symphony film it aims to portray a day in the life of a modern city, Porto, from dawn to dusk. The film belongs to both genres, although not in a conventional way. By reconceiving these genres, the film provides us with a new aesthetic interpretation from each perspective, which I will explore below.

The City Symphony

Film history has shown that movies have always had a special connection to the city. They have created new city views and celebrated iconic skylines, establishing the city as the main character of many films. When thinking about the relationship between cinema and the city, many ideas come to mind. We have all had the experience of visiting a new city for the first time and in a sense "remembering" it from a movie we've seen. In

other cases, we feel that we already know a city, even though we've never been there, simply because we've seen it on screen. This phenomenon had already been experienced in the context of paintings, however: David B. Clarke quotes Jean Baudrillard's comparison of the connection between certain European cities and Italian or Dutch paintings and the connection between American cities and film (1997, p. 1). It seems that the modern city is inseparable from the screenscape, from the way it is filmed and represented by cinema – as if the city itself emerged out of movies.

Nevertheless, the cinematic city is far from being a truthful representation of the "real" city. Paraphrasing Paul Klee's famous aphorism – art's purpose is "[n]ot to render the visible, but to render visible" (1985, p. 34) – film likewise seems not to render the visible, but to render visible. However, by making its subject visible and perceptible, an image is not thereby limited to what is there to be represented, nor is it reduced to the present dimension of seeing it.

Moving images are not limited to showing reality as it is because their connection and editing techniques transcend simple representation: cinema is driven by sensations, not representation. After all, cinema has changed the way we perceive reality: it gives us new perspectives on reality, new points of view, that challenge our natural perception of the world.

In a sense, the cinematic city was born in 1895 with the Lumière brothers. One of the first movies ever publically screened was *Place des Cordeliers*, which depicts a minute in the life of the famous French square. It is interesting to note that the specific urban public space is itself a place of transit: we witness this through the intense movement of its elements, from public transportation to several urban activities.

In the 1920s, the city itself became the main character of a popular genre: the city symphony. Such is the case in *Manhattan* (1921) and *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927), movies that aimed to provide scopophilic experiences, portraying the city from the outside, as an object of pleasure and amazement.

This close link between cinema and the city was noted by Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin, mostly because, as Graeme Gilloch argues, cinema "is able to capture the flux and movement of the urban environment, to record the spontaneous and the ephemeral" (1996, p. 18).

Yet the popularity of the genre did not make it immune to philosophical criticism. Some criticized it, including Kracauer and Benjamin, claiming that the films offered a superficial and formalist image of the life of the city, an exterior portrait of what the modern city looked like, as the expression of new sensations, new rhythms, but also of the new forms of alienation that were so typical of modern urban life. For Kracauer (1995), for example, the attraction that cinema has always had to the city and street life is grounded in their common nature: both are expressions of transience and ephemerality.

Consider, for example, Kracauer's (1995, p. 318) criticism of Walter Ruttmann's most acclaimed city symphony: "But does it [*Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*] convey the reality of Berlin? No: it is just as blind to reality as any other feature film (…) Ruttmann leaves the thousands of details unconnected, one next to the other, inserting at most some arbitrarily conceived transitions that are meaningless." Kracauer reproaches *Berlin* for its superficial portrait of an "ornamented" life, for its fragmented edited sequences without meaningful direction, since its formalist techniques (the use of eccentric angles, camera movements and speeds, and even the self-consciousness of the editing work) prevail over everything else. He reproaches Ruttmann's film, in particular, for its lack of soul.

The superficiality and formalism of these attempts were therefore not received without criticism, as a manifestation of a *deeper* quotidian phenomenon to be discovered. But the inner relationship between the city and cinema has been met not only with criticism but also with more constructive reactions. As Nélio da Conceição observes, "technology increased an element which is fundamental in Benjamin's relationship with the city: physiognomy and, implicitly, the idea of decipherment" (2018, p. 304). The filmmaker shares the role of a Benjaminian physiognomist, especially when understanding, examining and expressing a paradoxical realities with a critical gaze, at the time both superficial and profound.

Thus, although we might view these movies as poems or tributes to large, modern cities, the life of the city has not always been represented truthfully. With that said, however, how *can* film provide a truthful representation of the city?

