

Listening to Vincent Moon

Musical Encounters and the Cinematic Diagram

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ABSTRACT

This thesis confronts how, in Vincent Moon's films, experience takes the spotlight in detriment of signification. I formulate that the director, rather than worrying about imbuing his films with an inherited sense, is instead searching that his work may express something unique each time it is encountered. To achieve this, his artistic practice is submitted through a set of procedures that are more in line with the field of sound than that of cinema. By transposing values that are deeply rooted into sound philosophy to film (particularly *Listening* by Jean-Luc Nancy), Moon's work criticizes the predominant ocular-centric perspective where meaning and understanding is the ultimate goal. Questioning the implications of such a practice, I relate emerging studies related to sound with Deleuze's *Actual/Virtual* circuit and Walter Benjamin's auratic experience. I conclude by proposing that in Vincent Moon a new form of image surfaces, one that even though in its early stages, should be comprehended through its explosive capacity to deliver an experience and in its intrinsic transient and ephemeral nature—the encounter-image.

RESUMEN

Esta tesis se enfrenta a cómo la experiencia es el centro de la atención en detrimento de la significación en las películas de Vincent Moon. Formulo que el director está buscando que su trabajo exprese algo único cada vez que se lo encuentre en vez de preocuparse por imbuir sus películas con un sentido. Para lograr esto, su práctica artística se somete a un conjunto de procedimientos que están más en línea con el campo del sonido que el del cine. Al transponer valores profundamente arraigados en la filosofía del sonido al cine (particularmente a la escucha de Jean-Luc Nancy), el trabajo de Moon critica la perspectiva ocular predominante donde el significado y la comprensión es el objetivo final. Al cuestionar las implicaciones de tal práctica, dialogo con estudios emergentes relacionados con el sonido con lo Actual y lo Virtual de Deleuze, además de la experiencia aurática de Walter Benjamin. Concluyo proponiendo que Vincent Moon propone una nueva forma de imagen, una que debe ser comprendida a través de su capacidad explosiva de ofrecer una experiencia de naturaleza intrínsecamente transitoria y efímera: la imagen-encuentro.

INDEX

INTRODUCTION	15
Methodology and structure	22
1. CASE STUDY: VINCENT MOON, THE TRAITOR	
1.1 La forma de la espada	31
1.2. Early Experiments (2000-2005).....	36
1.3. The Take Away Shows (2006-2009)	41
1.4. Feature Documentaries and other projects (2006-2011).....	52
1.5. Petites Planètes (2009-2014).....	58
1.6. Híbridos (2014-2018).....	70
2.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	
2.1. Listening: overcoming the limitations of a visual model of thought.	75
2.1.1. What is it to be listening?	82
2.1.1.1. At the Edge of Meaning	85
2.1.1.2 The Resonant Self	89
2.1.1.3 The Sonorous Body.....	94
2.1.2. Balancing at the Impasse	103
2.2. The cinematic diagram: mastering the loss of control	105
2.2.1. Diagramming sonorous figures – Listening to Images....	110
2.2.1.1. Hystericizing the (sonorous) body	110
2.2.1.2. Opening the figurative self.....	120
2.2.2. The Cinematic Diagram.....	126
3. AUDIOVISUAL ANALYSIS: PASSING THROUGH THE DIAGRAM	
3.1. Accompaniment: becoming the coadjutant.....	131
a) OKO • LES FEMMES DE LA TERRE NOIRE (2013).....	138
b) Take Away Show_DAKHA BRAKHA (2012).....	141
3.2. Voice: searching for uniqueness in the what and the who...	150
3.2.1. What is a voice?.....	152

a) Mezzo Morra • i suoni della Sardegna (2012)	152
3.2.2. Searching for the who of a voice	159
a) Petites Planètes volume 1 • TOM ZÉ (2010).....	160
b) Petites Planètes volume 15 • ELZA SOARES (2011).....	165
c) Petites Planètes volume 10 • Ney Matogrosso (2011).....	169
3.3. Music: resonating the encounter	177
a) An Island (2010)	178
b) MEDEA *made in the black sea* (2011).....	193
c) Metal Machine Merkato (2012).....	199
d) YESETAN MENFES (2012).....	208
3.4. Noise: forcing an opposition	213
3.4.1. Noisy bodies and noisy voices.....	215
a) Petites Planètes _ volume 6 _ ZAR (2010).....	216
3.4.2. Noise as violence	221
a) Gaby Amarantos • Live in Jurunas (2011).....	226
3.4.3. Producing noisy compositions.....	235

4. IMPLICATIONS: UNFOLDING THE ENCOUNTER- IMAGE, THE DATABASE AND EXPERIENCE

4.1. The encounter-image: altering the production of sense	241
4.1.1. The audiovisual tear	248
4.1.2. Two opposing visions of becoming.....	251
4.1.3. The production of sense.....	255
4.1.4. Halting the sense-event.....	263
4.1.4.1. The noisy resistance in the Actual/Virtual circuit.....	269
4.1.5. Short-circuiting the Actual/Virtual with Cine-trance	271
4.2. The fold: the (Neo-Baroque) production of beings.....	284
4.2.1. Database	298
4.3 What is there to experience? Fragments of existence in Walter Benjamin's concept of aura.....	312
4.3.1. Aesthetics as sensory perception	314
4.3.2. Encountering fragments of one's own existence.....	323

CONCLUSION 331

BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 339

VINCENT MOON'S FILMOGRAPHY 351

INTRODUCTION

This is the music you hear; but can it be called music? From every shard of sound you continue to gather signals, information, clues, as if in this city all those who play or sing or put on disks wanted only to transmit precise, unequivocal messages to you. Since you mounted the throne, it is not music you listen to, but only the confirmation of how music is used: in the rites of high society, or to entertain the populace, to safeguard traditions, culture, fashion. Now you ask yourself what listening used to mean to you, when you listened to music for the sole pleasure of penetrating the design of the notes.¹

In one of his last stories before passing away, Italo Calvino wrote about a king living in a palace that resembles an ear.² Frightened in having his power usurped he never leaves his throne, where he stays day and night hearing the sounds that reach him from all his reign. The king identifies each sound and must continuously pay attention to what the faintest noise might mean; the slightest change in how the pots bang in the kitchen an indication that someone might poison him, an extra pause in the guards steps a sign that a coup might be taking place, the tanks passing over gravel without a creak a hint that it was recently oiled in preparation for battle. His paranoia is broken when he listens to a woman singing somewhere in the city. Her voice impels him to stop searching for indexical meanings of sound and instead listen to it and be delighted by its unique possibilities. The unknown and disembodied voice opens in

¹ Calvino, Italo. 1998. *Under the Jaguar Sun*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, pp. 51-52.

² The name of the story is *A King Listens* [Un re in ascolto] and was first published in English in the book *Under the Jaguar Sun*, 1988.

the king the desire to interact with it, but he is not sure if he is physically capable. Has he forgotten his own voice? Can he answer back by joining in a duet?

The quest, forces Calvino's character in *A King Listens* to discard everything that certified his power, to shed all appearances so he could find his voice. The outcome though, as the story ends, doesn't seem to have succeeded. The reader is left confused. Did he manage to find the voice? Has his reign been usurped? Was his voice heard by the woman after all? Could it all have been a dream, something that happened purely inside of him?

While Calvino leaves it open, the king's fictional endeavor seems analogous to the work that filmmaker Vincent Moon has been carrying out since 2006. Both—the unnamed king and Moon—are enticed to explore new models of listening. Both discovered that to interact with sound one cannot be in full control (the king of his reign, Moon of his films); that their notions of music need to be reconsidered; that to listen is also to fold between the inside and outside; and lastly, both are forced to reconfigure the relation between aural and the visual.

At the core of this improbable connection is the concept of listening. In Calvino's story, as with Moon films, a new form of listening emerges. One that is not focused on finding meaning, and not in passively hearing sounds. Listening is a call for interaction both for the king and for Moon. To listen is to look beyond meaning, to search for the inexplicable. The act of listening, as

Jean-Luc Nancy develops in his homonymous book *Listening* (2007), is a model of thought that subverts traditional western philosophy. An anti-ocular method of interaction that circumvents knowledge and instead seeks acknowledgment.

Calvino magnifies the treacherous aspect of sound once it is genuinely listened to. The narration, always in the second person, starts by circumscribing the king into the realm of the image. A series of rules is put forward where the power of the king is intimately connected with how he is presented—"it would hardly be a pretty sight to see a king stretched out on the floor"; "you must maintain the regal composure"; "it is a good idea to have the curtains of the baldaquin drawn, to remove the king's intimacy from outside gazes".³ To keep the throne is a game of appearances, one where the king is exposed to everyone but is blind towards what is happening, he is left merely with his palace-ear. Nevertheless, at the outset, his sense of hearing is subservient to his sight, it allows "the sounds themselves to prompt the images."⁴

Only when he's unable to catalog an unknown sound coming from the basement of the palace, incapable of deciphering its meaning, is when the king begins to break his initial stance of hearing. A change that is fully completed after the woman's voice finally reaches him. The voice doesn't prompt an image; it doesn't elicit the king to fantasize about the body that is producing that voice and what it means. It's a pure appreciation of sound, of the miracle of a

³*Ibid.*, pp. 33-36.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 42.

throbbing “throat of flesh [la vibrazione d’una gola di carne].”⁵ Once the king listens, a desire grows from within him to also interact sonically, to have his voice acknowledged.

The work of Vincent Moon, in juxtaposition, is driven by the same fascination with the aural and how listening opens to interaction. The seditious elements of sound—the innate anti-ocular rebellion in listening—are also present and responsible for intriguing twists throughout his career.

Some critical differences, though, emerge between Calvino’s king and Moon. The king’s dive into the sonic is one of chaos and confusion. His reaction to listening to the singularity of the sonic is a plunge into disarray and confusion. The king’s hunt to interact with the woman’s voice explodes the city into flames and shouts. Moon’s approach to pursuit the sonic interaction is, in contrast, a controlled descent into chaos. A set of parameters that incentives the unknown but that aims to balance itself at the edge of chaos.

The king, who initially had a limited vision and could only see what was in the throne’s room, loses all traces of sight in his chase to interact with the voice. In pitch black darkness, he touches the wall in front of him to discover it’s covered with moss; he receives back the echo of his voice guessing that, perhaps, he is in a cave.

Where the story in *A King Listens* ends, is where my research with Moon begins. The second person narration, which in the conclusion seems to have relocated to inside the king’s mind, for the first time

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

instigates the use of vision— “If you raise your eyes, you will see a glow. Above your head the imminent morning is brightening the sky: that breath against your face is the wind stirring the leaves.”⁶

As the last paragraph continues, though, something is different. Sound and image not only interact— “the dogs are barking, the birds wake, the colors return on the world’s surface, things reoccupy space, living beings again give signs of life”⁷—but ultimately it seems that now the optical has been reborn from the aural. Sight is no longer higher in the hierarchy of senses. Announcing that the sonorous insurgence has been fully carried out, the story ends with the space of things and the signs of life being inundated by the sonic world— “Now a noise, a rumble, a roar occupies all space, absorbs all sighs, calls, sobs...”⁸

Calvino’s story ends with the vision subjugated to sound. The sound no longer “prompt images” but now, in reversal, it is the images that prompt the sounds. With the king being able to see once again, the signs of life are the sighs that are heard. The sight of the city reawakening is the creaking and hammering that grows louder. *A King Listens* finishes giving a glimpse into the birth of an anti-ocular image, or maybe a better term, an otocentric vision.

Moon, unknowingly writes in this space left by Calvino’s final ellipsis—what is an image born out of sound? What is a film

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64. The story ends with this phrase and with the ellipsis.

practice innate to listening? These are the two central questions that guide my research, simple in form but with endless unfoldings.

My interest in Moon dates back to 2006 when, as a teenager, I first came in contact with his series the *Take Away Shows*. I accidentally stumbled upon it when browsing the video podcasts section in iTunes and became mesmerized with the naïve but effective format of how music was recorded. It was just a single camera following the musician around Paris while he played and sang, but there was something in the raw intensity of that moment that I couldn't exactly figure out.

In parallel, Moon's practice symbolized the freedom brought by the newly created digital platforms and affordable digital cameras. Releasing almost a film a week, his blind belief in shooting without excessive thought, sharing it as soon as possible, and that everything else would work fine, epitomized the general sensation at the time I was learning the ropes of filmmaking. It was partly inspired by his practice, that my first more extensive project in 2009 (a fictional web series shot between São Paulo and Beirut), was funded through Kickstarter and distributed under Creative Commons.

As I moved into directing commercials, his path continued to intrigue me. He left the *Take Away Shows*, at a time when the *New York Times* was claiming that he “reinvented the music video,”⁹ to

⁹ GOODMAN, Lizzy. *THE VIDEO EXPLORER*. The New York Times, 18 June 2011. Web. 16 May 2014.

start traveling and documenting local musicians from all around the world in his series *Petites Planètes*. His sudden shift a reminder, that maybe in this new online world a filmmaker can exclude any middle-man between the creation and distribution and live exclusively through the community that is generated around his work.

In 2013 I decided to examine more systematically Moon's work. Without a clue on how to pinpoint the experience I felt in that first encounter with the *Take Away Shows*, I focused my master thesis in mapping how his series *Petites Planètes* used new technologies to alter and delegate to the viewer/user the search for a narrative within its database.

My practice as a filmmaker also shifted during this period. I drifted towards directing music videos, preferring to carefully plan, produce and work extensively on each video in post-production. For all my interest in how Moon works, my work took an opposite approach. To abolish your power as a director is not an easy task, and in most cases, not a desirable one. The figure of the filmmaker (or the *auteur*) is more commonly associated to the paranoid king at the beginning of Calvino's story. It's Truffaut's self-depiction in *La Nuit Américaine* (1973) where each gesture, from the fake snow to the position of the hands, carries the intentionality of its creator.

Since the research for this thesis started, I tried applying more developed and mature methods of film analysis only to reach dead

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/19/magazine/vincent-moons-take-away-videos.html?_r=0

ends. A purely comparative media approach, as was done to a smaller spectrum of his work in my master's thesis, would further help to delineate his unique approach to technology but wouldn't take me any closer to finding the source of my initial attraction. To exclusively focus the study on a specific element—like semiotics, structure, imaginary, narrative, mise-en-scène, film space, film time, and even film sound—didn't yet encompass the impression that the film itself is but a consequence to “something else” in Moon's practice. Hence, a different procedure was needed, one that could invoke these methods when needed but that had the flexibility and freedom to go beyond the object of the film.

To venture into unveiling this “something else” I restarted my investigation. This time, retracing the director's steps and establishing a research that stems from the same origin point that the works of Moon—listening. An idea that I'm indebted to Greg Hainge and his book *Philippe Grandrieux: Sonic Cinema* (2017), where he initiates such a revisioning by exploring a sonic approach to cinema. As Calvino's king, who is profoundly changed by the woman's voice and searches for a way so that his voice may interact, this thesis seeks to open its own voice so that it may dialogue with Moon's works.

Methodology and structure

Before moving forward to the research itself, it's important to clarify that this thesis does not aim, in any occasion, to be an exhaustive analysis of all of Moon's films, but instead, to provoke a

listening of his films; to further incite a mode of interaction that breaks the ocular-centric film theory, that plunges into the chaos and darkness of the king's underground caverns and finally resurfaces with sound and image reconfigured anew.

As such, the examples that were selected are the ones that best envision and epitomize the aspects central to Moon's career. The reasoning behind which films were chosen within Moon's 538 pieces of audiovisual works released to date (approximately 156 hours of material), was not about a difference in kind but a difference in intensity. Which film embodied aspects of Moon's work most evidently? Did the work in question instigate an inflection point in his artistic practice? Was there intentionality and awareness in structuring and developing these traits? These are some of the questions that guided which films were selected to be studied within Moon's oeuvre. Furthermore, the sequence in which the films are considered throughout the thesis aspire to keep the chronological arrangement in which they were created (albeit loosely).

Vincent Moon's work provides the skeleton for this research. To flesh out and create the body the methodological focus stems from the transposition of sound theory and philosophy into the realm of cinema and image. In addition, I'll draw on literature, paintings, art installations, and cinema, so that Moon's cinematic body may fully resonate. This is not a new approach, and I will rely on previous works that already made great strides towards this objective, which I'll briefly introduce in subsequent paragraphs.

The first part is an introduction to Moon's works, a requirement for a director whose career was created at the margins (and intersection) of distinct areas: self-exiled from the music industry, a vagrant in the ethnographic circles, and an outsider in the cinema and art circuit. An overview of his work is given together with the main moments that indicated essential shifts in his work. To better visualize his body of work, the chapter includes a table that helps contextualize the 538 films that he released so far.¹⁰

Next, in the second chapter *Theoretical Framework*, the theoretical grounds of listening is provided as I explore Jean-Luc Nancy's book and the various implications that it has in positing an otocentric mode of thought. The term *listening* is submitted here, to extensive analysis and is imbued with a very specific denotation that will be carried throughout the thesis. Other vital terms, like *renvoi* and *sens*, are also defined in this chapter. Additionally, *The Cinematic Diagram*, is an answer to the king's descent into chaos and confusion. In Moon, to allow chaos is part of his practice, but it is controlled so that it doesn't flood the work into meaningless sensations. Nancy's proposal of listening as balancing at the edge of meaning is here connected to Deleuze's concept of the diagram in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (2017). Bacon exemplifies how listening can be practiced in the visual realm, how to be positioned at the fringe of the abyss. The diagram, thus, becomes

¹⁰ As of June 2018, his website lists 538 films. Many films, though, have outtakes, and extra segments that are released (his Vimeo account lists 746 videos). I opt to use throughout the thesis what Moon denominates as "films" in his website and interpret these outlying materials as the "extras" of a DVD. In total there is approximately 156 hours of content that was published.

the link for a practice that repeals signification and meaning while also avoiding falling into chaos. To distinguish between the diagram in painting, I appropriate and expand the term “cinematic diagram” to open into the discrete aspects of Moon’s practice that will follow.

To start discussing what is a film practice innate to listening, the third segment dives into his films to sketch the aspects of Moon’s cinematic diagram. The first aspect is *Accompaniment*, a musical term that Greg Hainge transposes to cinema when talking about Grandrieux’s documentaries. It unfolds an alternative narrative in Calvino’s story where the voices encounter each other. To accompany severs the traditional relationship between director and subject, he abdicates control but still maintains an active interaction with the soloist.

Subsequently in his cinematic diagram, is *Voice, Music, and Noise*. Analogous to when the king descends into the purely aural and started questioning his capability to listen while the city explodes in fire and shouts, Moon at a specific moment became engulfed in sound and started questioning the what and who of a voice and the what and why of music. This period in his career stresses the relations between sound and image to its extreme, at times breaking the thin line that kept him balancing at the edge of chaos.

In, *Voice*, Adriana Cavarero and Sara Nadal-Melsió supply the premises to tackle the questions of uniqueness and singularity raised by Moon. Succeeding, *Music* debates Moon’s evolving conception of what is music through John Cage’s critique of music as a “time-

object” and Murray Schafer’s concept of the soundscape. *Noise*, will study the power at play when regarding the aural, and analyze how Moon appropriates it when necessary.

The fourth chapter focuses in opening the cinematic diagram to beyond the film itself and question its implications. In *The Encounter-Image*, I address the question of what is an image born out of sound? What happens when the king surfaces back and opens the eyes with a new vision born in the depths of sound? Stitching all the other previous aspects of the cinematic diagram with Deleuze’s concept of becoming, here it’s proposed that Moon’s unique path from aural to optical resulted in a peculiar and unique type of image. To delve into the encounter-image, the process of becoming is scrutinized and tied to how the diagram alters the production of sense. In *The Fold*, how Moon uses Neo-Baroque ideals to invite the viewer to listen, to search for an interaction where his voice can be acknowledged; exploring the second kind of production present in Deleuze’s late work, the production of beings. And lastly, in *What is there to experience?* I’ll seek in Benjamin’s notion of auratic experience an opening to grasp the important of experience to Moon.

Before continuing, some last explanations to help guide the reading. My use of the term film can be seen as controversial, for all of Moon’s work discussed in the thesis was recorded using digital cameras. Apart from the ontological debate film/video/digital, I regard that the dispute has been transposed into the field of practice. What is a film practice? A video practice? A digital practice? In this

year's Cannes (2018) only eight of the 21 films in competition were shot on film.¹¹ From all the theatrical releases in the United States in 2017, only 31 movies used film partially or integrally, many counting with post-production done digitally.¹² To linger on this debate seems productive only when the artist himself tensions between the diverse mediums, bringing the stress between film vs digital to the foreground. As such, I stand by my use of the term "film," for its how Moon calls and defines his work.¹³ Also, when referring to the person who interacts with the films of Vincent Moon, I'll use the term listener, instead of viewer. As will become clearer throughout the thesis, the reasoning behind this is how his films elicit a different type of perception than that of someone who merely "views".

To visualize sound is a counter-intuitive task that goes against the whole purpose of this thesis. Nevertheless, when writing about sound the problem of how to describe what is being studied always presents itself. When merited, I used spectral analysis, soundwaves, and phase analysis, to provide vestiges of what is occurring sonically in Moon's films. The experience, though, is vastly

¹¹ O'Falt, C. (2018, May 11). *Cannes 2018: Here Are the Cameras Used To Shoot 32 of This Year's Films*. Retrieved May 21, 2018, from IndieWire: <http://www.indiewire.com/2018/05/cannes-2018-camera-cinematographers-don-quixote-blackkklansman-under-the-silver-lake-1201960977/>

¹² Rizov, V. (2018, April 5). *~31 Films Shot on 35mm Released in 2017*. Retrieved June 18, 2018, from Filmmaker Magazine:

<https://filmmakermagazine.com/105050-31-films-shot-on-35mm-released-in-2017/#.WyvweBfpfOh>

¹³ For a deeper discussion on how cumbersome some key words in film theory have become and the need to reinvent them I suggest Jonathan Rosenbaum's article *End or Beginning: The New Cinephilia* in the book *Screen Dynamics: Mapping the Borders of Cinema* (2012).

inferior, to which I admonish the reader to listen to the films that are mostly available online (and in the accompanying USB drive).

Lastly, I would like to note that Moon's career is still relatively young. At the time of this writing, it has been little over a decade since he started his experiments in film. Such a short time-span, rather than being viewed negatively, is an invitation to further follow which directions his art practice may take and to grasp his work within the words that Miriam Hansen proposes to the emerging new transformations of cinema at the start of the 21st century:

The reframing of cinema by the new media does not just replay that of the traditional arts by the cinema; rather, it makes for a constellation in which the cinema relates amphibiously to *both* old and new terms. Perhaps we should defer cultural pessimism about the digital transformations of experience and publicness for a while and give the generations growing up with these technologies a chance to incorporate them into cultural memory and, along the way, to rediscover and reinvent cinema.¹⁴

¹⁴ Hansen, M. B. (2012). Max Ophuls and Instant Messaging. In G. Koch, V. Pantenburg, & S. Rothöler (Eds.), *Screen Dynamics: Mapping the Borders of Cinema*. Vienna: Synema Publikationen, p. 29.

1. CASE STUDY: VINCENT MOON, THE TRAITOR

1.1 La forma de la espada

Threatening or comforting as it may be, the future that unfolds on those pages no longer belongs to you, it does not resolve your uncertainty. What you want revealed is something quite different, the fear and the hope that keep you awake, holding your breath, in the night: what your ears try to learn, about yourself, about your fate.¹⁵

Vincent Moon is the artistic name for Mathieu Saura, a French filmmaker and visual artist born in 1979. The name choice is quite interesting as it's a character from Jorge Luis Borges' *La forma de la espada*. In the short story, an Irishman, living in a small Argentinian border town, recounts to Borges the story behind the scar on his face. During the civil war in Ireland, his band of rebels was introduced to a new comrade named John Vincent Moon. Moon was a coward, intellectually arrogant, and terrified of being hurt. At their first encounter with some soldiers, the Irishman saves the newcomer from being killed with only a superficial bullet scrape and takes him to an empty general's house where they would stay for ten days. On the ninth day, the Irishman overhears Moon talking on the phone. He is selling the Irishman to the police in exchange for money and his freedom. Enraged, he chases Moon around the house, grabs a scimitar and with the "half-moon shaped steel, I inscribe in his face a half-moon of blood."¹⁶ The Irishman is killed in the town-square while Moon grabs his "Judas silver" and flees to

¹⁵ Calvino, Italo. 1998. *Under the Jaguar Sun*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, pp. 40.

¹⁶ "...con esa media luna de acero le rubiqué en la cara, para siempre, una media luna de sangre".

Brazil. The story ends with the Irishman revealing “It is I who am Vincent Moon, now despise me.”

Why choose Vincent Moon, the name of a traitor? Who or what did he betray? Mathieu Saura started studying photography under Michael Ackerman and Antoine d’Agata in the year 2000, both significantly influencing his photography. During 2000-2005 his photo work was released under his real name. There is even a book from Les Éditions de l’Œil, published in 2006, entitled *Mathieu Saura: Photographe*. Also, in 2003 he creates *Les Nuits de Fiume*, a photo blog following the underground Parisian nightlife scene. From this project, he meets a couple of bands and starts doing small and experimental music videos.

Vincent Moon only appears at the credits of his first music video, *Lantern by CLOGS* (2004), a short experimental film shot in super8. After that, all his films would be credited to Vincent Moon while his ongoing photo work was still tied to his given name. As he moves on to start the *Take Away Shows* in 2006, Vincent Moon betrays Mathieu Saura, killing him together with his photo work. In retrospect, it appears that the decision to assume an artistic name is not only a practicality to separate his work as a photographer and filmmaker, but also a betrayal to the image. As the initial quotation in this chapter from *A King Listens*, Moon grows unsatisfied with the purely optical, and starts a pursuit to find what the “ears can learn.” The line that threads throughout his whole work, the half-moon scar inscribing the death of Mathieu Saura, is to search in the aural the opening for encounters and interaction:

...the music is the pretext. What I'm interested in is the human interaction. From the beginning, the big idea was a simple thing. The films are not very important, it's the process that might change things. The contact with someone is extremely important – the simplicity of it, and the human exchanges I had with the people.¹⁷

This quest starts taking shape already in his first works as a filmmaker. There is a sequence of five films that are quite prophetic in addressing Moon's driving force for the years to come. These films are composed each of one song recorded live in the shows of the bands *The National*, *Sonic Youth* and *Liars*. Although they are an exercise of a photographer experimenting with a new language, the question that propelled the name change is already present—How can the sonic interaction present in sound be translated to image?¹⁸

To develop the aspects of his work related to this question I first will present a summary of his work. There aren't clear distinctions between the distinct phases that he went through as they cross-fade into one another, but I separated some primary points that exemplify his growth in addressing the transposition of the sonic interaction to vision. Also, in the following page, I present a summarized table containing the number of his works per year, the series to which these works belong and in which countries they were recorded.

¹⁷ Moon, V. (2010, March 11). *Vincent Moon: Interview*. Retrieved 08 15, 2015, from Prefix Mag: <http://www.prefixmag.com/features/interview/37989/>

¹⁸ This question can also be rephrased as “how to film music?” A recurrent question in cinema that is explored in Kracauer's *Film Theory* (1960, pp.146,151,152) and Michel Chion's *Film, a Sound Art* (2009, pp. 413-414)

<i>Year</i>		<i>Films Produced - Series¹⁹</i>	<i>Locations</i>
2000-2005	16	16 - Early experiments	France, USA, China, India, Argentina
2006	39	36 - Take Away-Shows ²⁰ 2 - ATP & other works 1 feature - A Skin A Night	France, USA, UK
2007	57	52 - Take Away-Shows 3 - ATP & other works 2 features - Histoire de Feu, Cheap Magic Inside	France, UK, USA, Morocco
2008	37	16 - Take Away-Shows 19 - ATP & other works 2 features - Mirror Noir, Little Blue Nothing	France, USA, Israel, Mali, UK, Tanzania, Italy, Iceland, Spain, Palestine, Czech Republic
2009	49	10 - Take Away-Shows 36 - ATP & other works 3 features - La Faute des Fleurs , Mogwai Burning & others	Denmark, Canada, USA, Japan, UK, France, Greece, New Zealand, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Slovenia
2010	54	18 - Petites Planètes 25 - Take Away-Shows 10 - Other works 1 feature - An Island	Brazil, Argentina, USA, Iceland, Egypt, Spain, Chile, France, Poland, Cambodia, Denmark
2011	54	48 - Petites Planètes 5 - Take Away-Shows	Indonesia, Hong Kong, Singapore,

¹⁹ The titles in bold will later appear in this research.

²⁰ Each take away show usually has a “side b” and one or more outtakes that are not being counted here.

		1 feature - Esperando el Tsunami		Turkey, Brazil, Italy, Colombia, Bolivia
2012	58	55 - Petites Planètes 3 - Take Away-Shows		Russia, Ethiopia, France, Croatia, Philippines, Australia, Ukraine, Indonesia
2013	70	69 - Petites Planètes 1 - ATP		UK, Laos, Vietnam, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Peru, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile,
2014	9	8 - Petites Planètes 1 feature - The Last Concert		Brazil, France, USA, Kosovo, Denmark
2015 ²¹	-	-	-	-
2016	-	-	-	-
2017	94	93	Híbridos	Brazil
		1 feature		

²¹ As I'm counting the year of release from 2014 to 2017 many films were recorded but only released together with *Híbridos, the spirits of Brazil* in 2017.

1.2. Early Experiments (2000-2005) – The First Steps

The early films of Moon already capture the seditious seeds of a longing to subvert the image through sound. In his first films where a live performance was captured music takes center stage, while the show itself and even the artists becomes secondary together with providing any context about what is happening. This is patent when contrasting Moon's *About Today (live)* (2006) by *THE NATIONAL* and *LIARS LIARS LIARS! (or how to play nirvana in 2006)* with Jem Cohen's *Instrument* (1999). Both films carry a similar DIY rock aesthetic, both are recorded with a bare minimum of equipment, and likewise, focus on live performances of the bands playing on the stage. However, the outcome and how each director envision the role of the image in relation to sound couldn't be further apart.

The technological shift between the six years that Cohen released *Instrument* and Moon started his experiments is partly responsible for some of these differences, but only to a limited extent. In Cohen's case, there was no way an independent filmmaker collaborating with an independent band could release a steady stream of short concert films on his own; he needed enough material to cut a feature-length documentary and participate in film festivals to find distribution.

With Moon video technology had significantly improved, digital video cameras were getting cheaper by the day, editing software

was finally within reach of the regular consumer, and most importantly YouTube and similar video sharing platforms were just created. Moon started just when video and internet platforms became a feasible option for artists and creators; he could find an output without needing the help of the bands he was recording, thus having the freedom to experiment.

Nevertheless, while it provides a more fertile ground for Moon, the difference between both is further ingrained. *Instrument* is the outcome of Cohen spending ten years recording the American punk-rock band Fugazi. The film narrates their transformation throughout 1987 to 1998 using captured footage of their shows, recording sessions for the albums, interviews, and shots of how it is to live on the road while touring. It also testifies to the development of film and video technology at that decade as it started on Super 8, moved to 16mm and later to video. The aesthetic is very DIY, a single camera with direct sound usually handheld mostly immobile during the shows with only some zooms and pans.



For someone that doesn't know anything about Fugazi, the documentary *Instrument* goes to lengths to explain the philosophy and ideals of the band (the constant effort in keeping its distance from the music industry and operating in a truly independent

manner). This strive to explain is even poked at by the insertion of a fantastic interview between the lead singer and an 8th grader for a public-access television TV show.

Cohen offers information to situate the songs inside a bigger picture, hints the socio-political views of the band, unpacks its history and makes sure that the unaware viewer has enough to follow the narrative development. The film is imbued since the start with an ocular-centric approach. It was created to remind a period, to be a documentary in its literal sense. Cohen, when started to record the Fugazi's shows just, wanted to "document things that are important to me."²²

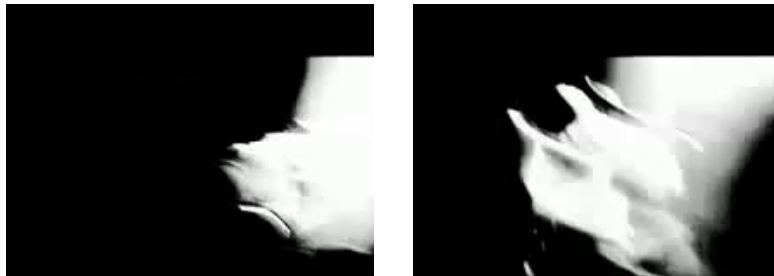
In contrast, Moon is not worried about documenting anything or in providing any information. Sound is at the center of attention, eschewing interviews and other footage that might give any explanation or context. *About Today (live)* by *THE NATIONAL* is the last film of a three-part series where three different shows by The National was recorded by Moon. In this film, he shoots the song being performed live in Paris. The first and most axiomatic observation is that music is the core of the film, even the band playing becomes background for it merely indicates the source of the sound. Moon, is not really interested in the band, it's appearance, or how they are playing, his focus is on the music being performed.

²² Cohen, J. (1999, May 5). *Jem Cohen*. (T. Minarchick, Editor) Retrieved June 22, 2018, from Ink19: <https://ink19.com/1999/05/magazine/interviews/jem-cohen>

In *Instrument*, each performance is mostly shot from the same angle. The camera only slightly moves to reframe or zoom in from a wide to a medium angle. The viewer can clearly distinguish what is happening on stage, who is who and what they are doing.

In *About Today (live) by THE NATIONAL* Moon starts experimenting with low frame rates coupled with fast camera movements that blur the image. The lead singer becomes a blur that transitions from one state to another like a slide show. In *LIARS LIARS! (or how to play nirvana in 2006)* he takes it one step further. In this film, shot a couple of months later, Moon mimics with the camera the rhythm and intensity of the music. Giving only a vague sense of where and what is happening the fast pans and whips with a low frame rate turn the concert, the band, and the people into an abstract painting as a method to convey the sense of being there, of interacting with the music, of experience a live performance.

LIARS LIARS LIARS! (or how to play nirvana in 2006)





Moon walks a thin-line between video art and rock documentary in these seminal years. From these experiments, though, three key traits emerge that are essential to how he will continue to develop his process of filmmaking. First is how music functions, not in reference to who is performing, but to open a space for encounter. Secondly, meaning and narrative are not essential as his films rather focus in delivering an experience akin to being present in a live show. Lastly, there's a heavy reliance in the new technologies that were developed at the turn of the century that persuades all steps of his artistic practice.

1.3. The Take Away Shows (2006-2009) - The Rebellion of Sound

While Moon was taking his baby steps in filmmaking, the freshly graduated journalist Christophe ‘Chryde’ Abric created, in 2003, an online blog to talk about the rock scene in Paris named La Blogothèque.²³ A couple of years later, in 2006, Moon and Chryde partnered up to record live and improvised song performances mostly by foreign bands that came to Paris on tour. Chryde would get in contact with them and produce the films while Moon would be the filmmaker.

The project was named *Take Away Shows* (or *Concert à emporter* in French) referencing the fleeting moment that was captured but also the fact that now you could carry these shows in your pocket as the iPod Video had just been launched. By subscribing to their RSS feed, it would automatically download the latest shows to be watched on-the-go.²⁴

The format was deceptively simple: record a live performance with one camera and the minimum takes possible—most of them in a single take—in an improvised and ordinary down-to-earth place.

²³ According to *Variety* magazine:
<http://variety.com/2008/digital/features/christophe-abric-and-mathieu-saura-1117985049/> and to <https://www.francemusique.fr/emissions/label-pop/christophe-abric-fondateur-de-la-blogotheque-25562>

²⁴ iTunes store would have a specific section for “Videocasts”, a term that fell into disuse as Youtube consolidated and made obsolete having to download the videos to watch.

The locations vary from small apartments, bus stops, coffee shops, taxis, bridges, parks and what became the staple of the *Take Away Shows*, the streets of Paris.²⁵

The first came out in April 2006, and each week two new films were published. This accelerated schedule fitted well with Moon's ideals of keeping each show raw. There was barely any editing, and the structure of the films was composed of a quick intro where the instructions of the director or some preparations by the artists sound, a dry cut to the title sequence followed by the song being performed and finishing with an outro title. This structure had some slight variations, but it permitted Moon to focus on what he considered most important: finding novel ways to force the musicians to sonically interact with the environment and with him.

To find a simple definition for this series would be hard, Mathias B. Korsgaard in his book *Music Video After MTV* categorizes it as "Improvised Music Video," but even then he problematizes it as "the *Take Away Shows* are uncategorizably situated between music video and concert documentary. They retain the music video's insistence on a single song, but the songs are played live in front of the camera as in concert documentaries."²⁶

²⁵ The crowdsourced dictionary "Urban Dictionary" ironically defines the *Takeaway Shows* as "an impromptu concert performed usually while walking down a street. Usually performed in France, always performed by an indie band. If it's a true take away show, it will involve some obscure instruments."

²⁶ KOORSGARD, Mathias B. (2017) *Music Video After MTV: Audiovisual Studies, New Media, and Popular Music*. [Kindle Book]. Retrieved from <http://www.amazon.com>

I will take another step and say that, as Moon prioritizes sound and music over the musicians, he goes beyond merely situating the *Take Away Shows* in between the music video and concert documentary. A simple example is seen in *Neil Halstead - Trying to Reach You* (2006). This film came out only two months after the *Take Away Shows* started and it was the first time that Moon gave priority to the environment and the sound over the performer. With a total duration of almost 4 minutes, more than half of the time is a single shot of the camera traveling down a street in Paris while the performance is heard. The listener doesn't know where the sound comes from until the camera reaches a building at the end of the street and with a big zoom into one of the dark windows he finally reveals the source—the artist casually playing his guitar sitting on a balcony—just to pan out some moments later.

It is not merely a question of delaying the source of the sound, as in Michel Chion's concept of acousmatic, but that the musician loses its hierarchy in the film. The fascination springs from the miracle of the “fleshy throat that vibrates” instead of being towards the artist.

Anchoring his films on the song and the interaction as opposed to the musician isn't without controversy. A recurring criticism about these films is how Moon vampirizes the bands and musicians' identities. According to one of these critics, “each time a band makes a *Take Away Show* the same ritual is repeated thanks to the *mise-en-scène*. The result is always a progressive loss of the band's

identity and posteriorly an assimilation thanks to the person behind the camera [Moon]”²⁷

Morera’s idea of losing the identity of the band is a curious one. Wouldn’t the band’s identity be in their music? Or is it in the constructed image of what they and their music represent? Lawrence Grossberg, in his chapter in the book *Sound & Vision: The Music Video Reader* (1993) analyzes the impact that the image had on the artists whose careers grew together with the boom of the music video:

Now the singer plays himself, promising a continuity of self with the space beyond the stage. But it takes a rare musician to not look like a video quotation of the image of musician; the image shimmers at the border of leaving the music behind, while celebrating itself as musically inspired.²⁸

To situate the rock (and indie) bands that appear on the *Take Away Shows* within the context that Grossberg explains, gives another layer of meaning to Mathieu Saura’s choice in assuming the artistic name of Vincent Moon. He betrays the carefully constructed identity of the artist, opting instead to focus on the voice and the sound that is created.

It is also a reconfiguration of the function that the music video has taken since MTV’s launch in 1981. According to Grossberg, “Music video presents a particular mode of cultural cannibalization,

²⁷Morera, S. (2010, October 1). *La creación de Vincent Moon (La Blogothèque)*. Retrieved from Transit: <http://cinentransit.com/la-creacion-de-vincent-moon-la-blogotheque/> (Personal translation to English)

²⁸Grossberg, L. (1993). The Media Economy of Rock Culture: Cinema, Postmodernity and Authenticity. In S. Frith, A. Goodwin, & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Sound & Vision: The Music Video Reader*. Abingdon: Routledge, p. 35

in which the soundtrack has been digested lifetimes ago, in fact, consumed by the image, which appears to be singing.”²⁹As in *A King Listens*, the sound in Moon is the responsible for undermining the image sovereignty in music video, as ontologically contradicting as it may sound. The image no longer matters, the musician’s identity is to be found not in how he presents himself but, in his resonance, sound becomes the site to find the unmediated uniqueness.

In Borge’s story, the Irishman not only saved John Vincent Moon but trusted him enough to take Moon to his hideout, which was paid back with betrayal. The band’s (or their managers and agents) similarly trusted their image to Moon who would then throw it away and look instead into the aural for something singular. A kind of betrayal where music and sound are more important than anything else, even if it means at the expense of the performer’s interest.

With time though, Moon and Chryde, that started the *Take Away Shows* by tracking down the bands that were in Paris and trying to convince them to participate in the recordings, were amassing millions of views. The films they did with Grizzly Bear, The Kooks, Beirut, or Arcade Fire, became even more popular than their official music videos and the music industry took note. Moon’s rebellion against the supremacy of the ocular, the civil war between sound and image, quickly became assimilated as another instrument in

²⁹ *Ibid.*

reinforcing the identity of a band. For some time, Moon played along.

The films shot for R.E.M. are a tipping point in this aspect. According to the blog post in La Blogothèque, the lead singer from R.E.M. (Michael Stipe) reached out to them looking to do a couple of *Take Away Shows*. Stipe had shown some of the films to his band members and thought that it would be an exciting challenge. Moon displays a clear idea of why R.E.M. is interested in doing a *Take Away Show*, he writes— “Doing a Take Away Show with R.E.M. could be seen as a way to rejuvenate their image. Obviously, it’s part of the whole thing. Putting aside the huge venues and ultra-sophisticated recording studios to play in the street—that’s a pretty cool thing to do, certainly seen as chic.”³⁰

Stipe had doubts if R.E.M. would fit into this format. A decade before when Jem Cohen showed his film *Lucky Three* (1997) to Michael Stipe, a performance film with Elliott Smith similar to the *Take Away Shows*, Stipe’s answer was “who would want to watch a musician play an instrument?”³¹ These doubts—even with the proven success of the series from La Blogothèque—were still there since Stipe saw this as a “challenge” and Moon was worried what if it didn’t work? “What if the band looked ridiculous, old-fashioned, too used to playing their songs perfectly in front of bigger, more

³⁰ Moon, V. (2008, March 31). *R.E.M.* Retrieved 11 15, 2017, from La Blogothèque: <http://en.blogotheque.net/2008/03/31/r-e-m-en/> (The translated English version of the blog post doesn’t explicitly state who wrote it but the original in French is signed by Vincent Moon)

³¹ *Ibid.*

impressive cameras? (...) what would it be like with such an ‘old’ band, so experienced in the classical media stuff?”

It took three songs to break those doubts. In *R.E.M. - Living Well* (2008) Moon crammed the whole band into a car and made them sing while driving around. While “playing this little game” Stipe broke out in laughter and from there on they became friends just playing songs for the sake of it.

So why do these films for R.E.M. have such a weight? It indicates the reversion from Moon ideals of subverting the identity and the image to how the music industry started incorporating this raw, stripped-down music performances style and spinning it into promotion and marketing. Moreover, although Moon is aware of this, it didn’t seem to bother him back then, since R.E.M. gave him “crazy freedom for experimenting ideas and developing new formats.”³²

Also, even though it was part of trying to rejuvenate the image of R.E.M., it was still the sort of personal interaction that appealed to Moon. Using the film for promotion and marketing could be accepted if there was still freedom for an interaction that tried forcing the spontaneity of the sound above the image. This would soon change.

As La Blogothèque grew more successful, because of the *Take Away Shows*, new directors started coming onboard and mimicking the original format. Additionally, around the world many projects

³² *Ibid.*

started replicating the formula.³³ Moon's initial aural uprising was stalled. The *Take Away Shows* was mummified, withering any revolutionary potential into a set of aesthetic traits that pictured an imagined authenticity. His initial motives of "breaking certain rules of music representation and basically those rules were rules that we saw in a world of rock and pop music,"³⁴ became part of the rules itself.

Moon, the new directors of La Blogothèque, and the many other projects that spawned focused on the external elements instead of stressing the deconstruction of the identity. These aspects were: Take the performance out to unusual places; the music always must be recorded live; when possible shoot in a single-take; a hand-held camera that moves around. These traits initially devised to deconstruct the identity, when removed from the conditions of forcing unexpected encounters, became a blatant attempt in trying to sustain a shallow image of authenticity that could be adapted for the music industry.

Already in 2007, Moon occasionally focus so much on these aspects that the interaction comes in second place. In his film *CHEAP MAGIC INSIDE (a project with BEIRUT)* (2007), movements are rehearsed to the point that lead singer Zach Condon appears awkwardly acting out what was expected of him. The band is positioned throughout the building so that they come in to play in

³³ NPR's *Tiny Desk Concerts*, *Into the Woods*, *Música de Bolso* in Brazil, Sony Ericsson's *Copenhagen X Sessions*, *Watch Listen Tell*, *They Shoot Music Don't They* from Vienna—are just some of the examples.

³⁴ *Vincent Moon has a Vision* (2012). [YouTube Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdHiZRChxkc>

pre-determined moments, and there are very few sequences where Moon risks losing control of what is happening.

Chryde, the producer of the *Take Away Shows*, gradually turned La Blogothèque, into a production house, capitalizing on the interest of the music industry in exploring the format. A decade later, with Moon already far gone, the films that Chryde produced show to what extremes the format was carefully embalmed, embellished and immobilized to only maintain the outer appearance of what made it so unique. Both the music videos *Phoenix 'Ti Amo', Live in Teatro Bibiena, Mantova* (directed in 2017 by Colin Solal Cardo) and *Justin Timberlake - Say Something ft. Chris Stapleton* (2018, directed by Arturo Perez Jr.) follow, to the rule, all the aspects that Moon developed back in 2006.

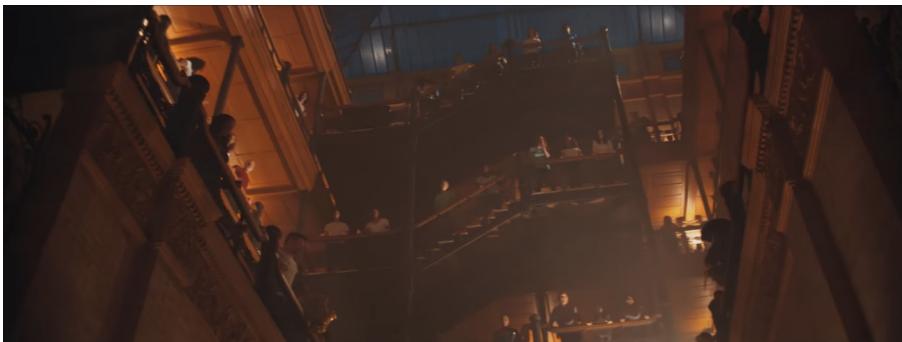
Both Colin Solal Cardo and Arturo Perez Jr., have been working as directors for La Blogothèque for many years now. In these two music videos though, the difference is that now there is not even a trace of the sonic interactions that appealed so strongly to Moon. Both follow, strictly, the format of the *Take Away Shows*: single-take, live music, always moving. Nevertheless, they required many weeks of pre-production, permit clearance to shoot in the historical buildings, an intricate lighting that takes at least half-a-day to set-up with a sizable crew, rehearsal with each person that will appear so that they are in the right position at the right time, wiring microphones all over the building and a sound crew, and have the musicians rehearse each step. In *Phoenix 'Ti Amo'* it's rehearsing with the people who will figure in as casually entering the theater,

in *Say Something* it's a whole choir that will have to correctly time their entrance throughout the balconies of the building.

Phoenix 'Ti Amo', Live in Teatro Bibiena, Mantova (2017)



Justin Timberlake - Say Something ft. Chris Stapleton (2018)



Returning to Moon, around 2008, his honeymoon with the indie music scene came to an end as a misunderstanding with the band *Arcade Fire* led to him losing the final cut of a feature documentary. Already disenchanted and recording less and less *Take Away Shows* (which now had more directors keeping a constant flow of new shows), the filmmaker hears once again that

disembodied woman's voice, attracting him towards the sonic interactions, and responds accordingly, going back to his projects without any commercial restrictions.³⁵

In retrospect, his analysis from this time is that “from the beginning I’ve had the freedom to do what I want when there’s no money involved. I’ve had good and bad experiences of working with money on some projects, but mostly it turned out bad.”³⁶ Moon in the end made over 200 *Take Away Shows*, and it was during this time that he perfected his style through constant experimentation. These years constantly creating was his true film school. Most importantly, during this period, he perfected the techniques that he will soon start using to unearth an otocentric image. He trained and became virtuous handling the, he learned how to move within the scene and how to use his body movement in a harmonic sense with the artist being recorded.

³⁵ The association that Mladen Dolar makes in his article *What's a Voice?* (DOI: 10.11606/issn.2237-1184.v0i18p79-90) between the woman's voice in *A King Listens* and the sirens in *Odysseus* strengthens this anecdote of Moon being unable to resist the call of sound.

³⁶ Moon, V. (2014, March 11). In *Conversation: Filmmaker Vincent Moon and Hung Tran of The Onion Cellar*. (H. Tran, Interviewer) Retrieved May 26, 2018, from <https://www.andofotherthings.com/2014/03/11/conversation-filmmaker-vincent-moon-hung-tran-onion-cellar/>

1.4. Feature Documentaries and other projects (2006-2011) - Finding a Voice

In parallel to the *Take Away Shows* and his work in La Blogothèque, Moon also created ten feature documentaries and some other side projects. Free from the self-imposed structure of La Blogothèque these documentaries display his inspirations at the time and serve as a testbed for his more experimental ideas. One of the biggest influence early on, that is visible throughout his career is Nicolas Humbert & Werner Penzel's documentary about Fred Frith *Step Across the Border* (1990). Moon praises the film for being the closest visual form to music, that it is "cinema and music conversing."³⁷ This film becomes a urtext for Moon. He will struggle throughout the *Take Away Shows* and in his first documentaries to reach what Humber & Penzel describe as being the core of the film:

In *Step Across the Border* two forms of artistic expression, improvised music and cinema direct, are interrelated. In both forms it is the moment that counts, the intuitive sense for what is happening in a space. Music and film come into existence out of an intense perception of the moment, not from the transformation of a pre-ordained plan. In improvisation the plan is revealed only at the end. One finds it.

The other connection concerns the work method: the film team as band. Much as musicians communicate via the music, our work, too, was realized within a very small and flexible team of equals. What mattered was exchange. And movement. Sometimes we started filming in the middle of the night, responding to a new

³⁷ Vincent Moon - *What's In My Bag?* (2011). [YouTube Video]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=21&v=7w1xzNnNcek

idea that had arisen only minutes before. We had a fundamental feeling for what we wanted to do, for what kind of film this should be. And we followed that feeling. It was all very instinctive.³⁸

Humber & Penzel furthermore, in how they worked within their production company Cine Nomad, travelling around the world to capture these moments, also seem to have inspired Moon's constant reference to his work as a nomadic kind of cinema.

With *Step Across the Border*, as a strong influence directing Moon's filmmaking, he pursues what a sonic image may be in the documentaries that he did in parallel to his work in the *Take Away Shows*. When observing these documentaries a trail emerges in how Moon progressed in achieving this. In his first documentary *A Skin a Night* (2008) this endeavor to take the visuals to the level of music is explicit.³⁹ Moon uses sequences of the horizon and landscape of the city quickly passing by and spinning into blurs of light and patterns similar to those in *Step Across the Border*. These shots, an attempt to visualize music, as they give rhythm more than meaning to the viewer. A first step similar to what film theorist and director, Sergei Eisenstein, wrote in his chapter *The Landscape as Music*, which will reappear later-on in this thesis.

Nevertheless, these sequences are few and stand out from the rest of the film. These first documentaries are still very didactic compared to his later work. There are lower thirds describing the people, the

³⁸ Liner Notes for the film quoted in Gehman, C. (1997). *Stateless*. Millenium Film Journal, 30/31(Fall).

³⁹ It was his first recorded as the footage is from 2006, although it came out in 2008.

band explain their songs, there are headshot interviews and Matt Berninger's (the lead singer) voice-over talks about the band, the recording of their album *Boxer* and the process of creation. With very little performance footage, most of the shots are their recording experience in the studio. *A Skin a Night* is an example of Moon trying different forms to subvert the image while balancing the commercial necessity of doing a commissioned documentary for a band.

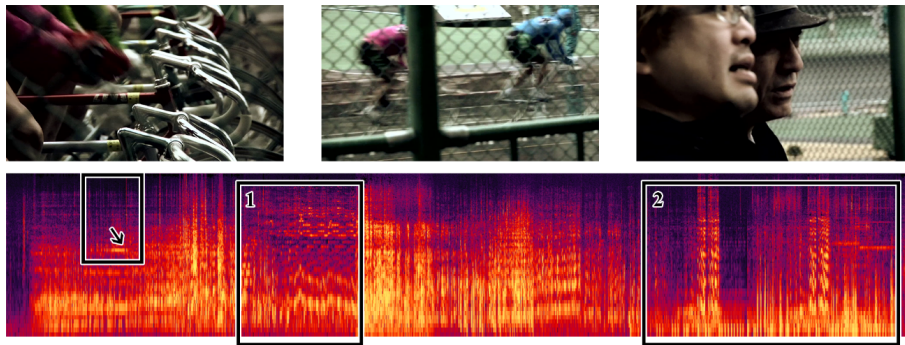
REM: Six Days (2008) progresses the experimentation, as it's a mashup of footage from live concerts, the recording studio and the outtakes from *Take Away Shows* that was done with them. With more access and freedom to capture the live shows around the venue and the stage, he goes back to his exploration of how to shoot a live show returning to the exercise of using the concert to break free from the forms of the performance and into the visual realm as he had previously done in *Liars, Liars, Liars*.