As Giuliana Bruno (2002, p. 56) has argued, movement is common to both cities and movies. In each filmic experience, the viewer follows an imaginary path, one designed by the film's montage sequences. With Dziga Vertov, for example, moving images became an art form that created its own city, a mental and imaginary space that Kuleshov called a "creative geography". The idea of a path and of walking, together with the sensorial affects and percepts that constitute the nervous system, allows us to understand the great similarity between walking down a city boulevard and watching a film: both experiences are based on the idea of a fragmented, discontinued and shocking point of view on reality itself.

If fragmentation and shock are synonymous with modernity, how can art express that experience? Is this fragmentary experience partially or entirely reconfigured by the 'spectatorial movement' of the *flaneur*, the moviegoer or the filmmaker? Can we really say that we come to know a city better by seeing it on screen? What does the (superficial) screen show us on a deeper level? In the following, via a film analysis of Oliveira's *The Artist and the City*, I will attempt to look beyond the limits of abstract and formalist city symphonies for an alternative to the above criticism.

The Artist and the City: A Film Analysis

The Portuguese filmmaker Manoel de Oliveira has always expressed his own concerns about these questions, at least in his first movies, in a straight dialogue with the contemporary European avant-garde. For Iván Villarmea Álvarez, *The Artist and the City* is the last film in a single cinematic composition that he calls a "modernist trilogy about everyday life and the banks of the Douro river" (2015, p. 156), a trilogy that begins with the short documentary *Douro, Faina Fluvial/Labor on the Douro River* (1931), followed by the fictional film *Aniki Bóbó* (1942).

The cinematic qualities of the city of Porto are the main characters of Oliveira's first three movies, along with the city's iconic historical landscapes, its lively crowds sharing public and modern spaces, and the anonymous human beings who live, move around and work there.

This trilogy has shaped our collective imagination regarding the city of Porto in all its photogenic qualities. Interestingly, it begins with a film that in many ways replicates the model of the city symphony, for example by showing the chaotic and disorienting rhythms of the new experience of a modern city and of urban life. In this sense, Oliveira can be regarded as a formalist: he reveals his own cinematic visions by emphasising the film's formal elements, such as the editing work. He did not want to create a film that gave the illusion of not having been created or manipulated, as if it were reality itself.

The trilogy of films ends with *The Artist and the City*, a short poetic documentary that explores an imagined city of Porto through the complex relationships between the individual and the collective, the fragmented and the whole, painting and film itself. My aim here is to question the relationship between the artistic practice of moving images and the experience of the modern city towards a logic of sensation. This objective is not limited to the film's aesthetic qualities, for I also aim to analyse its social, economic, and political structure, just as Kracauer claimed (1995, p. 318). Could *The Artist and the City* be the soul that was lacking in other city symphony films? Does it give us an innovative perspective on its social, economic, and political structure?

In a way, as mentioned above, *The Artist and the City* revisits many of the subjects presented in both *Labor on the Douro River* and *Aniki Bóbó*, and it seems at first to recover the city symphony genre in the sense that it portrays a conventional working day in a big, modern city. In this case, the journey is that of a painter, the watercolour artist António Cruz, who takes the viewer on a tour of his favourite city landmarks while painting them.

The film is not limited to depicting a painter at work, however. As a film, it creates a particular space and a particular time for that cinematic experience. What I wish to explore here is how the portrait of a modern city is assembled in a montage of fragments and the differences between painting and film. *The Artist and the City* was not only Oliveira's first colour film, exploring the full sensorial potential of polychrome, but also a film about the powerful forces of the moving image.

At the age of forty-eight, Oliveira directed his first colour film – colour being the only reason offered in explanation of his choice to

portray this artist in particular, a watercolourist. On the one hand, we might say that the film explores contemplative 'representation' and the transition from the painter's urban watercolours to the filmic image of the urban landscape. On the other, however, the filmmaker was aware of the enormous responsibility of his ingenuity, since a comparison would doubtless be made between his cinematography and the canvas.

António Cruz and the city, Porto, are the film's two protagonists. According to André Bazin (1957, p. 48), this "film d'art" is a "poetic documentary about the city of Porto."[1] The film portrays the modern mundanity that surrounds the artistic work, showing the painter surrounded by anonymous crowds snooping at his work, but also by the city's soundscapes.