In any case, what I consider to be the two most decisive films from this time are *Le Feutes des Fleurs* (2009) and *An Island* (2010). The former is a film about the cult Japanese musician and poet Kazuki Tomokawa. This film consolidates the style of what Moon worked so far in his previous documentaries and in *La Blogothèque*. He finally achieved creating his particular version of *Step Across the Border* and won the Sound & Vision award at CHP:DOX 2009, one of the film festivals that continued to bring Moon onboard with his new releases.

This film indicates his distancing from the music industry. It's his first feature documentary that wasn't commissioned by a band or musician. By this time Moon had already shot five documentaries and a little bit over 100 *Take Away Shows*, he acquired the technical knowledge and confidence that enabled him to take the next step in his sound overtake of the visual. Free from any commercial requirements the film is not a portrait of Kazuki Tomokawa, but a portrait of what it is to be in the presence of this poet and musician also known as "the screaming philosopher." The film focuses on the experience of interacting with the artist, music flows out of the performance footage and mixes with the sounds of the city occasionally coming back together to show a segment of a performance or a snippet of Tomokawa's life.

Very little explanation of what is happening is given. Additionally, all the music being in Japanese helps to distance the listener from any meaning. The subtitles are present only in the moments where the musician talks about his life, and even then, the little that is talked isn't sufficient to create a portrait of the artist. The sequence of Tomokawa talking about Keirin bike races establishes well Moon's progress in reconfiguring the relation between music and visual.

Stills and Spectral Analysis from the Keirin race sequence



It begins with the sounds of a Keirin race transmission on tv. The film first introduces the sounds to briefly show a quick sequence of the bikes rushing through the track to then cut to Tomokawa sitting in his living room watching the race. The voice of the race announcer is joined by a strange gong that increasingly reverberates louder and quicker until it stops in sync when Tomokawa starts shouting “go!” as the bikes get closer to the finish line (the **arrow** in the figure above marking the exact moment). It does not explain from where the gong comes from, and as the sequence continues sounds flow in and out not helping identify if what is being heard comes from the race, from some other source that is not being shown, or from the artist’s music. Jumping from the living room to the race tracks, a strange kitschy Japanese music starts playing without every revealing it’s source (the frequencies at rectangle **1**). People are putting their bets in; the bikers are getting ready to race even though there is heavy rain pouring down. Tomokawa starts talking about the differences between betting and artistic creation while images of the stadium resound and the bike race dances together with the soundscape. When Tomokawa the bet, his music

merges the sound into a dreamlike image (number 2 is where his music starts). Moon succeeds in grounding the film in the sonic experience, image and sound unfold an interaction that slowly detaches from what the film depicts.

Le Feutes de Fleurs is a film about affirming one's uniqueness at its most basic level, and for such sound is the only place where this concept can be developed. The musician tells the tragic story of his younger brother— in his 30s he couldn't longer manage to live in this world and decided to jump in front of a train. Tomokawa, in turn, sings and screams to affirm his place, his voice is his presence against all odds. Moon, successively, accompanies Tomokawa's screams, using the camera as an instrument that screams together with the poet.

Tomokawa's portrait is the mean that Moon uses to open his own voice, a successful encounter in interacting with the woman's voice in Calvino's story. The previous years of constant experimentation culminated in this documentary. It's Moon's scream of autonomy against the industry and his affirmation as an independent fleshy throat that resonates back through his films.

After expunging in *Le Feutes de Fleurs* his need to reconceptualize *Step Across the Border*, he moves on to new territories. This move will be analyzed in depth in the chapter three with *An Island*, and how it solidifies Moon's interests in expanding what he views as music and continuing his development of the image from a broader sound perspective.

1.5. Petites Planètes (2009-2014) - A Thousand Planets and Becoming Minor

Moon's breakout from the music industry was due to a slow but constant curiosity to explore new interactions with sound and music that went beyond the ones he was having so far with the indie music bands. In *La Blogothèque*, the idea at the time was to ignore the rules and force the musicians out of their comfort zone by taking them off the stage and into the streets. However, a part of him wanted to seek something different and pursuit places where music is on the streets, far away from the recording studios and already a site for unexpected encounters.

While still dedicating himself to the *Take Away Shows*, in 2007 Moon released three short films about the music in Essaouira, Morocco. In 2008 he released three films shot in Tanzania, a feature documentary about a duo of Czech viola players, and an unfinished documentary shot in Palestine. This is an important aspect as it shows that even while working within the indie rock scene there was a growing attraction in Moon to other forms of music. It may also be the manifestation of a growing disenchantment with the industry.

With the new directors of *La Blogothèque* keeping the flow of indie-rock shows, he distances himself from the USA/Europe axis and searches for rising artists in other places of the world, starting with a film about a musician from Mali. A work that he continued

well after he stopped directly working for La Blogothèque. Each time he found an artist that would fit the audience of the *Take Away Shows* he opted to release it in the bigger platform created by Chryde instead of on his personal network.

In 2010 the ties are further severed, and Moon decides that it's time to try something different:

I felt the need to travel and to discover some other music, to explore the world, going to other corners, and actually, it was also this idea of nomadic cinema, sort of, that I had in mind. How could the use of new technologies and the road fit together? How could I edit my films in a bus crossing the Andes?⁴⁰

It was this call to explore and investigate that led him to create *Petites Planètes*. A name inspired by the homonymous series of travel books that Chris Marker edited for Editions de Seuil in the 1950s. The idea behind the 32 volumes that he edited was for it not be “a guidebook, not a history book, not a propaganda brochure, not a traveler’s impressions, but instead equivalent to the conversation we would like to have with someone intelligent and well versed in the country that interests us.”⁴¹

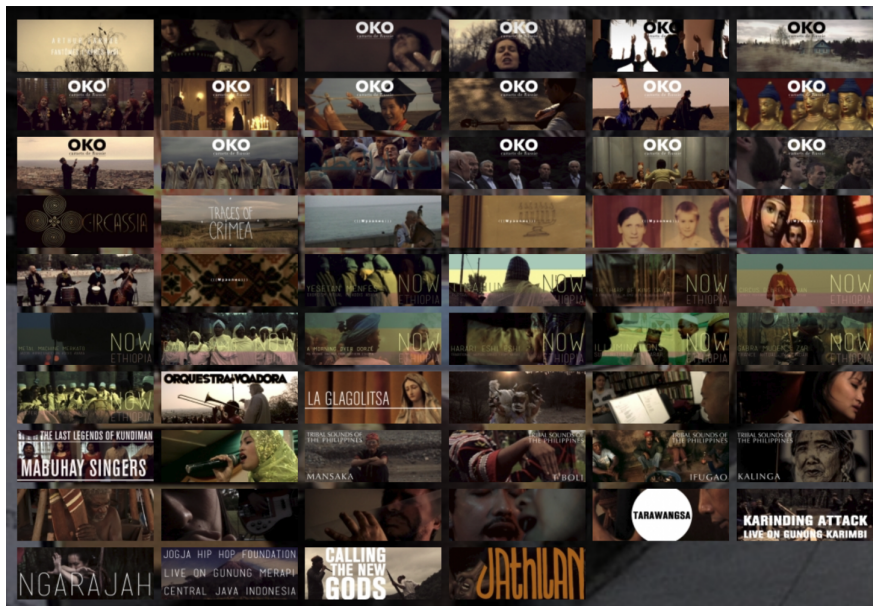
⁴⁰ Vincent Moon and Nana Vasconcelos: *The world's hidden music rituals*. (2014) [Youtube Video]. TED. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nZqiPLCvM4>

⁴¹ Marker, C. quoted in Stevens, I. (2014). *Isabel Stevens on Chris Marker's "Petite Planète"*. Retrieved January 23, 2016, from Aperture: <https://aperture.org/blog/isabel-stevens-chris-markers-petite-planete/>

Covers from Chris Marker's travel books



Vincent Moon's Website



It's intriguing to make deeper links between Moon's series *Petites Planètes* and Marker's *Petite Planète*. The first, more obvious, is how Moon uses the plural form. In 1959, Marker's words to justify the series was that "We live in a planet that seems smaller and smaller. Everything invites us to know it better."⁴²

The tone of Moon's films also reflects how Marker questions the seriousness of travel books by breaking the idea of what is institutionally noble and sanctified—why is there a separation into what is considered to be proper culture and history? Marker gives photographs of street life and people at work equal attention to those of eminent historical figures. This doesn't mean he refuses or denies the gravity of history—especially at a time with such recent memories from World War II—but he intersects these scarred memories with new ones that are being created. In the volume on Austria, for example, he opens the first chapter with the title of Carol Reed's film "The Third Man," and it takes three pages to confirm what the reader was expecting by showing the iconic Prater's Ferris wheel.

Moon's series, in a similar manner, counterbalances these both extremes. A film about the Sufi chants in Ethiopia is followed by the traveling circus artists performing in the streets of Debre Berhan. Trance rituals in Java clash with Indonesian Hip Hop. Possession rites in Brazil are followed by carnival. Both artists

⁴² Marker, C. quoted in Geneix, N. (2014). *LA COLLECTION «PETITE PLANÈTE» (SEUIL) – «SOUS LA DIRECTION DE» CHRIS MARKER, 1954-1964*. Retrieved February 2, 2016, from Chris Marker: <https://chrismarker.org/chris-marker-2/petite-planete/> (My translation from the original in French)

carry in their homonymous series the idea of mixing all levels of culture to better dialog with the places they are talking about.

At last, Chris Marker's words at the beginning of *Petite Planète* echoes strongly in Moon's beliefs and in the direction that his work has taken him:

One does not escape so easily from a world now conquered, and a new tourism appears, which exorcises the picturesque. This enthusiasm of the reader for the knowledge of the world is not the sign that he suddenly discovered for the other nations a long-dormant curiosity: it is rather that he understood that their knowledge was a step, an indispensable component to self-knowledge.⁴³

For five years Moon traveled to over 20 regions from all over the world and released 198 films.⁴⁴ Technology played a very important part and was essential to how *Petites Planètes* worked. Apart from allowing Moon to shoot single-handedly and to edit it on the go, it also made possible for Moon to create a massive database of these films where the listener can navigate throughout the hundreds of films creating his own path.

Possibly, its due to this database that Moon decides to, instead of using Chris Marker's original *Petit Planète*, use the plural form *Petites Planètes*. A vision more appropriate to a time where the vast quantity of information available ends in isolationism; each niche, each place, each topic, a world in itself. Moon's use of the plural form, furthermore, indicates a move towards the Deleuze of *The*

⁴³ *Ibid.* (Personal translation from the original in French).

⁴⁴ Chile, Argentina, Cambodia, Egypt, Poland, Iceland, Brazil, Colombia, Turkey, Sardinia, Indonesia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, Philippines, Croatia, Ethiopia, Russia, Uruguay, Peru, Caucasus, Vietnam and Ukraine

Fold and *A Thousand Plateaus*. An understanding that in constructing these multiple worlds the listener is forced to find new ways to interact with the films, to unfold the rhizome (which is the subject of the last chapter).

While still in Deleuze's and Guattari's, another perspective that helps understand Moon's move away from the music industry is that of becoming minor.⁴⁵ Free from the music industry, his work inadvertently drifts towards the three main aspects of what is considered to be minor literature (and art): The deterritorialization of the major language (further changing the relation between image and sound); Everything is political (as it searches to disrupt signifying regimes); It is always collective (Moon's dependence on the community that grew around his work to support and help him in every step of the process).

Moon, while not theoretically expressing the idea of becoming minor, was actively appropriating the tools at his disposal to avoid what previously happened [in *La Blogothèque*] when creating *Petites Planètes*:

To do all those films would have been impossible with a big company behind me. I was traveling alone with my backpack — computer, camera, microphones in it. Alone, but with [the help of the] local people. Meeting my team, which was absolutely not professional people, on the spot there, going from one place to another. I really believed that cinema could be this very simple thing—I want to make a film and you're going to give me a place

⁴⁵ Which is present in *A Thousand Plateaus* but that assumes the central spotlight in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1986)

to stay for the night. I give you a moment of cinema and you offer me a caipirinha.⁴⁶

In an essay named *Becoming Minor* (2017), authors Anna Secor and Jess Linz discuss that the condition and the aim of becoming minor is to be at the impasse, at the space of betweenness. The problem, though, is that it's not a comfortable position to stay in this state of the impasse (thus the need of a diagram as discussed further on), Moon failed in his first years and now with more experience comes back to this state in *Petites Planètes*:

The impasse space is parallel to the space you were passing through, but different. Unadorned, it does not cater to its guests with predictability or decorum. It is more savage. It is dark in the impasse; it is a space that requires heightened senses, because it makes no promises. In the impasse, adjustment style prevails over history and genealogy. This is an unholy space of flux, reconfiguring, and recoding of meaning. In the impasse, you can't move forward with any rapid clip. This doesn't mean that nothing is happening, though. In an impasse, an active passivity overtakes you, reconfiguring molecules and changing operations.⁴⁷

This description of the impasse seems to describe the king's plunge into the dark caves below his castle, could listening be a form of active passivity? At certain moments in *Petites Planètes* Moon seems to go so far into the sonic experimentations that he seems to be touching his way in the darkness trying to find a way to balance himself. It's his period where listening and the sonic is most tensioned with the image. Moon's becoming minor is a work from within cinematic language, it stammers and stutters the vision so

⁴⁶ Vincent Moon and Nana Vasconcelos: *The world's hidden music rituals*. (2014) [YouTube Video]. TED. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nZqiPLCvM4>

⁴⁷ Secor, A., & Linz, J. (2017). *Becoming Minor*. *D: Society and Space*, 35(4), 568-573. doi:10.1177/0263775817710075

that sound can overtake the hegemony. In continuing the movement from *La Faute des Fleurs*, Moon in *Petites Planètes* becomes more conscious of the medium he is working with. He pushes the visual sometimes to see where the connection with the sound will snap.

Furthermore, in moving on from the idea of music video to now tackling the ethnographic documentary practices, becoming minor is used as a tactic to divest Moon from responsibilities when he takes this next step. It's impossible to ignore the ethical issues raised by a French filmmaker who leaves a budding career in the music industry to travel the world recording traditions in lesser developed countries. The first image that comes to mind is that of French colonialism and the practices of ethnographers in the first half of the 20th century.

Deleuze, in his chapter *The Power of False* in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (2013), relates becoming minor to how Jean Rouch attempts to overcome this colonialist mentality. In Rouch's documentaries, the trained ethnographer uses various mechanisms to critique the colonialist other and to undermine the fiction of identity. Whether they worked or not is a controversial topic outside of my research scope. Nevertheless, the three elements of minor literature are evident in his films— "deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1986). *Kafka: toward a minor literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, p. 18.

In Moon's case becoming minor is associated with his fixation on being experimental as a method of resistance from any academical approach. This routine avoids the necessity of guidebooks and extensive knowledge in ethnography practices, both with the creator and the listener. This isn't without certain pitfalls. The editors of the experimental anthropology magazine *ART/E/FACT* synthesize well what Moon brings to this field— "Vincent Moon and Jacob Kirkegaard, have a clear ethnographic perspective in their line of work, but are not afraid of misrepresenting the folklore or worried about staying within academic frames of anthropology - in this way they push the boundaries into an experimental folklore."⁴⁹

For some years Moon even described himself in his website as "questioning the established norms of visual representations of the 'other'," he later moved on to a less pedantic "About Me" page that raises less controversy and has avoided naming himself an experimental ethnographer, as he did before.⁵⁰

There is also a financial-technological aspect to Moon's becoming minor. Compare *Petites Planètes* with Alan Lomax, an ethnographer that similarly to Moon shared interests in collecting music from around the world. With a life dedicated to capturing folkloric music, Lomax although focusing his work in the United States also traveled around the world capturing local musicians. The

⁴⁹Rosenblum, E., & Grytter, C. (2013). *From the Editors*. *ART/E/FACT*, 3. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/artefactpub/docs/issue_3/1?ff=true&e=3746210/6638693

⁵⁰ The old one, from 2013, can still be accessed here: <https://web.archive.org/web/20130528091503/http://www.vincentmoon.com/about.php>

controversy in Lomax, though, is that he used to copyright the folk music he recorded and sell them without distributing any royalties to the musicians. A fact that came to light when the blues musician Leadbelly sued him for the money that he owned.⁵¹ Moon, on the other hand, by using Creative Commons avoids entering these legal and ethical issues.

Distributing his films for “free” creates a relationship with the listener that Henry Jenkins denominates as the moral economy, where “free” means that even though people have not used money to purchase the films, Moon expects some sort of labor to be involved from those that watch his work.⁵² In becoming minor, he expects that a percentage of people who watch his films are likely to support the project either by sharing, by helping him with specific expertise or knowledge of local musicians for his next recordings, donating money through crowdfunding or paying a small fee to watch him screen his movies. Moon is acutely aware of this and adapted his life to fit within these parameters:

I live without any money, or very little sums, from film festivals or music festivals who invite me mostly. But, I don't make films 'for free' as someone was telling me the other day – I just don't make them 'for money', but I get very well paid in the energy of

⁵¹ Wolfe, C. K. (1992). *The Life and Legend of Leadbelly*. New York: HarperCollins. (On the other hand, in a turn of events, the electronic musician Moby sampled Lomax's recording in his music *Honey* and turned them into platinum selling records).

⁵² Jenkins, H., Ford, S., & Green, J. (2013). *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York: New York University Press, p. 74.

people, in the exchanges I have on an everyday basis, in invitations for a dinner or a drink.⁵³

Whether this model is an ethical one or not is debatable. Rouch, for example, shared with all his collaborators royalties from his films. Paul Henley in his article *Postcards at the service of the Imaginary* (2010) describes how Rouch's subjects became future collaborators, and how many of them through the royalties they received were able to open a business and improve their life situation. Moon, conversely, even though is sharing the films under Creative Commons reaps benefits, other than a financial one, that mostly concentrates on him (like recognition, invitations to travel, exhibition spaces). Although it could be argued that the musician's recorded benefit from the exposure that the films give them.

So far, this hasn't been a problem as the network of collaborators he built around him seem to derive trust from his collaborative process. The term refers to a sense that the people who helped him develop the films for *Petites Planètes*, expect him to maintain the moral obligations (freely sharing, local musicians, and creative commons) that are implicit in the project. As he balances between the impasse of minor and major, this might eventually become problematic if Moon is unable to continue in this in-between state and decides to use his material for purposes that betray this trust. For now, the fact that he walked away from directing videos to large record labels

⁵³ Moon, V. (2011, November 27). *WATCHING TOM ZÉ WAS LIKE WATCHING ME MOVING IN SPACE: AN INTERVIEW WITH VINCENT MOON*. (R. Slater, Interviewer) Retrieved July 15, 2014, from <https://soundsandcolours.com/subjects/film/watching-tom-ze-was-like-watching-me-moving-in-space-an-interview-with-vincent-moon-10813/>

and dedicated himself to *Petites Planètes* gave him the “street cred” that he has maintained so far.

Petites Planètes importance in Moon’s career will be further explored in the thesis, for now, this section focuses in defining the period where the concept of becoming minor was one of the primary key points. If with the *Take Away Shows* the director has to force the musicians into a situation where they can shed their identities, in *Petites Planètes* there is no such need. The notion of the director is of someone who collaborates, someone who is integral to what is being filmed but that has as much control as who is in front of the camera:

The notion of “director” is overstated and many things escape to our direction during the process of creation. It would have to be about letting it go as much as possible in the recording process, being open to the accident and play with it. In that configuration, the exchange with the “subjects” is obviously on a very different level. I often show my ignorance of the result as a first contact with the people I will film. The result will clearly then be a “collaboration” with all the impromptu in it. A collaboration born from the refusal of power.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ MOON quoted in Rosenblum, E., & Grytter, C. (2013). *From the Editors*. ART/E/FACT, 3. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/artefactpub/docs/issue_3/1?ff=true&e=3746210/6638693

1.6. Híbridos (2014-2018) – Lifting the eyes

Híbridos is the latest project that Moon created in partnership with the director Priscilla Telmon. For three years Moon stayed in Brazil dedicating his time to explore the multiple manifestations of spirituality in the country, a big change in pace for someone who was always traveling around the world and working on multiple fronts. The project is composed of a feature-length documentary (released in 2017), a database where each ritual is a separate film (93 films total), an audiovisual installation and also a live-cinema experience.

The feature follows the aesthetic line Moon has developed so far. Moon and Telmon over the course of 90 minutes explore rituals from the diverse tapestry of spirituality that forms Brazil, with no explanation or descriptions. From Candomblé to Indigenous rituals, from the New Christian Evangelical movements to Ayahuasca ceremonies, all of these are concatenated together creating a fragile line that connects them. The bodies merge into a moving mass of feet and hands during the celebration of Círio de Nazaré⁵⁵ and soon are made whole again in Umbanda's "terreiro."

In the live-cinema version, the directors edit and mix the footage with the sounds in a live performance and sometimes with live music being played as well. In film festivals and wherever adequate,

⁵⁵ A catholic religious procession in Belém do Pará that reunites over 2 million people.

the feature documentary is followed by the live version. In the first year of release, interestingly, *Híbridos Live* gained more space than the feature and was able to take the project to places such as *MoMA* and the *Barbican*.⁵⁶ As the topic of the film is the manifestation of spirituality in its most diverse forms, some unexpected venues became interested in the live version like the Église St Merry (Paris), the San Damiano Church (NYC) and the Mekudeshet Sacred Art Festival (Jerusalem).⁵⁷

Híbridos consolidates a growing interest in religion, rituals, trance and possession that was already present in *Petites Planètes* (in 2012 Moon made a series on Sufi rituals in Chechnya and the trance rituals of Java). At that time though, this was a tangential subtopic to local folklore. *Híbridos* finishes this move from local folklore to solely focus on how sound and music are integrated into religious practices and its relation to the body.

The section in this thesis *The Encounter-Image*, is dedicated exclusively to *Híbridos*, where I will go into details. However, for now, most importantly, this project, is the moment in *A King Listens* where Moon emerges from the darkness with the ocular reconfigured anew. *Híbridos* marks the opening of the eyes. A new image that was conceived in the *Take Away Shows*, gestated during *Petites Planètes* and that now is born. Its umbilical cord freshly cut.

⁵⁶ Although at the time of this writing it's still early to compare in the long run the feature and live version. There are two distributors already for the theatrical release in Brazil and France.

⁵⁷ <http://petitesplanetes.earth/agenda>

Still an infant, still not being able to walk alone, but already a separate entity born anew from sound and vision.

From Mathieu Saura to Vincent Moon—with the chronicle of the betrayal mapped out and the king having emerged from the darkness, it is time to shift from the macro narrative to study the details that make Moon's path relevant to the progress of an otocentric cinema.

2.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Listening: overcoming the limitations of a visual model of thought.

What does it mean to be truly listening? In Moon's career to listen is a mode of interaction that opens to sensual apperception, one that denies the constructed identity to find the uniqueness in sound. In the king's story, similarly, listening is the mode of interaction that asignifies what previously carried an indexical relation. Listening, then, is a direct breach in the predominantly visual creation of meaning. To listen is not only to be all ears but a symbolic mode where all senses become equally important in creating a subjectivity.

Take Moon's film *CALLING THE NEW GODS • SENYAWA live in Java* (2012), as an example. Shot in various location around Jakarta, the music from duo Senyawa is the foundation on which the film is developed. Instead of attributing signification to what is shown, the electronically modified Indonesian instrument distorts, together with the manic-possession-like singing, the bucolic rural vision of country-side Indonesia. Something is growing underneath, that cannot be seen, cannot be understood, but that can be listened too.

Intro sequence in CALLING THE NEW GODS • SENYAWA live in Java





In the opening chapter of Jacques Attali's *Noise*, when discussing the dominant mode of scientific thought (and philosophical thought) based on the visual conception, the French author writes that "our science has always desired to monitor, measure, abstract, and castrate meaning."⁵⁸ There is an important mistranslation here that Adrienne Janus caught in an article discussing the anti-ocular turn in philosophy. Janus notes that meaning here is misinterpreted in the English translation from the French word "les sens." A tricky word that carries the idea of meaning but also of sensual perception (among other unfoldings that this word has). The original text meant senses and the right translation would be that visual conceptualization in scientific and philosophical thought "has always desired... to castrate our senses."

What a difference! From vision castrating meaning to vision castrating our senses! Attali follows-up that, to counter this sensual castration one must listen, that listening works as a "mode of sensual apperception."⁵⁹ In the English translation, listening ends as a form to counter the castration of meaning, implying that to listen

⁵⁸ Attali, J. (1985). *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, p. 3.

⁵⁹ Janus' translation from the original French text of Attali's *Bruit* in Janus, A. (2011, Spring). *Jean-Luc Nancy and the "Anti-Ocular" Turn in Continental Philosophy and Critical Theory*. *Comparative Literature*, 63(2), p. 185.

is to understand. But in the original, listening is a way to open our senses, to counter the optical castration.

This simple mistake perfectly introduces a problem that haunts continental philosophy, that of sensation and perception as opposed to the intellect. Understanding has historically been linked with the visual, the ocular. Even the word “theory” already carries the weight of thinking with seeing. Heidegger in *Science and Reflection* probes the etymology of the word by looking into where it came from, *theōrein*.

The verb *theōrein* grew out of the coalescing of two root words, *thea* and *horaō*. *Thea* (d. theater) is the outward look, the aspect, in which something shows itself, the outward appearance in which it offers itself. Plato names this aspect in which what presences shows what it is, *eidos*. To have seen this aspect, *eidēnai*, is to know [*wissen*]. The second root word in *theōrein*, *horaō*, means: to look at something attentively, to look it over, to view it closely. Thus it follows that *theōrein* is *thean horan*, to look attentively on the outward appearance wherein what presences becomes visible and, through such sight-seeing-to linger with it.⁶⁰

To overcome this impulse “already prepared in Greek thinking, of a looking-at that sunders and compartmentalizes”⁶¹ Heidegger turns towards aural metaphors and the acoustics. Adrienne Janus draws attention to Martin Jay’s book *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century Thought* (1993) for its genealogy on anti-ocularcentrism in western thought. Jay, through a survey reaching back to Plato’s cave, states that western philosophy “has tended to accept without question the traditional sensual

⁶⁰ Heidegger, M. (1977). *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. New York: Garland Publishing, p. 163.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

hierarchy.”⁶² He then goes on to map out the thinkers inspired by Heidegger, Husserl, and Nietzsche that will manifest “hostility to visual primacy” and develop an alternative approach at some level.

Jay’s book, written in 1992, leaves Jean-Luc Nancy out as *Listening* would only be published ten years later. Nevertheless, Janus interprets that “Heidegger is a major touchstone and Nancy a culminating figure.”⁶³ And while *Listening* is not without its flaws,⁶⁴ Nancy brings a renewed strength by asking “is listening something of which philosophy is capable?”⁶⁵ The question, therefore, is the possibility of a mode of thinking that can reintegrate sensual perception.

In Moon anchoring his practice on listening as a mode of thinking, how does this transpose to his films? Can a film, like *CALLING THE NEW GODS*, counter the castration of senses only by shifting its foundation from the image to sound?

This task in itself is conflictuous, since to theorize sound, as Heidegger reminds us, the inheritance of the visual bias comes attached. Nancy recognizes this difficulty and the challenge of this impossible equation:

...figure and idea, theatre and theory, spectacle and speculation suit each other better, superimpose themselves on each other, even can be substituted for each other with

⁶² Quoted in (Janus, 2011, p. 187)

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁶⁴ Which Sarah Hickmott exposes through a feminist view in her article (*EN CORPS SONORE: JEAN-LUC NANCY’S ‘SONOTROPISM’* (2015)).

⁶⁵ Nancy, J.-L. (2007). *Listening*. New York: Fordham University Press, p. 1.

more ease than the audible and the intelligible, or the sonorous and the logical.⁶⁶

The outcome is an “otocentric” mode of thinking based on listening that can be expanded to all the senses as Janus perceptively notes.⁶⁷ Moreover, what is most surprising, in doing so, Nancy schematizes a response to three limitations in a visually based philosophy. The first is the subject-object paradigm and the dichotomies that comes with it: immanence-transcendence, body-mind, other-self, absence-presence, material-spiritual, writing-speech. The second limitation, is the view for which signification and meaning is the final objective. Nancy, in his previous books, expresses his ideal on this when in *The Birth to Presence* (1993) he writes: “A moment arrives when one can no longer feel anything but anger, absolute anger, against so many discourses, so many texts that have no other care than to make a little more sense, to redo or perfect delicate works of signification.”⁶⁸ The last limitation is that with this Cartesian epistemology of sense-making, it inevitably occludes the body and the sensual perception.

Returning to *CALLING THE NEW GODS*, the use of Senyawa’s music to blur signification and meaning is only one of the three aspects of this otocentric mode of thinking. But this does not mean that the other two traits are not present. One moment, midway through the film, embodies how Moon ruptures the subject-object paradigm and resituates the body in the forefront.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁷ (Janus, 2011, p. 183)

⁶⁸ Quoted in (Janus, 2011, p. 189)

Moving from the opening part of the film, in countryside Indonesia, Moon starts a sequence that happens in a trash dump around the city of Jakarta. Cows are shepherded through the garbage, people collect whatever is still useful, and Senyawa continue their invocation on top of this wasteland. The instrument being played (that was electronically modified) is originally called Sasando. It's native to Indonesia and believed to already be in use around the 7th century. Suryadi (one of the duo that forms Senyawa) plays his adapted Sasando on top of the pile of trash, he scales from a primitive string sound to the distortions of an electric guitar.

It isn't a dichotomy between traditional and contemporary, but a gradual progression with many levels. Likewise, the value that the society gives to sounds is reflected in this scene, what may seem useless for many people still has value in this dumpsite. Moon connects Senyawa's "call to the new gods" as one where every place can be a ritualistic site. The spiritual doesn't discern any differences in the material, it all can be used to invoke the senses.

The body, in turn, is brought to the forefront, for it is the miraculous "fleshy throat," stripped from all the constructions of identity. The singer, Shabara, nuances between a guttural attacking low voice, peaceful melodies, and screams. His voice resonates throughout his whole body, shaking its mass, and convulsing its shape. Voice, music, the sounds of Indonesia, and the image come together to propose a film that first and foremost is the outcome of listening. Instead of searching for meaning, creating and provoking a sensual apperception.

Waste yard in CALLING THE NEW GODS



CALLING THE NEW GODS • *SENYAWA* live in Java further expands how to overcome these limitations of a visual based philosophy (the paradigm subject-object, meaning as the final objective, occlusion of the body and senses), which will form the three cores of this segment after some misconceptions about listening are clarified.

2.1.1. What is it to be listening?

The word *listening* in itself (*écouter*) is a start to map and prepare the foundation for Nancy's theory. The scholar Brian Kane notes that "unlike English, where we contrast the passive form, to hear, with the active or intensive, to listen, the French language can exploit a larger vocabulary for describing a variety of 'modes of listening' through the use of verbs."⁶⁹

These verbs would be *ouïr*, *comprendre*, *écouter*, and *entendre*.⁷⁰ The debate around these verbs is a useful one that unlocks the full meaning of certain passages that in English was lost in encouraging the reader to find a dichotomy between "sensibility versus the understanding" instead of oscillations "of difference within the same."⁷¹ A discrepancy that further on in this thesis will have more significant consequences as the research dives deeper into Deleuze.

Pierre Schaeffer, in his book *Traité des Objets Musicaux* (1968) considers the differences between the verbs related to aural interaction. *Ouïr* is related to inattentive audition, sounds that pass by the listener without being noticed, like the air-conditioner hum in a library. *Comprendre* is connected to languages, an audition mode focused on extracting the message from a proposition; a listening tied to understanding. *Écouter*, Schaeffer defends (and this is one of the biggest differences with Nancy), is an audition mode tying the sounds as indices of objects and events. Its tied to situating sounds,

⁶⁹ Kane, B. (2012). *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Listening Subject*. *Contemporary Music Review*, 31(5-6). doi:10.1080/07494467.2012.759413, p. 440.

⁷⁰ The verbs are also very similar to the other Latin languages.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 442.

their distance, and spatial locations. In identifying them in the surrounding sonorous world. What one would do if searching for a bird through its singing, and more problematically, what initially leads the king to paranoia in *A King Listens*.

Entendre, finally, is the one that Schaeffer dedicates more time to expand on its meaning: “For *entendre*, we retain the etymological sense, ‘to have an intention.’ What I hear [*j’entends*], what is manifested to me is a function of this intention [*intention*].”⁷² Here the sound itself is the object of attention, not the origin or the comprehension of the sound, but to focus and take the sound as intended object of audition. To do so, one has to shift from *écouter* to *entendre* by ignoring the source and actively focus on the sound attributes, just by doing so the presence of Schaeffer’s sound object is called forth. This background is then essential to begin with Nancy for in his opening page he writes:

...hasn’t philosophy, forcibly and in advance, superimposed or substituted upon listening something that might be more on the order of *l’entente*? [translated to English as understanding]⁷³

Even the translator’s notes trying to clarify the meaning of “understanding” doesn’t differentiate the importance of the original using *entendre* (which in *tendre* also carries the meaning to stretch or tension) instead of *comprendre*, which would more appropriately translate to understanding.

⁷² Quoted in (Kane, 2012, p. 441)

⁷³ (Nancy, 2007, p. 1) This is Kane’s translation that keeps it similar to the French original while Mendell translated “...d’avance et forcément superposé” to “beforehand and out of necessity”.

Nancy doesn't explicitly make any connections to Schaeffer's conception of the verb *entendre*, and both Nancy's *écouter* and Schaeffer's *entendre* share some resemblances in its call for a non-significational and non-indexical mode of listening. What distinguishes Nancy, though, is the criticism that's lost in translation, of *entendre* as having "a subject possessing the capacity for attention who wills its direction; and an intentional object towards which this attention is directed."⁷⁴

In light of this, when Nancy discusses the tension and balance of the philosopher as between "a sense (that one *écoute*) and a truth (that one *entend*)"⁷⁵ it's not one versus the other, sense vs. meaning, but rather a smaller variation and difference between openness (*écouter*) and intentionality (*entendre*). The grounding questions seem similar to Schaeffer when Nancy asks:

What secret is at stake when one truly listens, that is, when one tries to capture or surprise the sonority rather than the message? What secret is yielded—hence also made public—when we listen to a voice, an instrument, or a sound just for itself?

Nevertheless, he soon moves forward to where the actual interest in Nancy's essay lies. It's within this framework that Nancy reaches the question that introduces his postulations:

(...) What does to be listening, to be all ears, as one would say "to be in the world", mean? What does it mean to exist according to listening, for it and through it, what part of experience and truth is put into play? What is at play in listening, what resonates in it,

⁷⁴ (Kane, 2012, p. 443)

⁷⁵ (Nancy, 2007, p. 2)

what is the tone of listening or its timbre? Is even listening itself sonorous?⁷⁶

2.1.1.1. At the Edge of Meaning

Nancy is adamant in differentiating listening from hearing, *écouter* from the other verbs. He recognizes such a task is not easy and remarks two distinct sound tendencies and our reaction to it. The first is to listen to someone whose words being voiced we want to understand, in this case, sound tends to disappear, “the listener strains towards a present sense beyond sound.” The latter is music, where sense rises from sound itself independent from outside signals or signs. In both cases listening only has two propensities—“the one where sound and sense mix together and resonate in each other, or through each other.” In other words, either sense is searched for in sound or “sound, resonance, is also looked for in sense.”⁷⁷

The solution devised is an intermediate state in between both tendencies, a stance of suspension in the resonance to find sense not in sound itself (as Schaeffer asks) or in the signifier, but in the action of its existence, in its resonance. Thus, “to be listening is always to be on the edge of meaning, or in an edgy meaning of extremity, and as if the sound were precisely nothing else than this edge, this fringe, this margin...”⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Moon's previous affirmation that "the music is the pretext. What I am interested in is the human interaction",⁷⁹ echoes this stance of finding a way to create the resonance. It distances Moon's listening from Schaeffer's, bringing it closer to Nancy's conceptualization—the power of music is not what it means, or expresses, it's found in resonating, in creating the space for sense.

Before continuing the next logical step, and explore resonance, I would like to delve into what is sense. Sara Nadal-Melsió, in her work on the artists Allora & Calzadilla, mentions that logos has many forgotten meanings and that originally in Greek one of them is, in fact, musical interval and suggests that "something remains immeasurable, forever escaping the calculus of reason."⁸⁰ Taking this route, and understanding sound without linguistics, one remains with pure sense.

A place of existence that can be fully understood if returning to a period where linguistics is still not part of life, that of the womb and a newborn infant. With infinite acoustic-articulations and always listening for a sense beyond meaning, the baby is the perfect example of Nancy's stance on how one should listen. Nadal-Melsió compliments— "if language begins with a reduction of that stupendous phonic ability into a finite oppositional organization, a return to the primal acoustic scene must involve an opening up to the infinite sonorous singularity that preceded it."⁸¹ Thus, the baby,

⁷⁹ (Moon, Vincent Moon: Interview, 2010)

⁸⁰ Nadal-Melsió, S. (2018). *Allora & Calzadilla*. Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, pp. 21-22.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

free of any sonorous significations and signs, is the perfect example for Nancy. It's as if "we never *listen* to anything but the non-coded, what is not yet framed in a system of signifying references, and we never *hear* [entend] anything but the already coded, which we decode."⁸²

The fetus and newborn infant furthermore represent Nancy's multilayered interpretation for the word sense. A topic that he had previously explored in his books *A Finite Thinking* (2003) and *Being Singular Plural* (2000). Sense in his work assumes a concept inspired by Nietzsche (especially his book *The Gay Science*) and opens the word up to include signifying, sensual and spatiotemporal directional sense. In this manner, the material world in which we find ourselves and meaning are the same, the world is only sense "on the grounds that there could be nothing else. Sense and the world are coextensive, perfectly commensurate, with no superfluous meaning overhanging this coextensivity."⁸³

Through this interpretation, sense is more than merely meaning as sign, its an alternative mode of perception. A mode connected not to understanding (*comprendre*) but to a primal pre-language existence.⁸⁴ To which from here forth, to help differentiate from the common interpretation of sense I'll refer to Nancy's conception in its original form, *sens*. This development of a new englobing *sens* comes as an answer to his previous criticism of signification:

⁸² (Nancy, 2007, p. 36)

⁸³ Hutchens, B. (2005). *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, p. 6.

⁸⁴ Janus further explore Nancy's conception of senses and its various unfoldings.

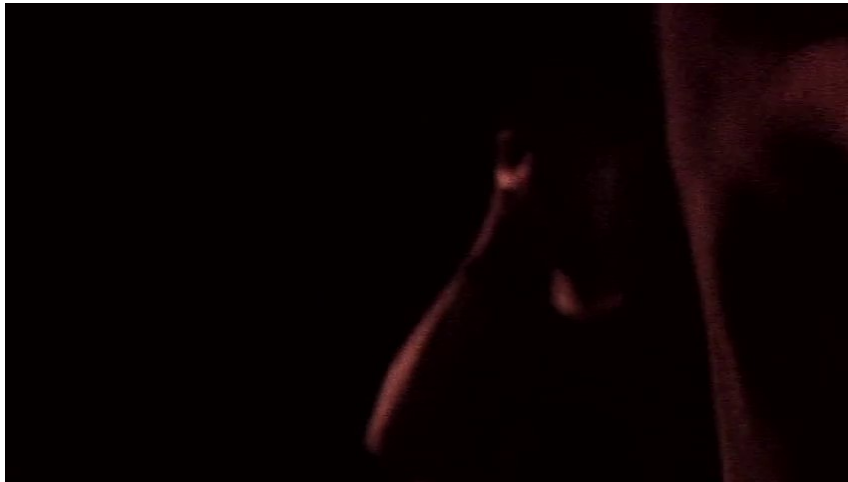
Signification is [...] the very model of a structure or system that is closed upon itself [...] Before the terrifying or maddening abyss that is opened between the possibility that thought is empty and the correlative possibility that reality is chaos [...] Signification is the assurance that closes the gaping void by rendering its two sides homogenous.⁸⁵

Having this conception of *sens* helps illuminate then what it is to be “listening to the beyond-meaning [l’écoute de l’outre-sens].”⁸⁶ Once again a deceptive translation, which this time, the translator recognized and inserted the original to clarify that more than beyond-meaning it's another-sense. Nancy moves from the western thought of sense to a primordial, sensual, spatial and signifying *sens*. For it's through this alternative *sens* that signification is not the final perspective but a small part of the spectrum of perceiving the world.

As *CALLING THE NEW GODS • SENYAWA live in Java* develops, it is Nancy's concept of *sens* that Moon tries to convey. He doesn't entirely break with signification as the visual can still be understood at its basic level (rice fields, people, cars, trash, and city) but it is only a small part of the work, which moreover than being understood must be *sensed* in all the gradual differentiations that emerge from the space opened by the resonance of the music. As it ends, the visual becomes almost indistinguishable, since Moon shoots Senyawa playing at night only with the lights from the street lamps. In impairing the visual, he further forces a space where *sens* is what matters.

⁸⁵ Nancy quoted in (Kane, 2012, p. 443)

⁸⁶ (Nancy, 2007, p. 31)



2.1.1.2 The Resonant Self

The question that arises next is how to enter into this primal scene where opening to *sens* becomes possible? Can a filmmaker enter the resonance in a neonate state? For Nancy, the answer lies in displacing the self encountered in the dualistic subject vs. object. Forced with the impossibility of the “I” returning to this primordial mode, Nancy looks towards changing where the self is located. He searches for a new self in the endless referrals, in the process of resonance, a space that he denominates *renvoi*. Another difficult term to translate as it means “return (as in return to sender), return a gift, send back (a parcel), repeat (a phrase or passage in music), refrain, refer, allude back...”⁸⁷

The self, in this case, breaks away from the phenomenological tradition to mean “nothing other than a form or function of

⁸⁷ Translator’s note in (Nancy, 2007, p. xi)

referral.”⁸⁸ Hence its outside to a proper self (I) and neither is intrinsic or exists to the self of an other. Its presence conditioned to only exist and identify “*itself* by resonating from self to self, in itself and for itself, hence outside of itself, at once the same as and other than itself, one in the echo of the other, and this echo is like the very sound of its sense.”⁸⁹

This differentiates greatly from Schaeffer for whom the self-subject “tends” or “stretches” his ear to sound, sound always carrying meaning, an intentionality to be heard in this two-way communication. In Nancy’s *sens*, self and sound share the same “form, structure or movement” in the *renvoi*. It’s no longer intentional, and the self only exists (or insists) in the echo present in this infinite referral.

Janus acutely observes that for the self to take place in *renvoi*, in the way Nancy proposes, the listening subject becomes less-human. “In other words, all objects, insofar as they resonate, tend to become listening subjects.”⁹⁰ This is a central point for in posing anew the question of the self he also opens the listening subject to an infinite variety of possibilities (to which Janus finds seven of them in *Listening*). Moreover, resonance isn’t only a condition for listening (*écouter*), but it’s the very “beginning and opening up of *sens*.”⁹¹

In *renvoi* (the infinite sonic referrals), the sound is methexic rather than mimetic, “not concerned with representation or appearance but

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁹⁰ (Janus, 2011, p. 194)

⁹¹ (Nancy, 2007, p. 31)

with the relations established by the sonorous and its duration.”⁹² Imbued with this idea is the concept that the process of *renvoi* is a diachronic one. Physically there is a space of time (as small as it may be) for a sound wave to envelop and reflect back its echo to its origin. A reflection altered by the “timbre” of the bodies that it encountered. This process is endlessly repeated, each time evolving and transforming the sound. “The acoustic is, then, a site for encounters” concludes Nadal-Melsió.⁹³

This encounter is the link to the next important aspect in Moon. For these encounters to happen, for the resonating self to occur, there invariably is a resonant vibrational space. Rather than objectifying in a visual plane Nancy delegates this spatial aspect to the *renvoi* itself, epitomizing it with the line in Wagner’s Parsifal Act 1— “You see, son, here, time becomes space.” The acoustic space is created, or better, opened, with listening and the sonorous event.

Calvino, on the other hand, brings a more sinister metaphor, ending the king’s story with a *renvoi* that takes over all the rest— “Now a noise, a rumble, a roar occupies all space, absorbs all sighs, calls, sobs...”. Nancy, in being concerned only philosophically with the implications of listening eludes the physicality of sound, which I will address later on in *Music*.

Regardless, Nancy’s self is simultaneous with the space-time created by the *renvoi*. This acoustic presence is one that envelops and shows itself fully. It’s not originated from a logic of

⁹² (Nadal-Melsió, 2018, p. 11)

⁹³ *Ibid.*

manifestation but a different one, more like evocation: “while manifestation brings presence to light, evocation summons (convokes, invokes) presence to itself. It does not establish anymore than it supposes it already established. It anticipates its arrival and remembers its departure, itself remaining suspended and straining between the two: time and sonority, sonority as time and as meaning.”⁹⁴

With Nancy’s process of *renvoi*, *sens* becomes independent, only depending on the sonic interaction to exist. By doing so, he makes possible a sort-of primal space for *sens* to resonate and evolve. The evolution of *sens* through the endless encounters is what begins and gives the presence for this *self* to insist in a space-time that is opened by the sonorous event.

In sum, Moon is unable to enter the resonance as a newborn infant and purely listen, but this becomes a minor problem as Nancy’s post-phenomenological *self*, once it’s summoned into existence, becomes independent. The beauty of the series *Petites Planètes* is indebted to Moon’s work in searching for the sonorous event, preparing the *renvoi* and invoking the *self* into existence, so that he may interact with it and find *sens*. The title *CALLING THE NEW GODS*, when grasped through this process of a filmmaker that listens, refers precisely to this conjuring of the *self*.

The sequence at the market, where Senyawa is positioned in the middle of a circle of passersby, epitomizes the process mentioned

⁹⁴ (Nancy, 2007, p. 20)

above. Moon takes the duo into the heart of Jakarta, setting-up an improvised performance in the middle of a market where most people there are at lost at what is happening. The public spaces assume in Moon's work, since the *Take Away Shows*, a location where he can set in motion the *renvoi* and introduce all the subjacent bodies as listening subjects. The soundscapes of these places are also an integral part in the *renvoi*, dialoguing with the music to open *sens* so that the *self* can come into existence. As Moon wanders around, responding and interacting with the *renvoi*, he attempts to capture the *sens* within the encounters that are happening between him and everything that is participating in this aural exchange.

Senyawa performing at the market



2.1.1.3 The Sonorous Body

Each body in Moon's films, deliberately or not, ends up being part of the *renvoi*. The musician's body, in particular, is the center of Moon's focus for it creates the sonorous event and is transformed by it together with all that surrounds it. The focus on the body is reflected in the conclusion of Nancy's book. Listening transforms the body, it becomes an echo chamber, stripped of its organs (a body without organs), an organon, redefined through his concept of rhythm and timbre. A "body beaten by its sense of body, what we used to call its soul."⁹⁵

To understand the development to reach this point a return to the primal scene of the fetus and new-born baby is needed:

Perhaps we should thus understand the child who is born with his first cry as himself being—his being or his subjectivity—the sudden expansion of an echo chamber, a vault where what tears him away and what summons him resound at once, setting in vibration a column of air, of flesh, which sounds as its apertures: body and soul of some *one* new and unique. Someone who comes to himself by hearing himself cry...⁹⁶

Thus, Nancy's reconfiguration of the body dates back to the birth (even fetus) in thinking of the body as the first potential for sensual (*sens*) self-reflection. In nativity, Nancy posits that the body, whether female or male, is already an acoustic organ capable of *renvoi*, capable of resonating and of *sens*—perception, directional, dynamic, and maybe the least important, *sens* as meaning.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17-18

It's from this indistinct organ that Nancy's body arises (does it need to be human?),⁹⁷ a body "before any distinction of places and functions of resonance, as being, wholly (and 'without organs'), a resonance chamber or column of beyond-meaning."⁹⁸ The body resembling Senyawa's modified Sasando, player and instrument merging into one. Alternatively, Nancy's example of the little hole in the clarinet that better explains his "matrice" of resonance—the ultimate body a belly-mouth matrix where *écouter* begins and ends. Where "the ear opens onto the sonorous cavern that we then become."⁹⁹

Douglas Kahn, in his book *Noise, Water, Meat* (1999), gives the best illustration when interpreting that modern aurality might very well started with Lautréamont's 1868 novel *Les Chants de Maldoror*. A quite obscure novel at the time that philosophically opened the debate that would gain full force a decade later with the invention of recording. In the book, the character was born deaf; he's unable to listen and to find his own voice until he decides to search the mysteries of heaven. There he encounters, what Maldoror calls, the Creator—a horrendous and terrific anthropophagic creature on top of a pile of shit and gold. As Maldoror saw those around him being eaten by this creature, even being deaf and unable

⁹⁷ Ironically, this reminds me of Daft Punk's album *Human After All* (2005). This already purely uncompartimentalized robotic echo chamber that functions exclusively to produce music (resonance) has to assimilate itself to a human body to search for a humanity in the mechanical, electronic organon. A quest that gives a new meaning to the film *Electroma* (2006) that came out of this album.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹⁹ (Janus, 2011, p. 198)

to hear the noises of those bodies being crunched and torn apart, something inside him happens:

Finally, my breast so constricted that I could not breathe the life-giving air quickly enough, my lips opened slightly and I uttered a cry...a cry so piercing...that I heard it! The shackles of my ears were suddenly broken, my ear-drum cracked as the shock of the sound mass of air which I had expelled with such energy, and a strange phenomenon took place in the organ condemned by nature. I had just heard a sound! A fifth sense had developed in me!¹⁰⁰

Like the first cry of a newborn, Maldoror's impossible scream uncompartementalizes his body, turning it into an echo chamber. The voice opening the barriers to *écouter*, the newfound organon for *sens*. As Kahn notes "his scream neither addressed the Creator [the name of the creature] nor reached the ears of his creations [those being eaten]. It merely announced the presence of himself"¹⁰¹ or what I would argue, announced the presence of the self in *renvoi*. Of a listening to the resonance of his scream.

Furthermore, Maldoror's scream contains in itself rhythm reemployment/deployment of the sound that resonates inside and outside his body, an invaginating sound that forms a hollow. Rhythm, as Nancy reminds us, "not only as scansion (imposing form on the continuous) but also as an impulse."¹⁰²

While Kahn uses this example to move on to the recording process of listening to your own voice, Maldoror's capability to listen, deriving from his capability to scream, brings to the forefront the

¹⁰⁰ Lautreamont, C. (2006). *Maldoror and Poems*. (eBook) London: Penguin UK.

¹⁰¹ Kahn, D. (1999). *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 6.

¹⁰² (Nancy, 2007, p. 39)

importance of the body in forming the subject, not as an I, but in the process of sound itself:

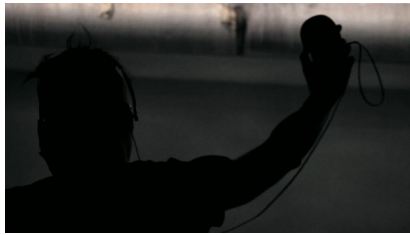
But what is the figure that is throbbled as well as stressed, 'broached by time', if not a figure that has already lost itself and that is still expecting itself and that calls to itself (which cries out to self, which gives itself or receives a name)? What else is it but a subject—and then isn't the subject itself the starting of time in both values of the genitive: it opens it and it is opened by it? Isn't the subject the *attack of time*?¹⁰³

The attack of time is precisely the moment that Lautréamont writes about. Before the scream, before the sound, there is a friction, the fold/unfold of the beginning of a dance, the body finding its possibility and necessity of resonance. And from this friction, the rhythm opened up in time, forms the other intrinsic and indivisible value of the sonorous body—the timbre.

Moon's work *One Man Nation*, is a constant build-up to the attack of time. The film begins with the artist Marc Chia searching for sounds in the streets of Singapore, looking for a possibility to start the dance between him, his environment and music. Moon focus almost half of the film in Chia's process of collecting the soundscape, to later concentrate on how he will now use all these samples to create a *renvoi*.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

Marc Chia collecting sound and sampling them in One Man Nation (2011)



As the musician spins into motion the sounds that he collected, a friction starts to arise. From the interaction between him and the sonic, a necessity to resonate emerges. Chia, who has not spoken a word throughout the whole film, screams, the force of his breath opens his body and turns it into an echo chamber. The belly-mouth matrix undearfens his timbre. Sound releases him from the imprisonment of the visual. A concept already present in this scream that would soon after express itself in the artist's work (now called Tara Transitory) as the sonic will be used to explore the boundaries of nations, identity, and gender.¹⁰⁴ In contrast to his

¹⁰⁴ The blog *Sounding Out!* Gives a better understanding of the current work of One Man Nation and its relation to the queer body, ritual, noise and sound art; <https://soundstudiesblog.com/2015/10/05/ritual-noise-and-the-cut-up-the-art-of-tara-transitory/>

recordings around Singapore, Chia's scream is unique and singular, fully dependent on the body. A sound with timbre and rhythm.

Opening the "matrice"



Timbre is a value intrinsic to the body that Nancy uses to link the sonorous body to the materiality of the world. It “does not stem from a decomposition: even if it remains possible and true to distinguish it from pitch, duration, intensity, there is, however, no pitch, and so on, without timbre.”¹⁰⁵

Timbre, consequently, is the resonance of the body and also the resonance of the listening process. Each body unique and capable in timbre of communicating its incommunicable singularity:

The world of sound is quite simply the world of the living. And the world of the living is also the world of the singular. In acoustic, the singular takes the place of the individual. The individual belongs to the human and to the universal, the singular

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

belongs to the living... difference is the norm in the rhythms and sounds of life.¹⁰⁶

From the otocentric perspective, the body gains full attention as the condition to the creation of *sens*. This is not merely the human body, though, the sonorous body is more assimilated to the hollow, the echo chamber and thus can apply to anything capable of resonance. Interesting enough, each of these bodies by opening to *sens*, through the attack of time, carry an intrinsic and unique timbre that assures its singularity in the acoustic world. In the aural, difference is already an existing condition, the singularity of the sonic subverts the constructed ocularcentric identity.