But *The Painter and the City* is more than a poetic documentary about a city; it is more than a short documentary on an artist and his work. It is not a biopic about a watercolourist – we are not introduced to the painter's life and work, to his techniques and influences, or to his importance to the Portuguese art world. In the end, we learn nothing about António Cruz himself.

Whereas *Labor on the Douro* was clearly inspired by Ruttmann's film and structured by different film editing techniques, *The Painter* is quite different, as if the filmmaker were rejecting his earlier work as overly centred on editing methods. Whereas classical city symphonies move from the periphery towards the city center, like the journey taken by a commuter, *The Painter* moves from the artist's studio to the outdoors, a visual metaphor for the worldview we are about to experience, but also a literal movement from painting to film.

This first movement gives us the illusion that we are about to see the artist immersed in his inspiration, the city of Porto. And at first, we are not deceived. Soon, however, after the first few minutes, the film reveals itself as having other purposes. We do not leave with the artist; we leave his studio through one of his works, through a slow panoramic movement from the door to one of the paintings, precisely a painting of a steam train (a symbol for cinema itself), entering into a cinematically imagined other place, other than the portrayed city of Porto (Figs. 1–4).

1 Author's translation.

FIGs. 1–4
Screenshots from *The Painter and the City*
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The next shots are of trains, crossing bridges or arriving at São Bento train station, a clear reference to the Lumière brothers. Here, we can see that Oliveira is fully aware that cinema has radically changed the way we view the urban space. As Oliveira continues with this tribute, *looking back* into cinema's history but also to the city's historical landmarks, he is also *looking forward* by creating a new image of a modern, dynamic, fragmented city. This opposition is very important to understanding the structure of the film. Even if we recognize a time and a place (1950s Porto), the film has another subject: a sensorial aesthetics that reveals the passages between art forms, between different techniques. The film's objectivity – and indeed its music – sometimes mimics the canvas's point of view, thus perpetuating the classical hierarchy between spaces: sacred and profane, urban and rural, etc.), although it generally moves beyond imitation by creating new points of view, framing the city in a fragmented way and creating a cinematic space that is unsettled and disconnected, with slow and disorienting vertical camera movements that depart from the human point of view.

Spatiotemporal fragmentation follows the contemplative gaze of modernity, confronting the viewer with the painting's presentness, emphasised by Lessing's idea of the "pregnant moment". Time is a disruptive element in the relationship between painting and film. It is in terms of time that, in a 1989 interview, Manoel de Oliveira explained how the film was conceived: "I made *The Painter* in opposition to *Labor on the Douro River*. If *Douro* is a film of montage, *The Painter* is a film of ecstasies. We were ecstatic with those images, for a long period of time. Within *The Painter and the City* I have discovered that time is a rather important element. I mean, there is colour, there is framing, there is the shot object, but there is, most of all, time. I have discovered that a fast image has an effect, but when the image persists, then it gains another form" (1989, p. 56).[2]

The avant-garde use of a temporal dimension that has freed itself from movement (against a cinema of montage), and the intersections between still and moving images and sounds – the simplicity of the city's noises (trains, trams, …), the intermittent use of an extradiegetic soundtrack and the absence of traditional voiceover, which could contextualize the film or introduce the main character (the film also has no intertitles) – will be important in analysing how cinema becomes a technique that is closer to art than a neutral mechanical reproduction of reality. Oliveira also inserts the appropriate sounds for some of the elements portrayed in the paintings, such as the noise of a train passing or the sound of church bells. Sound plays a specific role in the film, shifting between religious music by Luis de Sousa Rodrigues, a madrigal choir, and the city's own soundscapes. This cinematic mode of thinking and feeling explores the ontological connections between different media and the sensual qualities of the compound of affects and percepts.

The city's social space is inhabited by an anonymous crowd, circulating in a homogeneous space, an anonymity and homogeneity that is only disturbed by art in the figure of the painter, who stands out from the crowd, drawing attention to himself as an outsider to the city's anonymous rhythm and movements. The painter's presence interrupts

2 Author's translation.

the quotidian and distracts passersby from their usual routines, thus fragmenting the homogeneous urban space. At one point in the film, a police officer approaches to disperse the crowd.