As such, the body in Moon's work is spotlighted as an organon responsible for attacking time. The sensual castration and occlusion of the body is counteracted by the focus on its sonic singularity, by listening to the *sens* created by each intrinsic and unique timbre.

One film that captures well Moon's fascination with the ideals of *écouter* is the volume 12 of the *Petites Planètes* collection *THALMA & LAÉRCIO DE FREITAS*. The director follows the singer Thalma de Freitas improvising songs and melodies as she walks through Rio de Janeiro.

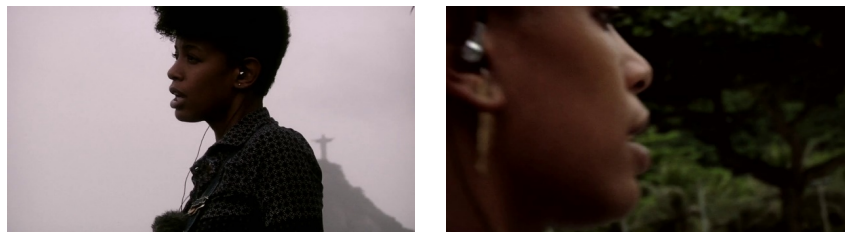
Through montage Moon also shows her father and pianist Laércio de Freitas loosely playing on the piano a base to which Thalma sings. Using a campy trick Moon leads the listener to believe that the piano base was recorded beforehand and that Thalma is listening

¹⁰⁶ (Nadal-Melsió, 2018, p. 26)

on her headphones to this base to which she sings while walking through the city (she carries a recorder on her hand). The film reinforces this notion by cutting between Thalma singing and her father playing. Towards the end the trick is revealed, Moon zooms out from the current shot to show that it's on a notebook on top of the piano, and that in fact, her father Laércio's accompaniment came later on in the process. The piano was actually answering to Thalma's improvisations.

This turnaround calls to attention and questions what was Thalma listening to while she was singing. By the end of the film, through this uncommon trick that isn't present in any other of his work, Moon brings the focus back to Thalma listening to her own voice being exchanged with the sonorous bodies that surround her in Rio de Janeiro. She is here actively listening (*écouter*) to the *renvoi*. The singer sets in motion Nancy's self in the echo and infinite referrals of her voice. Her voice, the attack of time that unfolds in a dance with the sonorous world a new presence, a new *sens*.

Thalma de Freitas listening to her voice in interaction with the renvoi





The voice assumes a sonorous quality that surpasses any meaning, any speech, it's musical, sonorous. Laércio de Freitas piano isn't a regular base of accompaniment to his daughter's song; neither works merely as a soundtrack as the images present in Moon's film

would lead to believe. It functions by listening to the self created by his daughter, her voice not reduced to speech. In this manner, the piano here attempts to transcribe the materiality, the timbre and rhythm of this *renvoi* into sound. Sound is the opener and conditioner for this interaction:

The intimacy of the sonic and the aural produces a shared, multiple, and tactile temporality, thus moving from the ordinary to the transcendent through breath. This may be the primary emotion of sound, its movement through time.¹⁰⁷

THALMA & LAÉRCIO DE FREITAS is Moon's emotional portrait of a daughter listening in the exchange of her voice as other with the world, and a father being touched and entering this endless referral that creates a self. A clash of timbres, rhythms, and echoes that open itself to *sens* through *écouter*.

2.1.2. Balancing at the Impasse

A recurrent underlying figure of speech has been repeated in different forms up until now. It first appeared as the descent into darkness in Calvino's story, in becoming minor it was "the space of the impasse", and in this chapter, it appeared as what Nancy calls "being at the edge of meaning." The three allude to the difficulty in maintaining this in-between stance that listening requires. Throughout the chapter Moon's films were used as an example of the director aligning himself with this stance of interaction, of listening being explored as a mode of thought, an alternative to an ocular-centric philosophy. To assume this stance is only a first step in a long journey ahead. Now, listening must be assimilated in the

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

process of filmmaking and most importantly in the film itself. As more forces and variables are added, to balance at this edge of chaos so that ultimately, the film can listen, is an increasingly difficult task.

It may sound outrageous even to mention that a film can listen, but Nancy's philosophical displacement of the *self* to the *renvoi* unlocks such possibilities. If the listening subject is now reconfigured to anything that reverberates, the object of the film is also included in this new sonic autonomy. Furthermore, with *sens* subsisting in the creation of the *renvoi*, it wouldn't be a stretch to conjecture that that two non-human listening-subjects in interacting through its own resonances could be able to produce *sens*. Or in the case of a film, that the listener enter into a *renvoi* not only with what it portrays but to interact and find *sens* together with the film itself.

Moon's practice will eventually return to these questions in *Hibridos*, but first, inspired by Phillippe Grandrieux, he will start developing a method on how to keep the stability, to balance himself at the edge of meaning.

2.2. The cinematic diagram: mastering the loss of control

To transpose Nancy's otocentric mode of philosophy into an art practice raises the question of what it is to be at the edge of meaning. As Moon is working with cinema, this is particularly problematic, for as Michel Chion observes sound and image naturally search for each other to create signification:

In the audio-logo-visual ensemble, sounds and images reinforce, illuminate, and influence one another not only by dint of their meaning content but according to signifying processes in which arbitrary and mechanical criteria, as well as formal ones, often hold sway.¹⁰⁸

In proposing listening as a model of film practice, the question becomes how to keep image and sound at this "edge" without rupturing them? How to reconfigure the power structure between image and sound without sending one (or both) into chaos? Such a practice, apart from breaking with the ocularcentric logic that Chion finds in sound films,¹⁰⁹ ultimately fractures the signifying force of image and sound in order to open the "space-time" (*renvoi*) required for the emergence of *sens*.

¹⁰⁸ Chion, M. (2009). *Film, a sound art*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 232.

¹⁰⁹ Chion, when discussing how Pierre Schaefer's idea of reduced listening affects the film (listening not to a meaning but to the sonic qualities of an object) repeats this hierarchization of image to sound: "The consequence for film is that sound, much more than the image, can become an insidious means of affective and semantic manipulation ... sound has an influence on perception: through the phenomenon of added value, it interprets the meaning of the image, and makes us see in the image what we would not otherwise see, or would see differently. And so we see that sound is not at all invested and localized in the same way as the image." (Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, 1994, p. 32)

The concept of the “edge” is an appealing anecdote, since this figure of speech creates two opposing sites (ground vs. abyss) and a small space tensioned in between (the cliff). The ground is where signification is prospected. An early example in avant-garde cinema is when the sound films just started, and Russian director Eisenstein (endorsed by Pudovkin and Alexandrov) wrote a statement in 1928 expressing his opinions. He attacks the talking films by arguing that sound should conflict with the image through montage, or in an asynchronous match. In effect, advocating for a rupture between the naturalist link of aural and vision. Nevertheless, his motivations to do so stem from his view that a contrapuntal sound “introduce new means of enormous power to the expression and solution of the most complicated tasks”, namely the two impasses that he talks in the previous paragraph of using subtitles (or title cards) and explanatory shots. In other words, the clash would create new understandings that were harder to be expressed only visually.¹¹⁰ Similarly, Siegfried Kracauer, while being more flexible than Eisenstein by not rejecting synchronous sound, still develops his ideas of sound in cinema (parallel as coincidence of meaning, counterpoint as opposition of meaning) as an instrument to contribute to the film’s signification.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Eisenstein, S. (1949). *Film Form*. New York: Harcourt Brace & World, p. 257-259. I use the word “harder” because Eisenstein will two decades later go into great lengths to describe how sound was already present in his silent films. He calls “plastic music” in the chapter *The Landscape of Music* of his book *Nonindifferent Nature* (1987).

¹¹¹ Kracauer, S. (1997). *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p. 102-103

In opposition, at the abyss of meaning are the practices that become pure uncontrolled sensations, such as Stan Brakhage's latter half of his career. As he stopped using a camera and started painting directly on film, Brakhage (similarly to Pollock which I'll talk in the subsequent paragraphs) aimed to bypass the eye and open the film to the chaos of chances. To do so, he looked towards ideas like self-hypnosis to deconstruct any mediation between him and what is being created:

Our whole structure of visual thinking is based on manmade laws of perspective and so on! But imagine! I say in my youth, an eye unruly by man-made laws of perspective, an eye unprejudiced by compositional logic, an eye which does not respond to the name of everything but which must know each object encountered in life through an adventure of perception. In other words everything you see, you have to be having an immediate adventure with it. It's not canned in any sense.¹¹²

Moon, as I propose, tries to settle between both, at the impasse, the fringe of the cliff. Throughout his films, he doesn't look towards creating meaning and signification but neither wants to go into the realm of pure sensation, as Brakhage. Drawing from one of Moon's inspirations (the filmmaker Philippe Grandrieux), I'll map the outlines for a practice that connects sound and vision through the works of Francis Bacon. The Irish painter is an unusual figure to talk about sound, but as Grandrieux figured out, an essential artist when it comes to subverting the hierarchy between the ocular and

¹¹² Brakhage, S. (2003). *Stan Brakhage with Pip Chodorov*. (P. Chodorov, Interviewer) Retrieved June 24, 2018, from <https://brooklynrail.org/2008/03/lastwords/stan-brakhage-with-pip-chodorov2>

the aural.¹¹³ Bacon “shares the musician’s attentiveness for the harmony of two moments: his aim is composition in the sense of a melody. Better put: his art consists in a resonance between visible and invisible, or heard and unheard.”¹¹⁴

The comparison between Moon and Bacon lies in how listening is present not only in the former’s films and the latter’s paintings but how, for both, it’s a mode of thinking that is imbued in their art practice. As I’ll develop, listening is a subject of Bacon paintings, but most importantly it’s how Bacon paints. This is essential, for in Bacon I’ll develop the fundamentals for an otocentric approach on how to create images that will subsequently be applied to Moon.

The process in which Bacon does this is termed in Deleuze as “diagram.” It is through this diagram that the three characteristics that I explained in Nancy will emerge. The diagram for Deleuze is a procedural term for Bacon’s set of characteristics that puts him at the edge of meaning, the inclusion of chaos, randomness, and catastrophe. In his paintings, this is the isolation of the figure; the making of random marks; blurring the body through swiping, smudging; and other techniques for a new order of painting to emerge—for the figural to emerge from the figure.

¹¹³ Grandrieux mentions Deleuze’s book *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (2005) as an integral influence on his films. A quite surprising source, but one that, as Greg Hainge links in his book *Philippe Grandrieux: Sonic Cinema* (2017) may have a lot more to do with cinema and most importantly, with listening.

¹¹⁴ Carraro, F. (2014, February). *Deleuze's Aesthetic Answer to Heraclitus: The Logic of Sensation*. *Deleuze Studies*, 8(1), 45-69. doi:10.3366/dls.2014.0133, p. 46.

A commonplace between Moon and Bacon starts to form since, for both, the randomness of chaos and catastrophe is an ontological constitutive and not just an accident. The artist always must be open to an outside (listening), searching not for meaning but an exchange of sensations (*sens*). For both, their work can never be thoroughly planned out in advance as it must encounter chaos. The affinity here between painting and sound is immediate. Isn't Bacon bringing noise into his work? Similarly, isn't Moon inserting chaos into his films?

Deleuze in elaborating a logic of sensation also discerns the opposing sites where Bacon needs to balance himself at the edge. The abyss is correlated to Pollock, who's interested in creating a purely haptic space where the diagram is not confined. Deleuze criticizes this approach, for in doing so, painting loses the capacity of acting on our nervous system as it is not controlled, sensation is not focused enough to create an enduring impact. The extreme opposite is a purely intellectual art. He uses Kandinsky as an example of the purely abstract that does not act on the nervous system instead only remaining on an intellectual level. In the middle is the figurative painting, and at the edge of the figurative, balancing between controlling the sensations and eliminating the figuration, the work of Bacon.¹¹⁵

Moon's stance to be at the edge is analogous to that of Bacon that dedicated his life's work to find the perfect balance in this impasse.

¹¹⁵ What I termed "ground" (where the aim is signification), would be a middle term that Deleuze maps to the figurative.

But the comparison, if delved deeper, can yield a much greater insight into Moon.

2.2.1. Diagramming sonorous figures – Listening to Images

In investigating Bacon to question if it is possible to reconfigure the vision to sound without a complete rupture of the image (like in Kandinsky's work where the sonorous becomes wholly abstract and intellectualized) a noteworthy segment in Deleuze's book about the artist comes to mind. When commenting on what is the presence of the figure that emerges in Bacon's painting, Deleuze's contrasts this presence with music. Even though he does not see how it could be possible to make music and sound present, he suggests that the step needed to bridge the sonorous to the figure is to "hystericize music," which, in this context means to bring to presence the material reality of the body—"We would have to reintroduce colors, passing through a rudimentary or refined system of correspondence between sounds and colors."¹¹⁶ Is it possible to bring to presence the material reality of a sonic body? I propose that yes.

2.2.1.1. Hystericizing the (sonorous) body

First off, when talking about presence in Bacon, Deleuze explains that it is to be understood as a kind of excessive presence, that he connects to hysteria: "the hysteric is at the same time someone who imposes his or her presence, but also someone for whom things and beings are present, too present..." It is precisely this hysteria that

¹¹⁶ Deleuze, G. (2017). *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 40.

for him is what painting attempts, to find this intense presence “beneath representation, beyond representation.”¹¹⁷ It is not the painter who is hysteric, no, the painting carries this in itself, the color system emanating a hysteric presence that acts directly on the nervous system.

Thus, for Deleuze, painting “discovers the material reality of bodies with its line-color systems and its polyvalent organ, the eye.”¹¹⁸ Music, on the other hand, according to the philosopher, trespasses the body and materiality and finds consistency somewhere else. Bacon is the torch-carrier of a hystericized painting for he refuses a figurative path where the painting stands as figuration (a sign of something else) and also refuses the abstract which has to go through a cerebral/intellectual path. Bacon’s painting then assumes the pure figure, the hysteric intensified presence without referring or taking any other route than to recognize its materiality.

It is within this context that Deleuze’s “invitation” to hystericize music seems maybe like an opening not only to approximate sound to painting but to listen to the figure, to make the image sonorous. For what is the concept of timbre if not the materiality of the sonorous body, the intrinsic “colors” present in the acoustic world? As Nancy points out “Timbre opens, rather, immediately onto the metaphor of other perceptible registers: color (*klangfarbe*, “color of sound,” the German name for timbre) ...”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹¹⁹ (Nancy, 2007, p. 42)

The key here, furthermore than linguistic etymology, is the idea that bodies have this singularity, a key material value always present that is made audible in resonance, brought forth by the rhythm of its vibrations. Timbre, as outlined a few pages back, is “the very resonance of the sonorous.”¹²⁰ It has a two-fold function, first to hystericize music (and sound) by opening a space-time for the self to be present but also by giving a material reality in the attack of time to the sonorous body, and not somewhere else as Deleuze suggests.

Timbre is always present, hysterically present in anything able to resound; resonance merely sets the *renvoi* in motion. Is not color the same? Doesn't the eye—that acknowledges and opens in painting the presence of its own material reality—operate as the attack of time that opens the sonorous event and acknowledges the timbre of a body? Isn't color an intrinsic value set in motion by light that accepts specific vibrations and reflects others? Both visual and sonorous body vibrating, echoing back certain light and sound waves while absorbing others? Both creating a self in the resonance between the world around them?¹²¹

Moreover, while the visual depends solely on the eye while sound transforms the whole body into an echo-chamber, isn't Bacon's

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹²¹ I'm attaining myself to the physicality of color, but a philosophical counter-argument for the notion of color that I use can be found in Walter Benjamin. Caygill, who wrote a book specifically on the topic, explains that “Benjamin maintains that a colour does not have a fixed value but gains its meaning from the surrounding colours, which because they are infinitely nuanced, make the value of a given colour infinitely variable.” (Caygill, H. (1998) *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience*. London: Routledge, p. 13)

figures precisely a body that is entirely transformed and trespassed by the forces of the lines and colors surrounding it? In Bacon, we find a figure that is the hollow drum that resonates back nothing but *sens*. A *renvoi* between painting and observer where this referral between the timbre (color) of the figure and the timbre of the observer merge into beyond-meaning, beyond-signification, into *sens*.

To hystericize becomes a visual manifestation of listening, to invoke the presence of the *self* through a sort of optical *renvoi*. In Moon, the hysterical figure gains weight as his interest in trance and possession rituals grows, and is mainly present in *JATHILAN • popular trance ritual from Java* (2012), to which I'll soon come back to contrast with a similar film by Jean Rouch, *Initiation à la danse des possédés* (1949). Both films follow an almost identical structure and have the same theme, the difference laying directly in how Moon hystericizes the image while Rouch goes oppositely to suppress the hysterical presence.

Perhaps, to better juxtapose both filmmakers, the link between the hysterical, the figure and the echo chamber is found in contrasting Bacon to whom he claims to be his master, Velázquez. Deleuze points out that many of Bacon's elements are already present in Velázquez's painting *Pope Innocent X* (1650) in a restrained manner: the parallelepiped prison, the heavy curtain, the mantelet aspect as being a side of meat, and Pope's fixation on an invisible looming future. Bacon takes all these elements, removes any traces to figuration and bring them to the front in *Study of Velázquez's*

Pope Innocent X (1953). The screaming pope carries the hysteric, the excessive presence of the material, its body only a figure of pure presence. Bacon decomposes Velázquez's Pope into pure *sens*, into color and timbre. Likewise, Moon will decompose Rouch's films so that the hysteric presence that is hidden may surface.

The scream is of particular importance, in it, Bacon bypasses painting the horror to focus on the invisible forces and their effects on the flesh. Moreover, even though his interest is in painting "the scream more than the horror,"¹²² what is painted is not only the scream but the friction of these forces and the precise moment before sound. In doing this Bacon hystericizes the exact instant in which Maldoror "unable to expel the life-giving air speedily enough" opens his lips. The painted scream is the fold/unfold of the starting of dance, the same first cry of the newborn—the attack of time.

As in his later paintings where the body attempts to escape itself through one of the organs, here the body is hollowing itself out by the scream, turning itself into a hollow drum. "The mouth then acquires this power of nonlocalization that turns all meat into a head without a face. It is no longer a particular organ, but the hole through which the entire body escapes..."¹²³ The painting *Head VI* (1949) can further help to elucidate this concept. Bacon isolates here the "underlined" paralepidid in which the Pope is imprisoned and removes any possible figuration in doing so.

¹²² (Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 2017, p. 45)

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Comparison between Velázquez's and Bacon's painting of Pope Innocent X



The head is then encased and isolated in this dimension, the torso and head forming a reconfigured body living in itself, outside of any meaning. Couldn't the scream here be the attack of time initiating a self that resounds beyond the dimension of the painting? An attack that creates the spatiotemporal place for the timbre of color (*Klangfarbe*) to reverberate, for the *renvoi* to take place?

Bacon's screaming bodies break the ocular linearity. The image is here a starting point for the *renvoi*, the vibration and echo of a *sens* that envelops and vibrates. In making present the attack of time

Bacon forces the observer to listen to the resonance produced from this friction, to listen to the sound that breaks out from the parallelepiped prison of the canvas, of the screen. Bacon “make[s] visible a kind of original unity of the senses... make[s] a multisensible Figure appear visually.”¹²⁴

Likewise, Moon’s film *JATHILAN* extracts the figure from any signification present in Rouch’s *Initiation à la danse des possédés*. The two follow a structure where music is already being played since the beginning while images show people arriving and preparing themselves for the ritual. *JATHILAN* is shot in a south-central Java village, and Rouch’s film is shot in Nigeria with the Songhay population.

Introduction sequence comparison between Rouch and Moon



¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.



Rouch's film opens with a large text citing the location, what is happening and with an explanatory note before showing the preparations for the rite:

Here, the camera was the simple witness of the ceremony of the initiation of a woman to the dance of possession. Before the ceremony, this woman was permanently possessed. The goal of the initiation is to master the possession: at the end of 7 days the healed woman will return to normal life and the appeased gods will only possess her on the request of the priests.¹²⁵

As the initial title sequence ends, Rouch lowers the volume of the music being played and sung so that his voice over can be clearly heard and provide the narrative arc of the film. He continually gives context and details on what is happening, and never spends more than two minutes without layering the footage and sound with his commentaries. As such, Rouch suppresses the sensations and the presence invoked by the bodies that contort themselves in trance, to provide an intellectual path that attempts to grasp what is happening. As with Velázquez, the elements that Moon will later explore are all there in (the disfigured bodies, the fascination with possession, music as ritual), hidden beneath Rouch's need to position his films as ethnographic documents.

¹²⁵ Translated from French.

Possession sequence in Initiation à la danse des possédés (1949)



Moon, similarly to Bacon, isolates the hysteric presence from the figuration that Rouch imposed, he removes the narrative arc, removes the context (the only explanation is the title and where it was filmed), and leaves these disfigured bodies contorting together with the music sang in Javanese. The framing also moves closer as in *Head VI*, uprooting the underlying “paralepidid” in Rouch so that the scream assumes the breaking open of the echo chamber that will (literally in this case) invoke the *self* in the renvoi.

By hystericizing the figure beyond figuration and making present the attack of time, an image can resound and have an otocentric approach, “the body beaten by its sense of body.” Similarly, to Maldoror’s scream resulting in his ear being unsealed to receive back his resonance, the attack of time in Moon and Bacon opens the figure to hear his vibration and echo.

Possession sequence in JATHILAN



2.2.1.2. Opening the figurative self

If the attack of time opens the body to the rhythmic and to timbre, the next step would be then to find the rhythm that is born from this fold/unfold, the space-time where the *self* exists. Deleuze finds this rhythm in Bacon's triptych structures when writing about his *Triptych, August 1972*:

A 1972 *Triptych* shows a Figure whose back is “diminished,” but whose leg is already complete, and another Figure whose torso has been completed, but who is missing one leg and whose other leg runs. These are monsters from the point of view of figuration. But from the point of view of the Figures themselves, these are rhythms and nothing else, rhythms as in a piece of music, as in the music of Messiaen, which makes you hear “rhythmic characters.”¹²⁶

Bacon's Triptych, August 1972



Going back to his other painting reveals that they are also organized similarly, “that each already encompasses a triptych, each distributes rhythms.”¹²⁷ In Nancy, the spatial-temporal matrix that

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

unfolds the *renvoi* is not the beat per se but the gap between the beat where the resonance occurs. In the same way, in Bacon, the *renvoi* occurs in between the beat of its rhythm and timbre, but it's a diachronic evolution of *sens* (Nadal-Melsió makes this point clear), of singularity, of the encounter between the multiple panels and the recurrent referrals between them. Bacon thus similarly shifts this phenomenological self to what Nancy proposes, by imposing rhythm on sensual perception:

...[The multisensible figure] is possible only if the sensation of a particular domain (here, the visual sensation) is in direct contact with a vital power that exceeds every domain and traverses them all. This power is rhythm, which is more profound than vision, hearing, etc. Rhythm appears as music when it invests the auditory level, and as painting when it invests the visual level. This is a "logic of the senses," as Cézanne said, which is neither rational nor cerebral. What is ultimate is thus the relation between sensation and rhythm, which places in each sensation the levels and domains through which it passes. This rhythm runs through a painting just as it runs through a piece of music. It is diastole-systole: the world that seizes me by closing in around me, the self that opens to the world and opens the world itself.¹²⁸

In the last sentence of the quotation above, Deleuze points out that the visual rhythm that allows for *sens* only is possible through hysterization (isolation of the figure) that opens the *self*. Thus, the visual rhythm in Bacon and Moon is different from merely a visualization of rhythm such as Sergei Eisenstein proposes in the chapter *The Landscape of Music* in *Nonindifferent Nature* (1987), Stan Brakhage in *Letter to Ronna Page (On Music)* (1978) or Michel Chion when he says that:

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

When a rhythmic phenomenon reaches us via a given sensory path, this path, eye or ear, is perhaps nothing more than the channel through which rhythm reaches us. Once it has entered the ear or eye, the phenomenon strikes us in some region of the brain connected to the motor functions, and it is solely at this level that it is decoded as rhythm.¹²⁹

The latter examples are preoccupied with the sensory path of the image, to create a sound image in the brain of the viewer. The former (Moon and Bacon) are engaged in rethinking the image from an otocentric model of philosophy, using the vision to open a *renvoi* for interaction. This task cannot only rely on creating a stream of images to be decoded as rhythm by the brain but has to make present this post-phenomenological self through *sens*.

Such undertaking is different in the visual and in sound. For, while sound is easier to assignify and enter it into the purely sensorial perception, vision is harder to discern from understanding and meaning. So far, Bacon materializes in his paintings and Moon in his work the three core concepts of listening (*écouter*): escaping the figurative (signification in Moon's case) for the figural to emerge, the body is reconfigured into one without organs (as the hollow drum that opens the attack of time), and posing anew the self in the resonance.

The diagram, appears thus, as the manifestation of listening. A method to be at the fringe of the chaotic abyss while distancing itself from signification. "According to Bacon: one starts with a figurative form, a diagram intervenes and scrambles it, and a form

¹²⁹ (Chion, Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen, 1994, p. 136)

of a completely different nature emerges from the diagram, which is called the figure.”¹³⁰

In addition, for Deleuze, there’s always a double creation in the aesthetic experience. The mutual creation of a figure and a perceiver both depending on the process of sensation. This perceiver has many similarities with Nancy’s listening-subject (and also distances itself from the human form) and how *sens* comes to fruition. Filippo Carraro in an article studying the minutiae of the concept of becoming present in Deleuze’s book on Bacon, notes on the endless referrals (*renvoi*) between the figure and its perceiver:

The perceiver distinguishes forces that constitute, in their play of visible and invisible, organic Figures and definite shapes. The Figure reciprocates by emanating sensations, so that the perceiver is once again hit by forces which have now acquired the artistic nature of a bloc of sensation(...) This ‘outcome’ has eternally already gone back from the perceiver onto the body of the Figure, and it makes its reality(...) The exchange occurring between the Figure and the Figure’s perceiver is the becoming real of the sensation itself, its bypassing of the perceiver’s subjectivity and its formation as a bloc of sensation. This is the Figure then: defined by the income of directed forces while emanating filtered sensations. This is its equilibrium, this is the flux of which the Figure is the filter; this is the eternal pulsation of opposites and the emergence of the acrobat. Bacon has obtained the subject of what Merleau-Ponty calls the ‘continual rebirth of existence’: the Figure.¹³¹

An optic sonic event opens the *renvoi* so that figure and perceiver may interact in it, the becoming of sonorous figures together with the creation of the listening-subject. Listening as the artistic process of creation is then indistinguishable with the formation of this *self*

¹³⁰ (Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 2017, p. 110)

¹³¹ (Carraro, 2014, pp. 61-62)

outside from an “I” or “other.” There is no reason to separate the act of creation from perception as in listening both functions depend on one another.

The precondition to be able to listen (in film or painting) is that it first has to listen to itself. This may seem obvious in sound, that to listen there first must be an attack of time (the sonorous event) that opens the self and opens *itself* for other listening bodies to enter in the *renvoi*. In the visual process of creation, this attack of time happens through the diagram, through opening the canvas, the picture, the film, to chaos and balancing it as an acrobat stuck in the tension between chaos and meaning. The visual creation generating its perceiver, its *self*. The artist, thus, doesn't function as the original perceiver but as a secondary listening subject that enters a *renvoi* that already exists, which will assume a major role in Moon's diagram through his development of cine-trance. The visual artist Gerhard Richter speaks about arriving late to his own creation. When talking about how randomness affects his process he mentions that “something will emerge that is unknown to me, which I could not plan, which is better, cleverer than I am.”¹³²

In conclusion, to speak about a diagram in Moon or Bacon instead of calling it the aesthetics or the style of an artist, is to conceive a practice that aims to create a space, through all the components of each one's medium, that resonates within itself and creates *sens*. In

¹³² RICHTER quoted in O'Sullivan, S. (2009, December). *From Stuttering and Stammering to the Diagram: Deleuze, Bacon and Contemporary Art Practice*. *Deleuze and Guattari Studies*, 3(2), doi:10.3366/E1750224109000622, p. 255.

Bacon's case a figure that creates its own perceiver, in Moon a film that creates its own listener.

This can be applied to all arts, the creation of a set of parameters to counter the ontological properties that lends itself to meaning and simultaneously open a space for encounter. Sound, for example, is naturally already closer to an asignifying and sensorial mode of perception and is evidently easier for itself and to the listening-subject to listen. Theater, on the other hand, has specific requirements of a diagram that can include the chaos into it, maybe the theater of Brecht and later that of Boal is an answer to this? To further extend this research to other mediums, the inquiry should be where is this Figure (if thinking of Bacon), where is this "edge of meaning"? Going to an extreme may help elucidate the question. If one regards the olfactory as a place for encounters, is it even possible to find an "edge of meaning" as it entirely bypasses any intellectual processing to act directly activating the amygdala neurons? Doesn't the perfumer have to think of a diagram that similarly to Bacon attempts to control sensations while opening himself to surprises and to the new when creating a scent? How may such a diagram look like for each distinct art practice?

These questions raise a fruitful area of discussion where distinct diagrams balancing and tensioning specific characteristics to vibrate between meaning and chaos can possibly be found. For this research, I'll focus on Moon as a form to continue this discussion through the notion of the cinematic diagram.

2.2.2. The Cinematic Diagram

With the concept of the diagram fleshed out the next stage is to explore how to transpose Bacon's diagram to Moon. An initial sketch on how to make this conversion is presented in Jeremy Powell's article *David Lynch, Francis Bacon, Gilles Deleuze: The Cinematic Diagram and the Hall of Time* (2014). While it's an article that I'm much indebted too for first bridging Deleuze's diagram concept to cinema, the "Cinematic" in the title only refers to the visual in Lynch's cinema. It is an incomplete approach, for Powell, when transposing the notion to cinema only requires one part of the cinematic body (the image) to be submitted through the diagram while ignoring the rest (sound, for example).

Powell argues that the diagram is ontological to cinema (the image in this case) because of the condition of the photograph and the cinematic image. His argument is based on Bazin's writing about photography— "for the first time, between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent. For the first time, an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man."¹³³ The logic in Powell is that even if a shot is constructed, rehearsed, and repeated countless times, the camera that is inhuman will be entering random chaos into it, "giving us marks of the irrational."

¹³³ Bazin, A. (1967). *What is Cinema, Vol. 1*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 13.

For him, this is enough, through the process of visual creation “the cinematic diagram is inherited to cinema as such.”¹³⁴

Even if the same principle is applied to sound (which is not done in Powell), viewing the microphone as an inhuman force that inserts chaos would be a stretch, for many times the audio is dubbed, the sound effects bought from databases, cleaned of all unwanted noises in post, etc. Claiming an ontological diagram to cinema because of its relation to photography is insufficient to bridge Deleuze’s concept to film.

For an all-inclusive cinematic diagram to exist, for cinema to be able to listen—to create the *renvoi*—the first requirement is to understand it as a body without organs, an indivisible entity where all its elements are merged into one. To reach the “edge of meaning” symbolizes that this body as a whole has to be subjected to the cinematic diagram. The result, an echo chamber that opens itself up to *sens*.

Greg Hainge, facing a similar task in connecting the work of Philippe Grandrieux to sound, redefines the cinematic body in a way that suits well Moon’s view of his work. The breakthrough that Hainge suggests is thinking of it in an expanded acoustic sense, a “body not as something that pre-exists, that has a fixed form, but only as something that propagates itself in space and time, a waveform whose qualities are constantly formed by its environment

¹³⁴ Powell, J. (2014). *David Lynch, Francis Bacon, Gilles Deleuze: The Cinematic Diagram and the Hall of Time*. *Discourse*, 36(3), p. 316.

and the other bodies.”¹³⁵ In other words, to rethink a cinematic body that is no longer the presence of a cinematic space where various figures and forms reside immutable, but as resonance created anew each time the elements of a film is set in motion. He terms this sonic-cinema, a cinema where the film ceases to be an object and becomes a *renvoi* instead. A cinema that has been subjected to the diagram to be reborn as the neonate infant that no longer able to find meaning, only searches for *sens*.

In *JATHILAN • popular trance ritual from Java* (2012), for instance, to isolate meaning Moon resorts both to the aural and optical. The music being sung opens the sonorous event, the image being captured hystericizes the figure. Moon’s cinematic diagram starts with his refusal to research the topic that he’ll film and avoidance of investigating anything beforehand so that his first encounter happens at the site of creation. The film is an immediate result of Moon’s reaction to what was happening in front of him, his inscription inside the *renvoi*. All elements of his films are subjected to this diagram, his movement, the minimal or non-existent “mise-en-scène,” the natural lighting, collaborating with people at the locations to help capture the sound, and the very basic editing.

All of these are the basis to develop Moon’s cinematic diagram, a diagram focused in creating an autonomous experience that enables the listener to interact with it.

¹³⁵ Hainge, G. (2017). *Philippe Grandrieux: Sonic Cinema*. New York: Bloomsbury, p. 80.

3. AUDIOVISUAL ANALYSIS: PASSING THROUGH THE DIAGRAM

3.1. Accompaniment: becoming the coadjuvant

Moon's first task is to find a procedure to remove the indexical relations of what he is shooting. To assignify what is being shot is not easy. Moon's early films for La Blogothèque, shows that it took years for him to be able to aptly handle music not as an indexical sign to a story, narrative or even to the body of work from the bands being recorded, but as sound itself, a space for resonance.

In the *Take Away Shows* such intentions were a point of tension, for while Moon was in a constant endeavor to test and figure out ways of stripping music to its core, the heavyweight bands and even the producer and owner of La Blogothèque (Christophe Chryde) had more commercial objectives in mind that became clearer as the years progressed.

Nevertheless, while being unable to dismantle the music video logic completely, Moon developed and improved what Hainge calls in Grandrieux's work as accompaniment, a concept that is worth investigating how it originated:

To accompany is then to move, with somebody, in harmony with that person without a need for there to be an absolute confluence of perspectives or knowledge. It is, like the idea of a harmonic relation, to open oneself up to a relation with the world that is not entirely one's own, to allow oneself to resonate in harmony with a different way of being in the world and thus to understand one's own positionality in the very moment that it is rejected as essentially arbitrary.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ (Hainge, Philippe Grandrieux: *Sonic Cinema*, 2017, p. 71)

This is a considerable shift from viewing the director as someone in control of his creation to instead someone who interacts with an existing world, vibrates in it, but that is no longer dictating what should happen. It is essential to differentiate from, for example, *cinema-verité* where the filmmaker attempts to capture what is happening but is mainly marginal in its participation or, on the other side of the spectrum, documentaries where the filmmaker takes an active participation and become the center of the film. To accompany is to create a tension where the director is inserted in the scene, vibrates and enters into an encounter with those around him without being the hero of the story. It is to enter the *renvoi*, to be at all times attentive. To find, once again, “the edge of meaning.”

In Grandrieux to accompany has many approaches, let's start with his film *Place de la Bastille* (1996).¹³⁷ While recording Jean-François Deniau in France's National Assembly, Grandrieux refuses to give a full view of the room instead opting to start with an already fully engaged zoom. Reacting to what is happening, Grandrieux pans and zooms between Deniau and the others present so that all that is visible is specific gestures while any camera movement is turned into blurs of color and light. By doing so, the camera enters into a dance with them instead of giving a faithful recording of what is happening. Here, Grandrieux accompanies his environment, dancing together with what is happening through the movement of his camera. The camera also assumes this musical

¹³⁷ Due to the difficulty in finding Grandrieux's early documentaries I'm using here Hainge's description of *Place de la Bastille*, *Jogo Du Bicho*, and *Retour a Sarajevo*.

function of being the instrument that harmonizes Grandrieux with those around him. And even though, in this case, it is the framing that is being studied, image takes the form of sound, the characteristics of each one transposed into the other and finally merged into one.

To accompany is hard, Grandrieux notes that documentary forms trained him to be “extremely attentive to everything around.”¹³⁸ And this attentiveness is not that of merely being able to follow a subject, to have the technical ability to keep a moving object in frame, as, a camera following a player in a football match. It is instead, to be inserted in the *renvoi*, and to resonate within it:

Framing is a way of being there in the ontological sense, an inscription in the world, a presence, it's a way of inhabiting the world, occupying it, feeling it, perceiving it and then retransmitting it, letting yourself be touched by it, letting yourself be imprinted by it.¹³⁹

In Moon, it takes an even more central aspect in his diagram than with Grandrieux. Opening himself up to the world and accompanying it with his camera, quickly responding to whatever happens and developing an extreme attentiveness becomes a central characteristic to his films. He doesn't shy away from fully entering with his body into the scene he is recording and interprets this movement as being his way to be welcomed inside the world of his subject. When asked how he breaks the barrier to enter the rituals that he filmed, Moon answered:

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

I think you break it with your body, more than with your knowledge. That's what it taught me to travel, to trust the memory of the body more than the memory of the brain. The respect is stepping forward, not stepping backward, and I really think that by engaging your body in the moment, in the ceremony, in the places, people welcome you and understand your energy.¹⁴⁰

Moon doesn't shy away from fully entering with his body into the scene he is capturing. He's inscribed in the shot even though we do not see him. The impression is that those being filmed are too involved to care about his camera that dances very close to their bodies and faces, as Grandrieux's presence in *Jogo Du Bicho* (1994) and *Retour à Sarajevo* (1996).

In *Jogo Du Bicho*, a film exploring the Brazilian lottery game that even outlawed still has firm roots within a big part of the society, he accompanies the game's players and workers that talk about how attentive one has to be for the signs indicating which numbers one should play in the game.¹⁴¹ For these players any sign (like the number of a car, an animal they crossed or that they dreamed of, the telephone of someone who called them, etc.) is an indication from an elsewhere that in turn will influence the outcome of the game. They have to live in an extremely attentive state where everything will help them place the "right" bet. The key for this scene is that this sort of extreme attentiveness, of opening oneself up to chaos and looking for something undefinable, a sense of something, is

¹⁴⁰ Vincent Moon and Nana Vasconcelos: *The world's hidden music rituals* (2014). [YouTube Video]. TED. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nZqiPLCvM4>

¹⁴¹ There are a lot of ways of playing, either by selecting four numbers or by choosing one of the 25 animals and their respective numbers.

akin to what Grandrieux is also, in parallel, doing in accompanying these people.

To accompany is to enter into this chance of an encounter, without knowing what to look for. By opening the creation to this chaos, to the random, and expecting not a perfectly understandable code, a precise meaning, but *sens*. It started with the accompanying made by the camera in *Place de Bastille* (and in his other films from the series *Brut*), but here it evolves into entering this resonance with his full body, moving in the scene together with his subjects.

This is consolidated in *Retour à Sarajevo*, where Grandrieux films a small group of women returning to their families in Sarajevo six months after the Bosnian war ended. Throughout the film, Grandrieux uses extreme close-ups that, this time, are not done with zoom lenses but by moving in between this group of women. For all the physicality of the camera, the group of women seemed unphased and didn't really seem to be interested in this undeniable body that accompanies this journey and is moving within the very close personal space of each one being filmed.

The impression is, simultaneously, that of trust on the filmmaker and of authenticity, a somewhat contradictory feeling seeing how the presence of Grandrieux is inscribed. Hainge interprets this impression with the harmonic relations set forth in accompaniment:

The notion of harmonic relations is intended, firstly, to figure the space and relations taking place in that space as resonant, not having a fixed or pure form that could ever be said to pre-exist and thus be objectively represented from a

distance but, rather, constantly exceeding the impression of any fixed form, going always beyond the limits that vision imposes on the world and extending always into that which lays beyond that impression of form.¹⁴²

Accompaniment in the cinematic diagram, therefore, is seen as a way to go beyond the ocularcentric philosophy of understanding (*entendre*) into an otocentric world that opens itself to the random encounters so it may counter the notion of meaning. If in Bacon's diagram the free-mark is his way of opening painting to the outside so that chance may dictate his hand, in Grandrieux it's accompaniment that does this function.

If accompaniment is opening oneself up to the unexpected, Moon reinforces this by not planning anything in advance. In his later works around the world, and in his early works with *La Bibliothèque* he positions the musicians in places where chaos and randomness are bound to invade the image and sound. The perfect staple, of which these films became known, are the streets of Paris—where both musicians and director must be on constant alert to the cars passing by, the honks, people interrupting, shouting, following them, etc. The street is the materialized place of encounters, both physically and sonically. It is the foremost site for Moon to exercise extreme attentiveness by always being forced to be aware of everything around him and using his body together with the camera to accompany the subjects and what is resonating around and within them.

¹⁴² Grandrieux, quoted in (Hainge, Philippe Grandrieux: Sonic Cinema, 2017, p. 67)

It is important to underline how disparate this way of filming is from the safe and controlled environments of studio shooting for commercial cinema and most music videos. Even La Blogothèque's latest music videos, the ones I analyzed previously, are eliminating any variables that can interfere with the final output.

I suggest that Moon is a virtuoso in accompaniment, an aspect that he unequivocally worked hard to improve. What I mean by this term is that firstly his stance of listening to everything around him and responding, interacting with the *renvoi*, resonating together with all the bodies set in motion, is something learned and developed. Secondly, his virtuosity is also a physical aspect regarding the technique to be able to masterfully move the body together with the camera (and control it).

The technical aspect isn't to be taken lightly. Jean Rouch regarded camera movement so important to his films that he even took classes with Marcel Marceau, the famous French mime, to improve the way he interacted and moved when he was shooting his documentaries.¹⁴³

Comparing Moon's films from different periods of his work clarifies this evolution. Moon's first film for *La Blogothèque* in 2006, called *The Spinto Band*, already had the concept of accompaniment— Moon responds to what he is filming in a single take with a handheld camera. It is still very crude though, Moon

¹⁴³ Baugh, B. (2005). *Jean Rouch: A Tribute*. Retrieved August 18, 2013, from Documentary Education Resources: http://www.der.org/jean-rouch/content/index.php?id=der_marshall

seems to falter and not know exactly how to behave and where to point the camera. The difference between the early films and Moon's work a couple of years is evident. After seven years and more than 300 films using the same technique, what was a shaky, same perspective and utterly dull camera is now an extension of his body, vibrant and energetic.

a) OKO • LES FEMMES DE LA TERRE NOIRE
(ensemble Volya) (2013)

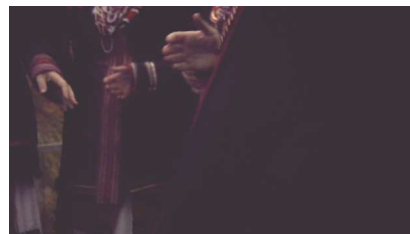
OKO • LES FEMMES DE LA TERRE NOIRE (ensemble Volya) is the first of a small series within *Petites Planètes* that portrays the female ensembles and voices from a southern part of Russia known for its black soil or *Terre Noire* in French. As is typical with the *Petites Planètes* series, the movie consists of diverse locations where traditional songs from the region are recorded with intercut scenes relating the present reality to the ruins of a glorious past.

Moon opens the film with some seconds of silence while the title is shown, following to jump straight into the music being sung with five quick shots of photos and paintings on the wall depicting the ensemble. Cutting to show where the sound is coming from, he slowly circles a closed room where six women are kneeling singing. The camera slowly moves around and inspects the scene seamlessly. In a single take, it scrutinizes the details, from the macro of a headscarf to examine the pattern of the textile, to a wide shot showing all the group.

The singing only stops when they are ready to move to the next location, an outdoor park with concrete buildings in the background. The brief moments without the music is filled with sonic details (the swing of the gate and the steps of the women). A single voice opens the next song, to which the ensemble will join in sync with the film cutting to showcase the size of the full group.

In the last performance, the singing gets faster, and the women stomp their feet on the floor to create the rhythmic percussion. Moon takes the opportunity to demonstrate his virtuosity with the camera—swiftly and without any loss of focus—the image goes from the ground level showing in detail the type of shoes and their dance movements to a wide-open shot of the group. After presenting the area, he closes in again to admire the face of a young singer before being impelled to one of the elderly ladies that compose the group. The camera pans downwards to carefully analyze the colorful robes before being leveled to the ground stressing the rhythm of the song that is being given by their feet.

OKO • LES FEMMES DE LA TERRE NOIRE (ensemble Volya)





With his camera, Moon dances around the group while inspecting the smallest details. The camera movements contrast youth/maturity, past/present, without explaining or elucidating anything that is happening, there is a sense of a time long gone and the nostalgia of something that the listener is not fully aware of. The way Moon moves and operates the camera recalls Angela Ndalians words on virtuosity as a key trait of the Neo-Baroque aesthetics—
“The virtuosity of science and technology is, in the hands of the

virtuoso artist and filmmaker, transformed into something that is both magical and akin to the spiritual.”¹⁴⁴

b) *Take Away Show_DAKHA BRAKHA* (2012).

Another film which epitomizes his consolidation as a master of accompaniment, is the *Take Away Show_DAKHA BRAKHA*.¹⁴⁵ The film, composed of two songs from the Kievian group, bridges Ukrainian folkloric music with contemporary styles. The band’s name refers to this exchange as it derives from the Ukrainian verbs “give” and “take.” The film, shot in 2012, was the first to give a global audience to a band that a couple of years later would go on to major festivals like Glastonbury and appear on BBC, NPR’s Tiny Desk, KEXP, and even have a track on the American television series *Fargo*.¹⁴⁶

Moon’s film starts with the sound of a muffled car motor while images of the horizon seen from the inside of a car quickly pass by. Old Soviet icons like the Motherland statue mix and swirl with the blurs of colors on the road. An a cappella song of *DakhaBrakha* starts in the background while Moon takes us to the destination of the film by slowing down the velocity of the pan to show the car pulling into a smaller road. In the film there is no indication of what this place is and where it is. Up until now, it has only briefly glimpsed that it’s on the side of a river and throughout the whole

¹⁴⁴ Ndalians, A. (2005). *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 241.

¹⁴⁵ The title of the film is introduced a space referencing to each verb (give and take) as there is no space in the name bands name *DakhaBrakha*.

¹⁴⁶ The song *Sho z-pod duba* was used in the second episode of the season three of *Fargo*.

film the only clarifications are small glimpses of the place. An old outdoor gym is shown, a bridge is under construction, and people are sunbathing on the other shore of the river, all while the a cappella song continues in the background.

It took me some time searching online with various terms in English (“open gym Ukraine river,” “river beach Kiev”, etc.) to finally find the place. The chosen location is curious, known as Hydro Park, it’s a river island on the outskirts of Kiev where the beach and a Soviet-era hand-made gym from metal scraps are the main attractions. Moon describes the conversation with Eugene, the person that was helping him in Kiev and that suggested filming there:

- The place is a bit like a gym. But in an impoverished Soviet style, in an open space with parades of proud biceps and bad homemade alcohol.

- Can we go film there?

- I don’t know, but it is pretty populated as you like it. The main beach on the Dniepr is just next to it, full of fat chess players and outdated orthodox churches.

- We will do that tomorrow. DakhaBrakha, in the best theater in the Ukraine.¹⁴⁷

As the a cappella song ends, Moon discloses the members of the band putting on their outfit and setting-up, tuning and getting ready for the shooting. In the background the noises of the rusty metal gym equipment get louder while the film cuts to shots of the man working out. The sound is that of a rusty swing going to and fro,

¹⁴⁷ Moon, V. (2012). *Dakha Brakha*. Retrieved July 10, 2017, from La Blogothèque: <http://en.blogothèque.net/2012/11/13/dakha-brakha-2/>

taking and giving. With the image of the people working out, the song *Sho z-pod duba* starts and slowly (in a single take) Moon travels backward with the camera, moving from the muscular men on the gym equipment to a close shot of a hand playing the cello. The rusty swinging sound of the gym fades out. Still, with this tight framing, he wanders around focusing on the details of the hands playing the drums, and on the mouth of the singer. During this movements, we still see in the background the men in their regular workout routine.

In the same single take, while drifting between the two singers, Moon slows down to focus on the gym. There is a friction between the performance and what is present in the environment. How the bodies that surround the band responds by being traversed or bothered by the sound and music that changed the natural soundscape of this old gym.

Moon is in the middle of the band, spinning in circles, dancing together with the camera in a tight zoom focusing and framing whatever interests him. He reacts back to the forces around him. A kid stops right in front of the performance curiously staring at the musicians and at the camera, to which Moon replies with a close shot of the kid's eyes and whirls around to capture the point of view of what the boy is seeing. In doing this, he opens-up to a broader framing where, for the first time, we can finally have a scheme of how they are positioned and where they are located. Still without cutting, the camera swings back to the tight close-ups of the

instruments being played soon drifting to a man that paused for some seconds to hear the music in-between his exercise.

Singing against the old Soviet gym

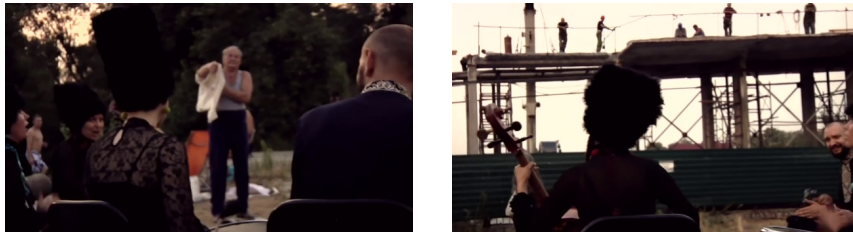


As *Sho z-pod duba* ends Moon reveals that some people gathered around,, stopping to listen to the improptu performance that was happening. The rusty swinging sound becomes audible once again. This time, singer Iryna Kovalenko answers to the sound by singing in harmony with it and transforming this annoying metallic sound into an angelical duet.

The film cuts to the next location. People swim in the Dnieper, a jet ski passes by, and a couple sitting at the edge of the river turn around with an inquisitive expression to check what is happening.

When the music *Yanky!* starts, Moon repeats the initial movement of walking backward to transition from the environment to close-ups of the musicians now playing at the opposite side of the river where the gym was. They are right next to a bridge that is being built. All the bridge workers stopped the construction to sit on the ledge to look down and listen to the music. This time Moon opens faster to an establishing shot, positioning the band against the small audience that stopped what they were doing to appreciate the pop-up show.

The second location of the film Dakha Brakha



Once the surroundings are shown, he swiftly closes in to the gestures of the musicians, syncing the camera movements with the beat. Each beat a cue to swoop the camera to the next point of interest. He goes back and forth between a wider view where DakhaBrakha is positioned against the river and the extreme close-ups of the sources of sound—hands, instruments, the body, the mouth. Next, he cuts to how those who gathered around are reacting. These unpredictable reactions are important for Moon and are present in many of his films. It is the visual sign of an exchange of resonances taking place (*renvoi*). It doesn't help elucidate or make it more understandable but instead helps strengthen the sensations provoked by music and sound. The critic and film

theorist Bela Balázs explores this mechanism in the chapter *Sound* in his book *Theory of the Film*:

The face of a man listening to music... may throw light into the human soul; it may also throw light on the music itself and suggest by means of the listener's facial expression some experience touched off by this musical effect. If the director shows us a close-up of the conductor while an invisible orchestra is playing, not only can the character of the music be made clear by the dumbshow of the conductor, his facial expression may also give an interpretation of the sounds and convey it to us. And the emotion produced in a human being by music and demonstrated by a close-up of a face can enhance the power of a piece of music in our eyes far more than any added decibels.¹⁴⁸

Perhaps by contrasting the same song being played by DakhaBrakha recorded elsewhere can help establish Moon's unique use of accompaniment. In 2015 the band appeared in NPR's *Tiny Desk Concert*, a project greatly inspired by the *Take Away Shows*. In the *Tiny Desk Concert*, the musicians are crammed behind a desk in the music department offices of the American National Public Radio as if it was a stage, where they are recorded playing their songs to the NPR staff (that although off-camera can be heard).

The same music *Sho z-pod duba* that was recorded by Moon is played here and captured in a three-camera set-up. One front camera that remains static and wide-open to show the whole set, and a left and right camera that mostly does close-ups and a few pans. The result is drastically different from Moon's films. NPR's video focuses on the music being played, which assumes center stage while the image is a bystander helping to give the music some

¹⁴⁸ Balázs, B. (1989). *Theory of the Film*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 120.

visual appeal. The image bears witness to the live aspect of the performance as dryly as a witness in a courtroom.

In *Tiny Desk Concert*, being crammed in a small place behind a desk is only a gimmick to justify an uninterrupted live performance. There is nothing else but the music, in a setting that is meant to convey it with as little interference as possible, so it doesn't get in the way of what is being sung and played.

The same can be said about DakhaBrakha's performance of the same song on a late-night show on BBC Two.¹⁴⁹ The elaborate stage, whimsical light design, and fancy camera movements on a crane are in function of the music. Delivering the performance as interference-free as possible is the goal.

So what sets Moon apart from the other recordings of the same song? Precisely that Moon enters into an exchange with the music, not only recording it but being shaped by it, and in turn, shaping it back.

Take Away Show_DAKHA BRAKHA affirms his argument when choosing the location—the best theater is that where life is happening. Music is integrated into a place full of people that without any previous knowledge will be confronted with the performance and in return will enter into a resonance between the musicians, director, camera, and the environment. Setting in motion the *renvoi*, Moon will join as an integral body that listens and reacts by searching for something beyond-meaning, beyond the music that

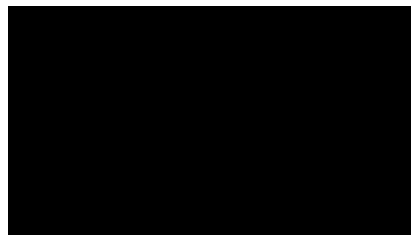
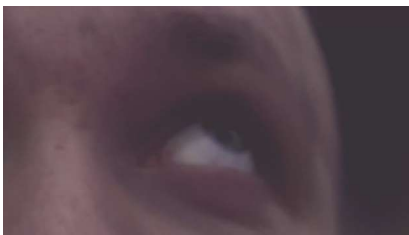
¹⁴⁹ *Later... with Jools Holland*. BBC Two. 29 September, 2015.

is being played, something precisely in this exchange, in this encounter. It's through such an approach that the random, the chaos is inserted inside the film. Accompaniment acts like an updated version of Bacon's free marks in the director's cinematic diagram. It is opening-up, searching, and listening for *sens*.