But Oliveira takes advantage of editing techniques to insert his own vision of Portuguese society at that point in time, expressing his own social and political concerns about the extra-cinematic city and society. This is exemplified in a poetic sequence in which Oliveira alternates fixed shots of flowering trees with fixed shots of modernist buildings, thus using the concepts of spring and modernism as metaphors for the awakening of a new society (Figs. 5–8):

FIGs. 5–8
Screenshots from *The Painter and the City*

It is also exemplified in a sequence in which the crowd "follows" directions given by mute statues, moving to the right and to the left, unquestioningly (Figs. 9–10). In these examples, we see Oliveira's notorious interest in the anonymous human beings who inhabit, work in and move through the city.

FIGs. 9–10
Screenshots from *The Painter and the City*
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The filmmaker inserts his own vision in a movement from images to ideas. Far from being empty and artificial, Oliveira's formalism is full of meaning, directing us to notice and to think about the visual contradictions of modern society (also strengthening this perspective are shots of poverty and of people living in sheds at the periphery of the historical city center).

The Artist and the City is also an experimental art documentary, and this aspect is important when it comes to blocking the criticisms levied against city symphonies' ostensibly superficial and formalist features, adding new layers of interpretation. In this respect, it is also worth noting the film's color palette: its sunny yellows, misty greys, and reds and oranges of the afternoon. The watercolor technique aims to render its subjects visible, capturing their impreciseness and fuzziness rather than copying reality. At first sight, this conjugation may seem anachronistic; as Bernardo Pinto de Almeida argues (2015), watercolor was an artistic resistance to modernism itself and its transformations, whereas cinema was the best expression of a modernist demand. Oliveira is able to bring both watercolor and cinema together as a study on light. Film is the perfect medium for reproducing watercolors since both depend on the suspended, almost ghostly, materiality of light, fog, and mist: a "luminous film."

The Spiritual Automaton: Images and Ideas

It is with regard to the film's temporal dimension that Oliveira distinguishes himself. The filmmaker argues that there was a great difference between *Labor on the Douro River* and *The Painter and the City,* a film in which he wanted to use time in a very different way: instead of relying on montage sequences, in *The Painter* he wanted to extend the duration of each shot to create an unconventional perception of time, almost more than necessary, turning a distracting experience into a possibly contemplative one. In this way, the persistence of the shot, its duration distended more than is "narratively" necessary, becomes the spirit of the spectator. More than giving fleeting and rapid impressions, the film *materializes* new, persisting sensations. In a footnote to the second volume on cinema, *The Time-Image*, Deleuze appeals to Cézanne's idea of a "materialized sensation", saying that "a film is not understood as offering or producing sensations for the viewer, but as 'materializing them,' achieving a tectonics of sensation" (2008, p. 316 n.44).

This "new aesthetic creature" thus creates a strange aesthetic experience, half contemplation and concentration, half shock and distraction. This awkward combination is not located temporally in the present, however, mainly because of the *dominant* and *transformative* role of film in relation to painting.

Of course, painting's simulation of eternity (its presentness) creates a stronger experience that concentrates the viewer's attention, which seems to be the exact opposite of the distraction produced by moving images. This new creature contradicts the temporal tension between the painting's eternity and the film's ephemeral character: Oliveira stretches the duration of certain shots to counteract the ways in which film (with its characteristic editing techniques) distracts us. Time endures in *The Painter and the City*.

Together with the idea of cinematic time, this perspective challenges our natural approach to 'motionless' artistic images, especially our ordinary expected understanding of the present moment: the actual chronological sequence of present moments according to what is represented [immobile image = eternal present]. The general use of the

parallel montage (of the variable present) in classical cinema highlights this idea. Although this overemphasis on the eternal present of the "now" can give us a certain indirect image *of* time, it is an intra-temporal image that exists *in* time and that results from a natural and unconscious understanding of the continuous contraction of the past and the future [past presents ← living present → future present].

As noted above, Manoel de Oliveira's *The Painter and the City* goes beyond the canvas's point of view by creating new perspectives that from the human point of view, for example by framing the city in a fragmented way, thus creating a cinematic space that is unsettled and disconnected, with slow and disorienting vertical camera movements.