The ending is symbolic in representing this active stance to search for *sens* that is present in accompaniment. In a unique sequence within Moon's filmography, as the music *Yank!* is about to reach its sudden end, shots of an eye frenetically searching are intertwined with reverse shots of constantly changing subjects. As if the gaze is never fully satisfied with what it's seeing and must keep moving, searching for something that is not visible. The eye isn't looking for comprehension or explanation, but it is one that hears, an eye at the edge of meaning.

For Moon though, *sens* is not only present in the interaction between him and the subject, or the listener and the film. The last shot of the eye looking to beyond the film, towards the blank space, is the inquiry towards the deeper labyrinthic database. A call for the spectator to continue interacting not only in the film itself but also in the endless operation of folding/unfolding that is the trait that I'll explore in the last segment of this thesis, *The Fold*.

Last sequence in Dakha Brakha



3.2. Voice: searching for uniqueness in the what and the who

The next aspect of Moon's cinematic diagram is the voice. In *A King Listens* it is the voice that breaks the king free from his constant paranoiac relation to sound. Moon, as with the king in Calvino's story, is fascinated with the voice itself, and uses it in his diagram to deconstruct any meaning it may provide, to set free the voice from any relations so that it may enter the *renvoi* as a sonorous body.

The voice of his subjects rarely are responsible for synthesis; it doesn't give information that provides any knowledge or context.¹⁵⁰ How he does this is in a constant tension between the what of a voice (its sonorous characteristics and its relations to the world surrounding it) and the who of a voice (the singularity of each voice that can only be sensed).

This tension in how to approach a voice beyond the signification of its words is already present in the *Take Away Shows*. At times the voice is interrupted, overpowered by other sounds getting lost and merged into the soundscape; at other times the focus on the voice is so close and extreme that one cannot resist but to listen to its uniqueness.¹⁵¹ Another early indication of Moon's low regard for

¹⁵⁰ I say rarely because in *Petites Planètes* there are some exceptions where a certain cultural tradition is explained as in *Mezzo Morra • i suoni della Sardegna* (2012) and in *KANGÈ E DEFA • Female Rhapsody in Kosovo* (2017).

¹⁵¹ A good early example for the music being taken over by sound is *Au Revoir Simone - Stay Golden* (2006) and for the extreme focus on the voice *My Brightest Diamond - Hymne à l'amour* (2006) and *Take Away Show #93 _ BON IVER* (2008)

meaning is how rarely he uses subtitles. In his *Take Away Shows* he had already recorded musicians singing in English, French, Spanish, Swahili, Czech, Dutch, Danish, Greek, Portuguese, Japanese, Maori, Arabic, Icelandic, Polish, and Lithuanian, all without subtitles. In *Petites Planètes* he sparsely used subtitles in some of the first films of the series, to soon abandon it completely.

This tension between the what and the who of a voice replicates the differences between Nancy's listening and Michel Chion's reduced listening (informed by Pierre Schaefer's writings). In *Audio-vision*, Chion discusses three modes of listening: causal, semantic and reduced. Causal is what is heard without paying any attention, semantic is listening to find meaning, and reduced, is a mode of listening that pays attentions and tries to scrutinize the characteristics of the sound object.¹⁵²

Moon, at times, is worried in exploring the voice as a sonic object and how it relates to its environment. Reduced listening here serves for his purpose to question the what of a voice. When questioning the who, though, Moon breaks free of Chion's (and Schaefer's) three modes of listening to enter Nancy's listening to a *sens*. This dualism can be grasped as perceiving sound as a sonic object vs perceiving the sound as a sonic body.¹⁵³ As an object the inquiry is about its traits, as a body it becomes probing its singularity.

¹⁵² (Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, 1994, pp. 25-34)

¹⁵³ "Reduced listening takes the sound— verbal, played on an instrument, noises, or whatever—as itself the object to be observed instead of as a vehicle for something else." *Ibid.*, p. 29.

3.2.1. What is a voice?

a) *Mezzo Morra • i suoni della Sardegna* (2012)

I'll start on how he approaches the what of a voice by studying *Mezzo Morra • i suoni della Sardegna* (2012). Moon's film, shot in 2011 in partnership with the Milano Film Festival explores the "canto a tenore," a style of polyphonic folk singing characteristic to the island of Sardinia. In this traditional form, each singer of the quartet plays a distinct role that is connected somehow to the sounds of the island. The "bassu" (bass) imitates the cow mooing, the "contra" (counter) a sheep bleating, the "mesu 'oche" (half voice) the sound of the wind, while the "'oche" (solo voice) leads the others on when to join him.¹⁵⁴ It is a fascinating vocal style that immediately sounds strong and primitive.

The opening of Moon's film recognizes this ancestral connection to nature by starting with the sound of bleating sheep while slowly panning around the mountainous landscape. As if arising from the wind, gradually the sound of the voices gain body opening in a polyphonic harmony for the "oche" to start his solo. The song continues while Moon slowly cuts between the landscapes, from the mountains to the sea, to the hills, to the clouds. After a couple of minutes, the voices dissolve into the sound of the ocean; the image fades to black to introduce the title of the film.

¹⁵⁴ As explained in <https://styriarte.com/en/artists/tenores-di-bitti/> (10 May, 2018)

The landscape that gives birth to the voices



This intro sequence posits these voices as the natural expression of the soundscape of Sardinia, it arises from the earth, from the wind, the animals, and returns to the sea. The images of the landscape help establish these sounds as ancient as the earth itself. A connection between the materiality of the natural elements with the sonic properties originated from them. What is the voice of each of these singers? Moon answers that they are the organic elements and the history of Sardinia.

The title is followed by a rare explanation in Moon's oeuvre of how the tenores function while countryside images from inside a car quickly pass by. After a sequence of a musician playing a unique modified guitar—intercut with shots and sounds of a small village

preparing itself for local festivities—Moon cuts to another critical sequence in the film.¹⁵⁵

At dusk, five boys are in front of a small church in the village’s square. Multi-colored flags form garlands that are strung across the top of the piazza. They are playing “morra,” a millennial old hand game that dates back to ancient Roman and Greek times. One boy acts as the referee while the other four shout monotonously their guesses of what the combination of the fingers will be.¹⁵⁶

The quartet playing “morra”, sound in their non-stop fast-paced shouts of numbers, almost as the tenores that were previously singing. The voice of these boys, casually grouped to play are turned into music, the rhythm of their game dictating the vibrations of their voices. The importance of this scene shouldn’t be overlooked, after all, the title *Mezzo Morra* gives equal importance to the tenores (in *Mezzo*) as to the game (in *Morra*). Both are integral in setting-up the acoustic encounter between the voice and the surrounding elements. The voice of the tenores is transfigured into soundscape, while the voices of these boys are mutated into song.

Cutting to the garlands on top of the boys and following the colorful flags, Moon pans to a small stage where a group of tenores perform.

¹⁵⁵ Moon doesn’t introduce the musician only giving his name, Paolo Angeli, at the final credits.

¹⁵⁶ The game consists in two players guessing a number between 1 and 10 to simultaneously draw their hands showing how many fingers they are playing, the first to guess the right number gains a point. In this scene a variant with four players is shown where each time someone loses the winner quickly jumps to the next person to continue the game uninterrupted.

The voices of the boys playing morra merge into the polyphonic tune of the tenores. Moon asks—can it even be heard differently?

The film continues exploring the sounds around the festivity before introducing the last element to interact with the soundscape, the Launeddas. A polyphonic instrument made of three pipes, a larger one that delivers the continuous base and two smaller pipes that play the melody in thirds and sixths, a similar arrangement to that of the “bassu,” the “mesu ‘oche” and the “’oche” in the formation of the tenores.

Furthermore, the Launeddas require an elaborate technique of circular breathing as it needs to resound continuously and there is no bag as in its more known cousin the bag-pipe. Breathing and blowing then take a central part in playing the instrument, for its necessary to continuously inhale air through the nose and expel it through the mouth.

The film overlaps the images and sounds of the Launeddas being played with the game of morra, this time being played by a group of adults. The sound is overlaid. The shouts coming from the mouths of the players guessing numbers are mixed in with the sound from the Launeddas.

In the final sequence, Moon closes the circle mixing and fusing all sounds. The air expelled in the shouts flow through the Launeddas pipes. The wind from the pipes shakes the trees in the landscape. The play their numbers and the morra is played on the stage.

Launedas, Morra and the landscape merging in sound



The film ends with the soundscape of this small village graciously wavering in the shot of the main church sitting quietly while the garlands full of flags vibrating in the wind on a peaceful sunny day. From sounds and images of the untouched nature to the daily life of this small Sardinian town, a millennial journey where all sounds are equally responsible in giving life.

The voice in *Mezzo Morra* expands what Serge Daney called “through voice” in a piece where he criticized the common terms of film theory when talking about voice:

...a *through voice* is a voice that originates within the image but does not emanate from the mouth. Certain types of shot, involving characters filmed from behind, from the side, or in three-quarter view or from behind a piece of furniture, screen, another person, or an obstacle of some sort, cause the voice to be separated from the mouth. The status of the through voice is ambiguous and

enigmatic, because its visual stand-in is the body in all its opacity, the expressive body, in whole or in part.¹⁵⁷

This concept is handy to grasp Moon's different approaches to voice. In *Mezzo Morra* the voices are emanated from a body, but they started elsewhere and will also soon move on, continuing in the landscape, the culture and nature. The launeddas become a visual stand-in for the voice, as do the trees, the sheep and the waves of the ocean. In the pursuit of what is the voice, Moon arrives in this film, to the "passing through voice"—the body as a temporary repository of a voice that perdures. Right now it is a more abstract concept that will later, through his explorations of possession, develop into a more literal "passing through voice."¹⁵⁸

Mezzo Morra is the film that better embodies how Moon explores the question of the what of a voice is, but this is visible to a lesser degree in many of his films, from the *Take Away Shows* to his series in Vietnam, like his movie *VIET≈NAM ≈ NORTHERN TRIBES* (2006).

In doing so, Moon questions what Michel Chion calls vococentrism, the tendency where the human voice naturally hierarchizes perception. As Chion states, "the presence of a human voice

¹⁵⁷ Daney, S. (2013). *Back to Voice: on Voices over, in, out, through*. *Cinema Comparat/ive Cinema*, 1(3), p. 20. Within the context of this chapter, his text comes as a direct answer to Michel Chion's reliance in seeing the voice as an object that is to be interpreted visually. Dany offers in his text an alternative, where the voice becomes the center to which the image needs to be decoded.

¹⁵⁸ The passing through voice will gain specific relevance in the sub-section of cine-trance.

structures the sonic space that contains it.”¹⁵⁹ It’s not that Moon succeeds in breaking this inherit order, but he contextualizes the voice differently in relation to the image and signification. In deconstructing the voice and removing its meaning to investigate the origin of its sonic properties, Moon reconfigures the voice as something to *sens* rather than to understand.

A move that, as a comparison, also happens in Werner Herzog’s film *How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck* (1976) where the voices of the cattle auctioneers are so fast, full of rhythm and intonation that it surpasses the words to become an extension of countryside Pennsylvania. A sensation that is reinforced by interrupting the voices to insert John Denver’s song *Take me Home, Country Rode* with images of the landscape passing by. In this interruption the banjo strikes as remarkably similar to the trained voices that will compete in the following auction.¹⁶⁰ Herzog’s words on what incited him to do this movie can also be transposed to Moon:

The auctioneers not only speak very fast. It is almost like a form of invocation and ritual. There is a common border with the last form of poetry that is within our grasp, and also, it’s very close to music.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Chion, M. (1999). *The Voice in Cinema*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ In the sparse interviews that are in the film, one of the competitors says that he had professional training by an opera singer on how to control his breathing to become a better auctioneer.

¹⁶¹ Herzog, W. Quoted in Anguiano, F. A. (2010) *Lo irónico-sublime como recurso retórico en el cine de no-ficción de Werner Herzog. El caso The Withe Diamond, Grizzly Man y The Wild Blue Yonder*. (Doctoral dissertation) Retrieved from <https://www.tesisenred.net/handle/10803/7266>

3.2.2. Searching for the who of a voice

The other side of how this constant tension regarding the voice appears in Moon's cinematic diagram is in how he searches to find the who of the voice. I initially found confusing to comprehend that both aspects are present in his work, but during Moon's development throughout the years, it became clearer that in his practical approach to filmmaking what guided his attention was a sense of curiosity to find new experiences. At times this curiosity was about cultural practices and rituals, where exploring what a voice is opens for exchange and encounters. Other times, the interest is about a specific person or group, where the who of the voice becomes the gateway to enter into a relationship with the subject and find its own singularity. This acoustic tension also reproduces what has been said before in trying to find a balance between the meaning and pure chaos, at being at the edge of meaning without falling too deeply into an uncontrolled anarchy of sensations.

Three films of Vincent Moon stand-out from the rest in his inquiry into the who of the voice. I imagine these films as a kind of trilogy of the voice for there are many links between them. The three of them were recorded between the two months of December and January (2010-2011) in Brazil.¹⁶² They are somewhat minimalist in

¹⁶² From the many countries that Moon recorded, Brazil is one of the most prominent. A possible explanation on why Brazilian music particularly interested Moon can be found in Albert Elduque when he comments that "most of Brazilian music contains contains a potential, latent image. It is an image that precedes its use in movies and documentaries, and may be inspired by the lyrics, the structure, the melodies or the chords of the song." Elduque, A. (Ed.). (2017). *Contemporary Brazilian Music Film*. Reading: University of Reading, p. 14.

their approach, mostly happening inside the apartment of the singer, with the songs being either a cappella or with just another instrument following it. The three subjects have very distinct life stories but coincide in marking a specific period of Brazilian music in the 60s and 70s and that are still actively singing, performing and releasing new material. The films are *collection Petites Planètes volume 1 • TOM ZÉ (2010)*, *volume 15 • ELZA SOARES (2011)*, and *volume 10 • Ney Matogrosso (2011)*.

a) *Petites Planètes volume 1 • TOM ZÉ (2010)*

The first film, about Tom Zé, is his “pilot” film for the *Petites Planètes* series. The first film released that inaugurated his *Petites Planètes* label. It starts with an electrical buzzing sound, soon cutting to display that the source of the sound are some Christmas lights strung around tropical palm trees. A woman’s voice breaks the scene to announce, through what sounds like an interphone, for Moon to wait. The film jumps to inside an old elevator going up, the floors quickly passing by. Together with the sound of the elevator, a voice starts to sing. Before seeing the source of such voice its characteristics are already conveyed (one may think here of *acousmètre*). The voice sings slowly, in a cappella, it crackles and faults at times but nevertheless its firm as it carries on with a slow tempo as though listening to its echo. The elevator reaches the top floor. As the door opens, Moon cuts to a figure in a far-away window to slowly pan to Tom Zé against the foggy gray skyline of São Paulo.

The singer moves slowly while singing an ode to the northeast region of the country, the place where he was born and grew-up. The song is a Greek tragedy of sorts, where a shepherd is searching for a lost herd in the sertão and calling for help to anyone who has seen them.¹⁶³



Moon slowly “floats” around him, he cuts to the skyline when Tom Zé finishes his song and lingers at this hazy day before going back to Tom Zé who already started singing about the death of a famous cangaceiro.¹⁶⁴ His performance becomes more physical, the voice becomes bolder, faster and with a stronger attack. Tom Zé moves

¹⁶³ For the Vincent Moon follower there’s something new here. He is inserting subtitles to the song lyrics, a practice that during the first year of *Petites Planètes* he occasionally did depending on the availability of someone to translate the lyrics and on the time to edit the film. The subtitles are far from perfect, at times slowing-up or disappearing completely. I understand, although there isn’t a source for this, that subtitling was an afterthought and focusing on translating wasn’t of real interest for Moon. In the Vimeo comments of his film *Volume 6 • ZAR* (2010) a viewer asked if he could add subtitles to which he responded— “Sure, can you send me the translation?”

¹⁶⁴ Cangaceiro is the name of the bandits that roamed the region in late 19th, early 20th century. Glauber Rocha made them internationally famous in his films (particularly *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*).

around more aggressively mimicking with his arms the weapon of the cangaceiro. As he moves, his breath gets heavier; each inspiration becomes more sonorous as the movements are intensified. He turns his lack of air (at the time of the recording he was 75 years old) into part of the song, reaching its apex as he describes the cangaceiro's death. Afterwards, calming down, he gently sings about the legacy that was left in the heart of the people.

In this sequence, on the one hand there is the sonic quality of Tom Zé's voice—the grain, the harshness, tonality, the fleshy throat that produces the sound. On the other, you have the symbolism of what is being sung, the socio-cultural context of racism against the northeastern immigrant, Tom Zé's personal background as someone who fled poverty, the “enfant terrible” of the tropicália movement who went into obscurity and regained attention when David Byrne discovered him.

The film, then, carries the questions if the voice is something purely semantical? Does it go beyond and carry an inner hidden-self as many philosophers based on Lacan will defend? Is it pure exteriority? Another sound with its unique properties for Moon to deconstruct? So far, some of the traits that Tom Zé's voice has revealed is where he's from, and maybe an age approximation. The difficulty arises when the who is questioned in the voice. In Chion's book *The Voice in Cinema* he starts with this dilemma, can the voice be broken down as a separate element from its source?

The voice is elusive. Once you've eliminated everything that is not the voice itself- the body that houses it, the words it carries,

the notes it sings, the traits by which it defines a speaking person, and the timbres that color it, what's left? What a strange object, what grist for poetic outpourings...¹⁶⁵

Chion's answer though is problematic, for him the way forward is to interpret the voice through Lacan, "when he placed the voice-along with the gaze, the penis, the feces, and nothingness in the ranks of "objet (a)."¹⁶⁶ In his attempt to neither be fascinated by the voice and neither reduce it only to speech and language, his proposition of the voice as an object is essentially one that is connected to the visual. Voice becomes the possibility of an indexical relation to the imagetic body, the acousmatic voice is one that only exists due to the visual tension to which body it pertains:

Everything hangs on whether or not the acousmètre has been seen. In the case where it remains not-yet-seen, even an insignificant acousmatic voice becomes invested with magical powers as soon as it is involved, however slightly, in the image. (...) Being involved in the image means that the voice doesn't merely speak as an observer (as commentary), but that it bears with the image a relationship of *possible inclusion*, a relationship of power and possession capable of functioning in both directions; the image may contain the voice, or the voice may contain the image.¹⁶⁷

In Moon this tension is eliminated, the voice is always intrinsically connected to its source, or it can be said, the body is always contained in the voice. Focusing on what has been said so far regarding sound, the basis to comprehend Moon's films start in configuring the world through a sonic perspective. The uniqueness of an otocentric approach relies on embracing that, in sound,

¹⁶⁵ (Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 1999, p. I)

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

difference is the normative. The world of sound is the world of the singular.¹⁶⁸

To further understand how this uniqueness is at the core of Moon's questioning the who of the voice, Adriana Cavarero's *For More Than One Voice* comes in hand. In her book, Cavarero deepens this concept finding in the voice markers of uniqueness and using this to revise the universal and abstract categories of philosophy based on singularity already being imbued into all living things. Cavarero reasons that each woman or man has "an identity that consists in an embodied existing being, unique and unrepeatable."¹⁶⁹

By asserting such a radical revision of singularity (through voice) what would be otherwise merely physical proximity is turned into a space of relation, conversation, and encounter. Voice is not the projection of a hidden-inside but a model to be in the world together. It indicates that someone is there to be seen and heard.

Relating back to Moon, Cavarero distinguishes what someone is from who someone is. In practical terms, what a voice is changes, it is subject to transformation. It may reveal some aspects of the person, but none of them finds the who in question. For her, the who, stemming from her political concept of the uniqueness through encounters, is not what Tom Zé is, neither the sonorous characteristics of the voice, but is the singular path of someone's life as recounted by others. In this sense, the who requires an

¹⁶⁸ (Nadal-Melsió, 2018, p. 26)

¹⁶⁹ (Cavarero, 2002, pp. 92-93)

outside interaction to be found. It is the result of an encounter, an exchange.

Ryan Dohoney synthesizes well the process, these external voices in communication with one's own "do not access anything secret or hidden in the innermost depths of subjectivity but instead open up a relational space—a plurality—through which uniqueness is communicated by a polyphony of other singular voices. The uniqueness of some woman or man is told as it existed in the world, experienced by others."¹⁷⁰

b) *Petites Planètes* volume 15 • ELZA SOARES (2011)

The film *ELZA SOARES* (2011) is exemplary in how this operates throughout Moon's work. Elza Soares is an intriguing figure that throughout her whole life has been able to persevere even after extreme tragedies. Forced into marriage at the age of 12, a year later, without any money to buy medicine for her son she went on a national radio competition to sing. She was laughed by the audience due to her condition, and the presenter mockingly asked her from which planet she had come from, to which she promptly answered— "Planet hunger."¹⁷¹ Her life even after success was marked by deaths of loved ones, despair, and even an almost national hatred towards her due to the relationship with the sixties football phenomenon Garrincha. All of this, like in *Tom Zé*, is nowhere to be found in the film. There is one sequence towards the

¹⁷⁰ (Dohoney, 2011, p. 77)

¹⁷¹ An in-depth recount of her life can be found in the archives of O Globo: <http://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/em-destaque/com-voz-suingue-elza-soares-deixou-planeta-fome-para-conquistar-mundo-21486028>

end where Moon shows the posters and pictures that are hanged on her living room's wall. A shot that without any previous knowledge of her career seems to be only another typical sequence where Moon directs the camera to explore the environment in which they are.

Instead, Moon focuses on her husky voice. The songs she chooses to sing has herself as the poetic persona and infers to be heavily autobiographical. They are songs of resisting adversity and in the process being trespassed by a range of emotions that change and affect her. The first is sung in a cappella and is *Noite do meu bem*, originally sang by Dolores Duran.¹⁷² The second part is a sort of medley with the accompaniment of a keyboard where her soliloquies connect the different music that she sings. In these spoken parts—referring to herself in the third person—Elza Soares enunciates a series of characteristics that defines her story. Moon mostly frames her face in a tight shot, occasionally opening up the frame and circulating to disclose the singer in an extravagant wooden chair. A throne in which she sits looking outside her apartment to the beach of Copacabana.

¹⁷² To sing a cover from another artist in this moment is an intriguing choice by Elza Soares. Albert Elduque, comments on the importance that re-performing takes in the Brazilian tradition of music films, which in this case can be applied to Elza's effort to rethink and reframe her past— "As a matter of fact, the re-performance is an enduring feature of the Brazilian music documentary, probably because it is an effective, condensed way of rethinking the history of the song through a single, present image which evokes a remembered past." (Elduque, 2017, p. 9)



In this film, the singer is adamant in explicitly defending her uniqueness. Even so, for her voice to reveal the who, there needs to be an exchange with someone else, an encounter with other voices. Her use of the third person as an imaginary other is a mimicry of what Moon is simultaneously doing with the camera, the outside self that finds the uniqueness.

The film seems to have caught an inflection point in Elza Soares career. It captures the seed of resilience, the will to provoke what is expected of her at that age. A drive originated in her voice, as the method to open herself to an encounter where the who can emerge. She is aware of how the voice is in play as a couple of years later in the album *A Mulher do Fim do Mundo* (2015), she would sing that

she is “a woman at the end of the world, who will sing till the end.”¹⁷³

Nevertheless, her voice says what Elza Soares is but for it to express the who it needs to enter an exchange, that happens in this film through Moon (and the pianist). Her singularity depends on its relations with the other singular voices around her. Moon by listening (*écouter*) to a voice opens this *renvoi* where the who can be found. Nadal-Melsió’s connection between Levinas and Nancy comes in hand here to properly interpret Moon’s stance:

I will be expectant in my listening, ready for the sound to reach my ears. I will wait for the emergence of something outside myself, for another to approach me. I will be attuned to another’s existence before my own.¹⁷⁴

In listening the who is found at the edge of meaning, it opens up one’s own existence as an echo-chamber to resound and affirms its singularity. At this edge, the what of a voice turns into a byproduct to the unique who that can only be sensed. The film becomes the propulsor and motivator for this exchange where both the who of the subject and the who of the director is affirmed through this sonic encounter. To make a film is to create the physical space of encounter that Cavarero proposes in her theory of voice and that Moon unknowingly seeks: “Making a film is like putting myself in a situation that I would not be able to do if I did not have the camera

¹⁷³ Pitchfork’s review of the album invokes the same feeling that is present in the film: “She sounds exhausted, worn out, run into the ground by sorrow. But in every click in her voice, in every catch in her throat, there is also defiance.” <https://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/22173-a-mulher-do-fim-do-mundo-the-woman-at-the-end-of-the-world/>

¹⁷⁴ (Nadal-Melsió, 2018, p. 24)

and if I didn't have the project of filming music."¹⁷⁵ The process of filmmaking becomes an excuse to enter into a physical space where he can vibrate with these voices. In the three films that I'm analyzing here, this space is the living room of each artist that he is shooting.

Nadal-Melsió expands how this encounter happens even beyond the physical interaction. The listener of the film doesn't need to be physical present before the artist, for now it is possible able to enter into the *renvoi* by being all ears, to closely and attentively listening—“the singularity of my voice only emerges as a response to the other that precedes and exceeds me, and of the world that we share in this game of call and response.”¹⁷⁶

If such a game sounds familiar, it's not a coincidence, for Nancy's summon to listen is precisely a mode of living that finds one's uniqueness through its interaction with others and in doing so encounters *sens*—an acknowledgment of the who of a voice instead of the knowledge of the what. Listening to a voice in Moon's films is a sensuous apperception that opens the listener up to interact with it, to resound and refer back, finding one's own voice in the process.

c) Petites Planètes volume 10 • Ney Matogrosso (2011)

The last film in this trilogy of voices is *Ney Matogrosso*, a film where the erotic and energetic countertenor voice of Ney

¹⁷⁵ Moon, V. (2012, March 7). *Vincent Moon has a Vision*. (D. Feather, Interviewer) Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdHiZRChxkc>

¹⁷⁶ (Nadal-Melsió, 2018, p. 25)

Matogrosso takes the central stage, while a cello provides a counterpoint to a dialog created between voice and instrument. Compared to the other two films the accompanying instrument here is sonically more evident and also foregrounded in the image. Also, Ney Matogrosso is holding a microphone very close to his mouth. If this is a technical decision to capture the smaller nuances of his countertenor voice or an artistic choice for him to feel more relaxed (in his shows the microphone has an integral part in the performance) is hard to know. What matters is that effectively the delicate variations of his voice seem to be indeed better recorded. It also becomes a source of interest for Moon as he frames the mouth and the microphone many times more than only the mouth with Tom Zé and Elza Soares.