This brings us to one last Deleuzian concept that I wish to mention, if only briefly, because it sums up what is in question here: the concept of a "spiritual automaton."[3] Grounded in Spinoza's philosophy, the concept of a spiritual automaton plays a central role in Deleuze's philosophy of film since it synthetizes his idea that cinema thinks and feels by itself: "We can no longer say 'I see, I hear', but I FEEL, 'totally physiological sensation'. And it is the set of harmonics acting on the cortex which gives rise to thought, the cinematographic I THINK: the whole as subject" (Deleuze, 2008, p. 158). Claire Colebrook (2001, p. 29), for example, observes that "[o]nly with cinema can we think of a mode of 'seeing' that is not attached to the human eye. Cinema, then, offers something like a 'percept': a reception of data that is not located in a subject." As Richard Rushton argues, "[w]hile at the cinema, we are able to encounter that which is genuinely *new*" (2012, p. 11).

Deleuze describes film as a new experience, as a possible field for creating new percepts and new affects, the elements that constitute his logic of sensation. Although he does not conceptualize the role of the viewer, he defines the creation of a new subjectivity that is particular to the cinematic experience, one that is not reducible to psychological analysis (the question of the gaze, voyeurism, identification, empathy, etc.) but that centres on new ways of thinking and feeling, which he identifies with the film itself. Concerning the visual arts in general, Deleuze was not interested in studying movement as the simple dislocation of moving

3 For a better understanding of this concept's philosophical origins, see Viegas 2014.

bodies, as in the spatial movement from point A to point B, or cinematic photograms as immobile images to which abstract movement is added by the mechanical and rhythmic sequencing of still images. Instead, he was interested in the inception of movement into spirit, which is precisely what Oliveira attempted to achieve. Thus, the essence of moving images can be better described by their capacity to create a shock in thinking, to directly touch our nervous system, and less so by their narrative and imaginative communication skills.

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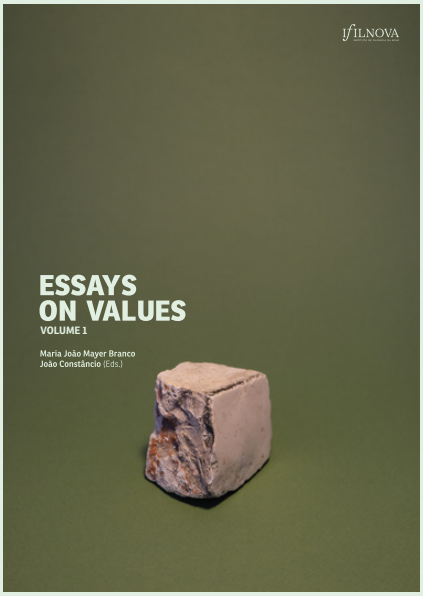

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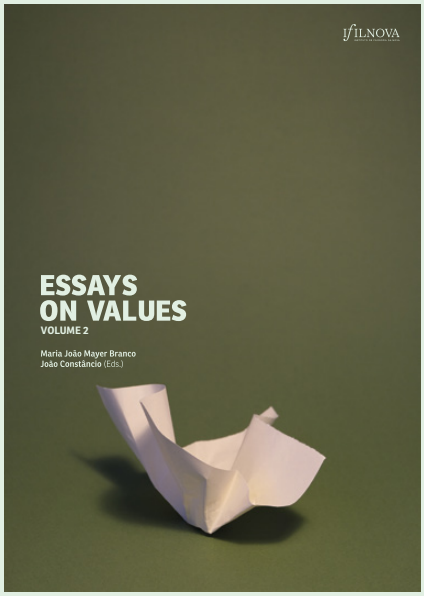

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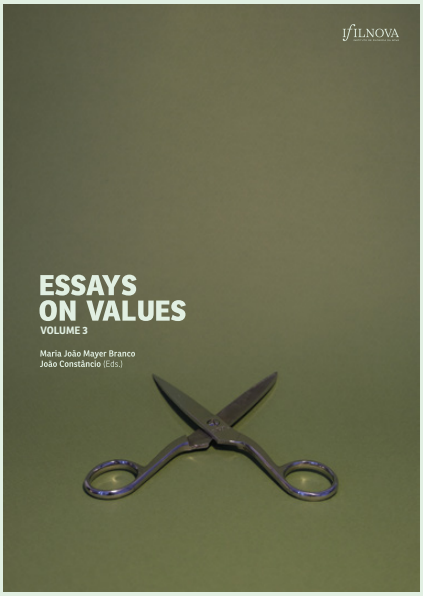

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