Ney Matogrosso starts to take Cavarero's ideals to the limit. The voice is only fully revealed because it's intermediated by a microphone that amplifies the subtler characteristics that would otherwise remain hidden. A question regarding the electronic intermediation of voice that Cavarero doesn't regard as appropriate, for it contradicts her political reasoning of the physical encounter. Furthermore, in *Ney Matogrosso* the voice tensions this balance between the physical pleasure in listening to a song to the pleasure of finding the uniqueness (this is Cavarero's notion of the pleasure of the voice). But can there be such an intensification of sensations that maybe something else can also appear? How to connect this pleasure in the singularity of a voice to how it functions inside a song? To the voice in music?

The listener takes pleasure in Ney Matogrosso's voice, to find the who that is captured in the film. There is pleasure also in how the sounds of Rio de Janeiro are inserted in between the sequences, giving life outside his voice, and how in contrast to his countertenor the cello being played escalates the impression of listening to a voice but also to an instrument that at times sounds like a gracious bird (like in the chorus of his second performance *Fala*). An impression that Moon accentuates with the birds singing in the background, by framing him against the trees and finishing with him against the sky before flying away to the next shot from a higher view down towards the city.

Transition sequence to the last performance of Ney Matogrosso



It's when relating the voice to a song that Cavarero's work shows its deficiencies and by exploring these limitations, in turn, further elucidates the purpose of the voice in Moon's cinematic diagram. When reading *For More Than One Voice* it is striking that all her elaborations on voice are always based in metaphorical or literary voices, nowhere she concerns herself with a real voice connected to a real body. The fleshy throat, the weightiness of a body, the physicality responsible for the reverberance that gives life to the exhaled air are all absent. The nonappearance of any connections to a real voice affects her idea of music for she sees it as a purely abstract concept of a place for voices to interact while carrying the danger of the voice uniqueness being absorbed, dissipated and finally lost.

The voice inserted inside a musical context, unconnected to any real sonic experience loses its spontaneity of conjuring unpredictable situations. Dohoney acutely rebates Cavarero's strict perspective on song:

To overdetermine the experience of song—as Cavarero does—as a source of pleasure is to miss those moments when musical performance acts otherwise, when it sets up unexpected situations that go somewhere (affectively, politically) we weren't expecting, in short, when music gives birth to something new whose circulation and mediation can't be foreseen.¹⁷⁷

As I hope, has become clear so far, to create an environment for the unforeseen, the unexpected, is one of the primary goals of Moon's cinematic diagram. The who of the voice is an integral part; it stimulates the film to happen, it impulses the creation of a physical

¹⁷⁷ (Dohoney, 2011, p. 80)

space of encounter between the director and the subject where both will interact in finding and defining the singularity of each other. It's also an invitation to listen attentively and in the voices present in the film find the opening of one's own voice to resound. Moon is interested in discovering this unique who in Tom Zé, Elza Soares, Ney Matogrosso, and all the other subjects he recorded. However, his fascination seems to go beyond. Finding the uniqueness of a voice is but the beginning to see how, together with the artist, they can compose an experience that goes somewhere unexpected.

Each of these three artists has feature-length documentaries that explore the who of their voice that would fit into Cavarero's philosophy.¹⁷⁸ They successfully recount their life stories and find their uniqueness. But none use this singularity of the voice as the platform for an inimitable and unpredictable composition to blossom. Does it always work? No. Dohoney adds, when regarding music and voice, that "Music does not always destabilize meaning; it is not always that drastic or enjoyable. Sometimes music is boring; sometimes it fails."¹⁷⁹ The same also applies to Moon, his films not always manage to give birth to the unpredicted. But the impulse to create a fertile ground for it to happen is always there.

Cavarero's notion of vocal expression emerges from a phenomenological perspective; each individual is naturally born

¹⁷⁸ They are *Fabricando Tom Zé* (2006), *My Name is Now*, *Elza Soares* (2014), and *Olho Nu* (2014). In an additional note, as Albert Elduque notes there has been in the past two decades an intense interest and production of Brazilian cinema with interest in music. More details on this movement can be found in the (Contemporary Brazilian Music Film, 2017)

¹⁷⁹ (Dohoney, 2011, p. 80)

unique, the voice is the form through which an interaction that finds this uniqueness within the other occurs.¹⁸⁰ Nancy, in contrast, conjectures a post-phenomenological conception where the focus is shifted to a self that exists outside the subject/other paradigm, one that subsists in the *renvoi* (the endless referral between the sonic bodies). This doesn't negate the singularity of each voice, and similarly to Cavarero, it is through listening that one interacts with the other bodies and finds its uniqueness.

But, Nancy, in surfacing this third entity, the *self* in the *renvoi*, opens the interaction to beyond the human, one's uniqueness can be found in the encounter with this third *self*. It no longer requires the physical presence of another human so that two voices can interact. With Nancy, singularity is affirmed with the body participating in the *renvoi*, be it between two people, or with any other type of sonic body.

As such, this *self* is what opens one's singular voice/timbre to participate transforming and echoing back to its surrounding. Cavarero helps explain Moon's fascination with the voice, in exchange Nancy helps understand how the voice is set in motion and what he hopes to achieve.

In this "trilogy of the voice" Moon and the singer listen to each other, become echo-chambers with unique singular voices/timbres that resonate with each other and with what is around them, creating and entering the *renvoi*. Nancy's post-phenomenological concept

¹⁸⁰ She will apply this notion into a feminist theory that breaks down the western philosophical history of ignoring this uniqueness.

also means that anything that resounds, that echoes, that exists in the sonic world also becomes part of the *renvoi*. The interaction is no longer between director x subject, but their voices are part in affirming the singular difference of everything that reverberates (remembering Nadal-Melsió's that in the living everything is singular). In this grand sonic encounter, the listener listens to *himself*, to the *otherself* but most importantly to the *self* in the *renvoi*.

As another entity is added to Cavarero's ideal physical space; the voice is no longer only a linear force in her metaphoric and literary conception. In considering how sound functions, when a voice interacts with another, it resounds, bounces, echoes back and forth in an endless reconfiguration, each time slightly changing as it is transformed by the subject, the other and whatever is around it. This doesn't negate uniqueness, but it creates a third self, one that is in constant change. It can't be understood what this other self is, but one can listen to it and acknowledge that something unrepeatable and unique is happening in the exchange, what Nancy calls *sens*.

In the *renvoi*, Tom Zé's voice reveals the uniqueness of that body converted into an echo-chamber. The mouth becomes the escape route of this organon to affirm and expresses his singularity beyond any words. It is not coincidentally that Moon often frames extreme close-ups of the mouth, a move that Brandon LaBelle unravels in his book *Lexicon of the Mouth*:

The mouth is thus wrapped up in the voice, and the voice in the mouth, so much so that to theorize the performativity of the

spoken is to confront the tongue, the teeth, the lips, and the throat; it is to feel the mouth as a fleshy, wet lining around each syllable, as well as a texturing orifice that marks the voice with specificity, not only in terms of accent or dialect, but also by the depth of expression so central to the body.¹⁸¹

Tom Zé, on the terrace of his building, sings to the cars passing by below, to the towers that surround him, to the birds that fly above, to the mountains that surround the city, to the neighbor that was previously shown in the window, and to Moon with his body and camera almost touching Tom Zé's mouth. All these sonic bodies resound back their singular existence, echo the singer's rough and tired voice, which in turn resounds back each sonic wave. Moon films this intricate continuous sending back and forth of sounds where the *self* in the *renvoi* emerges, where anyone can enter to affirm one's own voice.

¹⁸¹ LaBelle, B. (2015). *Lexicon of the Mouth: Poetics and Politics of Voice and the Oral Imaginary*. London: Bloomsbury, p. 1.

3.3. Music: resonating the encounter

...man unites himself with the soundscape about him, echoing back its elements. The impression is taken in; the expression is thrown back in return. But the soundscape is far too complex for human speech to duplicate, and so it is in music alone that man finds that true harmony of the inner and outer world. It will be in music too that he will create his most perfect models of the ideal soundscape of the imagination.¹⁸²

Schafer's quotation—from his book *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*—brings into play Moon's ideals that I've discussed so far through Nancy and Cavarero. Music organizes the world of sound, transforms the sounds received and echoes it back entering Nancy's endless referrals of the *renvoi*. Lastly, music breaks the semantic voice so that it can find its uniqueness/timbre in interacting with the world.

Music in the films of Moon serves as an extension of the voice, not to drown its uniqueness in the multiplicity of sounds, but to further develop its relationship with the instruments and the world around it. I've approached this idea in reverse through the film *Mezzo Morra*, where the voice is seen in relation to the sounds and the instruments of Sardinia. Here I'll tackle it head-on with the film *An Island* (2010), where the band Efterklang together with Moon fold the soundscape of their hometown into their music. The collaboration between the director and the Danish band produced one of the most robust examples to grasp the interplay between music, soundscape, and the visual.

¹⁸² Schafer, M. R. (1977). *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Vermont: Destiny Books, p. 42.

a) *An Island* (2010)

An Island is shot on the Baltic Sea island of Als with performances from Efterklang's eight-piece live band. During the film they partnered-up with more than 200 local musicians, ranging from kids to their parents, creating new performances and interpretations of songs from their album *Magic Chairs*. All the sounds and mixing of *An Island* was made in partnership with Efterklang, giving the documentary a layer of mastery and intentionality in creating the sounds that is only present in few of Moon's works. This is not to take away any merits from Moon in what is one of his best works as a director. The sound in *An Island* showcases the full potential of his diagram when given time and dedication to develop these little worlds fully.

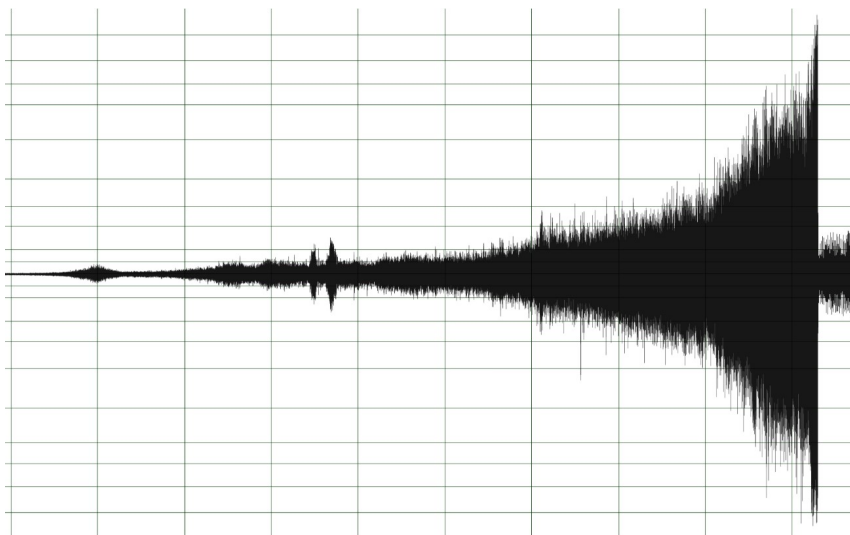
To situate the film within the Moon's work, this project was done in 2009 when he was distancing himself from the music industry and starting his new series *Petites Planètes*. *An Island* is one of his last documentaries that somehow still has ties with the indie music scene before diving into experimental ethnography.¹⁸³ It is the documentary that marks his graduation from *La Blogothèque* and showcases a director with firm and determined concepts, a period where he actively started working on establishing a more personal vision.

The film starts with the faint sound of water and a fog horn in the distance. Gradually, specific sounds are introduced while the

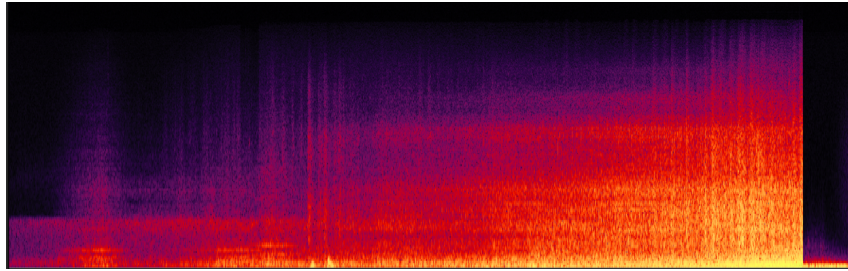
¹⁸³ His other exception was that four years later he released a sort of continuation of *An Island* with his Efterklang movie *The Last Concert* (2014).

members of Efterklang are silhouetted against the night. The credits are overlaid on top of these images. The waves get louder followed by the deep rumbling of the boat's motor. Birds start chirping at a distance as the night gives way to dawn. The sound of the engine chugging along increases in speed as it gets stronger. The water splatting on the hull of the boat swells together with the rumble of the motor. An airplane is heard, and from the growing sound, it's apparently approaching. The continuous crescendo creates anxiety until suddenly all the sounds are muffled, it feels like I'm now underwater and only vaguely hearing what is happening above the surface. The screen turns black while the title of the film appears.

Waveform of the introduction, a constant crescendo in volume until the sudden break to the muffled "underwater" sound.



Spectral Analysis of the introduction. Frequencies of sound gradually increase until the sudden drop to the lowest frequency.



As the camera pans through the horizon, it turns into a musical notation with each tree becoming a musical cue. Foreshadowing the next scene where the band is collecting sounds in the countryside of Als, this sequence of the landscape from inside of a moving car disclose that these sounds are not natural, they are created and recorded through an electronic device that changes and modifies them. The mediation between what you see and what you hear is in the hands of the filmmaker.

Michel Gondry, in his music video *Star Guitar - The Chemical Brothers* (2002) turned the countryside of France into musical notation by recording the landscape from inside a moving train, assigning each object in the scene a note or a beat and using special effects so that it would seem like a single take. The music video, becomes a literal “video music” where the moving image of the landscape generates the music. An updated concept where the landscape is used in the same way that the early synched-sound cartoons of the late 20s and early 30s— “The whole world becomes a wind, string, or percussion instrument creating a jazzy music that

sets everyone and everything to dancing.”¹⁸⁴ Or as in Eisenstein’s chapter, that I previously mentioned, *The Landscape of Music* where he creates drawings to illustrate how the landscape can refer to notes.

Similarly, the world of *An Island* also sets in motion the music of the band. To follow the introduction with a landscape that is sonically registered as music is strategical since it will give the basis to understand how the landscape and soundscape of the island of Als influenced the way in which the music was played and created for the documentary.

Here it’s the trees that dictate the duration of the noise, but throughout the documentary and most obviously, in the next scene, we can see the band harvesting sounds from their hometown. The muffled helicopter sound stops giving way to a countryside ambiance and a deep drone frequency. Casper Clausen (Efterklang’s vocalist) asks “Can we start?” and a low metal bang syncs with the cut to show a barn in the field. Images of this bucolic and abandoned barn are over-imposed on the sound of drumsticks banging on the metal surfaces and columns. Moon cuts to show the process of Efterklang collecting these sounds, Clausen is holding a shotgun microphone, a recorder on his lap and headphones. With the banging metal as a base sound, each new source of sound is added on top of that.

¹⁸⁴ (Chion, *Film, a sound art*, 2009, p. 39)



Pointing the microphone to a wood log, he hits it while recording the vibrations it produces. The other band members (Rasmus Stolberg and Mads Brauer) are also recording sounds by throwing logs on top of a pile of wood, scratching their hands on a damp metal surface, running, etc. All these sounds are introduced individually and accumulate on top of each other. An ongoing synthesizer drone starts gaining more volume. The metal bangs fade away as we see two of the band members recording the crisp squelch of their boots walking on the wet grass. Immediately after,

a recorder is shown in a close-up capturing the sound of raindrops on someone's hand.

From there Moon cuts back to Clausen walking through the woods searching for a station in a portable handheld radio.¹⁸⁵ As he tunes through the radio channels static noise comes out with small outbursts of distinguishable sounds. He finally finds a station playing classical music and, holding the radio close to his body he closes his eyes to immerse himself in the sound that surrounds him.

The island of Als is where the three members grew up and met each other, so coming back to shoot this movie and capture the sounds of their childhood can be interpreted as a tuning of the world, looking for the noises that surrounded them and capture the sounds that formed them into what they are now. Their roots are not only physically based in Als but also sonically. Their music carry this soundscape, it's a way to interact, and make sense of the sounds that gave them their voice. *An Island*, however, is not a document of the sound of Als. It does not aim to preserve a sonic registry of the island, but instead looks towards how the band members of Efterklang experience these sounds. Sound ends not being an object to dissect, but the basis on which music and encounters happen.

To clarify this distinction, compare Moon's film with Humphrey Jennings' *Listen to Britain* (1942). Jennings turned what could be a simple propaganda film into a textured, lyrical evocation of Britain at war. As the early treatment entitled *The Music of War* indicates,

¹⁸⁵ A brief voiceover of Clausen talking about how he met the other band members is inserted before the radio sequence.

for Jennings it is the sounds of that time that matter the most. Playing at the brink of fiction and non-fiction, with the help of editor (turned co-director) Stewart McAllister, the film is built on top of the music and sounds that create a continuum to which the image dialogues on top. Jennings, contrarily to Moon, understands and captures the music as being an outcome. It is not the ground on which subjectivity is built but the result of a modernization process—the Canadian soldiers sing on a train to the sound of an accordion; the factory workers follow the song that blasts through the speakers; a duet sings during lunch break at a large cafeteria. Moon and Jennings, both used soundscape and music as the skeleton of their films, and although reaching very distinct effects, their process of transfiguring the landscape into sound bear some similarities that is recognized through the work of the writer, educator and composer Murray Schafer.

Schafer opens his book announcing that “the soundscape of the world is changing.”¹⁸⁶ These changing soundscapes drastically differ from those of the past, both in quality and intensity. Continuous and loud sounds like the machines introduced in the industrial revolution, for example, were something unknown to humans until that point. There are now so much sounds in our ambiance and everyday lives that most of it turn into noise. When living in a city, for example, there are very few instances when there’s not constantly sounds from cars, buses, metros, trains, horns, shouts, and construction equipment.

¹⁸⁶ (Schafer, 1977, p. 3)

This overaccumulation of noises leads in turn to noise pollution, a problem that is now worldwide. Against the common sense of ignoring or trying to silence all noise in any possible manner, Murray Schafer gives an alternative:

Noise pollution results when man does not listen carefully. Noises are the sounds we have learned to ignore. Noise pollution today is being resisted by noise abatement. This is a negative approach. (...) Which sounds do we want to preserve, encourage, multiply? When we know this, the boring or destructive sounds will be conspicuous enough and we will know why we must eliminate them. Only a total appreciation of the acoustic environment can give us the resources for improving the orchestration of the world soundscape.¹⁸⁷

Schafer's admonition is a political one, where the power to decide which sounds should be eliminated and which ones should be preserved is given back to oneself.¹⁸⁸ It's also a musical admonition, for listening is the genesis where one becomes the composer of its own music.

The 10-minute intro of *An Island* (which has 50 minutes total) orchestrates the sounds of Als analogously to how the music present in the rest of the film will. This extreme focus on very specific sounds creates what Schafer denominates a Hi-Fi Soundscape.

A Hi-Fi soundscape is a place where the listener can clearly hear each sound and identify its source. It's described as "a favorable

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁸⁸ Greg Hainge, on the other hand, in the book *Noise Matters* (pp. 41-42) criticizes Murray for perpetuating a negative relation towards noise. As I'll reach later in the section specifically about noise, Hainge perceives noise as being an elemental material of which all sound emerges and cites *The Soundscape* as the urtext of the anti-noise lobby.

signal-to-noise ratio. The Hi-Fi soundscape is one in which discrete sounds can be heard clearly because of the low ambient noise level.”¹⁸⁹ A good example would be a countryside where one can pay attention and listen to a bird on the tree, a cow in the pasture or some vehicle approaching from afar.

The opposite would be a Lo-Fi Soundscape, a place where “individual acoustic signals are obscured in an over dense population of sounds.”¹⁹⁰ A large city or a busy factory is a good example, where the constant hums of cars, horns, trains, machines, air conditioner, airplanes and other sources are continually fighting each other for dominance.

The whole introduction to *An Island* creates a Hi-Fi soundscape where signal-to-noise ratio is high, and each element is distinguishable. Each new sound also brings new interactions where I can sense a little bit more what it was to grow-up in such place. As the movie will showcase later, these recordings and Hi-Fi sounds are integrated into the Efterklang’s music, by playing in places where the soundscape is present and fully embraced by the filmmaker and the band.

The first performance in *An Island* is the music *Raincoats*. Moon cuts from the intro sequence to an old pickup truck that slowly comes towards him in an out of focus shot. The sequence starts with a cut to black as the syncopated claps of the band mark the rhythm of the music, seconds later the first image is an extreme close-up of

¹⁸⁹ (Schafer, 1977, p. 43)

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

the vocalist's hand clapping. With a very shallow depth of focus the background is just a dark green blur of the forest that they are driving through.



The deep sound of the motor that is shown in the previous scene is present throughout the whole song. It is not a coincidence and neither inability to separate the sound of the truck from those of the voices and instruments being recorded. The low, continuously truck rumble doesn't cut from the previous sequence indicating that it most likely was recorded separately and added in post-production. So far, the band has collected sounds from the environment, in *Raincoats* these sounds are sonically introduced for the first time in their music. The world around them is a profusion of noise that if adequately tuned can give birth to new sounds, putting to test Murray Schafer's claim of not dismissing certain kinds of noise but selecting and including them in our sonic landscapes.

Spectral analysis of the music Raincoats as performed in An Island. The arrow indicates when the music starts.

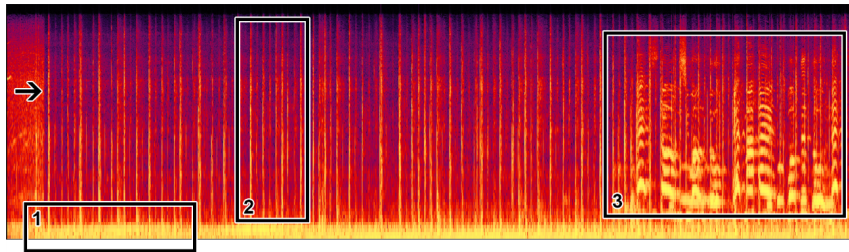
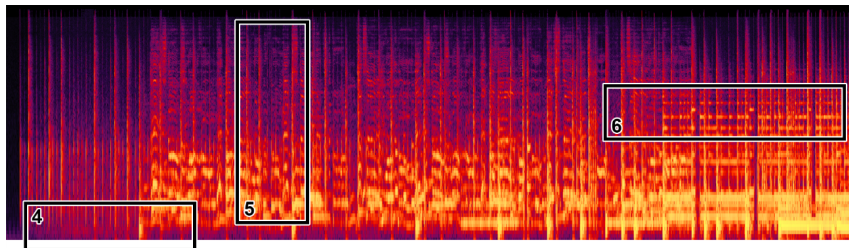


Figure 1 - Spectral analysis of the same segment in the recorded in their album Magic Chairs (2010).



The spectral analysis above reveals this integration of the frequencies present in the world as a changing force in how music is presented in *An Island*. If comparing the version in the film with how the music was recorded, the first observation is the inclusion of this deep motor sound that strangely enough fits perfectly in the music and is in rhythm with the rest of the sounds. It gives a deep continuous murmur of the soundscape (the frequencies highlighted at **1**) that ground the other sounds to a continuous materiality in space. In contrast, the version recorded in a controlled studio environment eliminates all unnecessary noises as exemplified by the lower frequencies that only resonate specifically when the bass guitar joins in (highlight **4**). In addition, the voice is clearly separated from the other instruments (the voice in **3** resonates across

a wider range and interacts with more sounds in contrast to the voice in **5** that is more constricted and clearly separated from the higher notes of the guitar that starts at **6**).

Music in *Moon* is integrated into a world that is sonically made present. In *An Island*, noise is an invitation to focus on specific elements from the soundscape that interact with the sound and the film. The rumble of the motor places where the performance is happening but will soon affect even more the music.

The fine-tuning of the sonic world is repeated visually in accompaniment; *Moon* transposes the extremely focused sounds that were being captured by the band into extreme close-up shots and frenetic camera movement to the rhythm of the song. As the verse starts *Moon* smoothly pans to Clausen's mouth singing and slowly zooms out to show the person next to him joining in the verse. When the guitar enters, he follows by quickly panning to it and framing just the hand striking the chords. Still keeping the tight framing, he moves to the person playing electrical bass and, as if instructed by *Moon*, the bassist slightly moves so that he can capture the drummer and his snare drum. Next to the drummer, another member is following the rhythm by slapping his hands on his thigh.

Only after throwing the listener straight into the music he pans up to show the faces of the band and slowly reveals who is on the truck and where they are. This doesn't last long, because briefly after situating the action *Moon* uses the rhythmic bridge to the verse as

an opportunity to visually express the sounds by following each compass with a new movement. First compass – quick pan to the bassist. Second compass – quick pan to the singer. Third compass – zoom in at the eyes. Fourth compass – pan down to the guitar. Once the chorus enters, the camera follows Clausen as he sings before zooming out, at last, giving a full view of the back of the pickup truck.



While *Raincoats* is reaching its apotheosis, the song abruptly stops as the sound of the motor dies, and the film cuts to a black screen. Clausen in an interview talks about the truck dying, but it happened after the shot had already been entirely recorded and it never turned back on, they had to call in a tow truck to carry it out of there.¹⁹¹ So why interrupt a performance that was perfectly recorded? This abrupt cut further strengthens the connection between the music and the soundscape.

In *Moon*, one cannot exist without the other. Music is not a separate ethereal aggrupation of sound, it always is connected to bodies, to the landscape, to the voice, and to the instruments. The sudden interruption is a reminder of this, without the soundscape, without Als, there is no Eferklang.

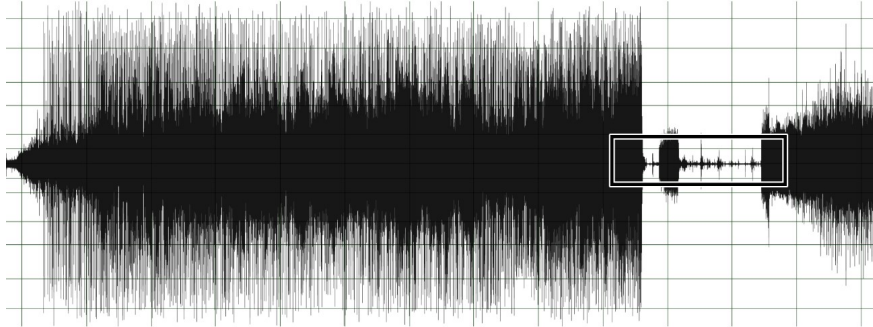
In all the following performances of *An Island* there are always elements that connect it to the soundscape of Als. It's their parents and their relatives making sounds out of the shed where they first rehearsed using unusual instruments (like balloons and brooms), the children of the local school who sing and play instruments, and the teenage choir for the grand finale in the town's auditorium.

Editing *Raincoats* so that the music depends on the sounds of Als is symbolic in this relation of the band to their origins, but I would say that it's even more representative in how little interest *Moon* has of merely filming music as recorded in the vacuum of the studio. The death of the rumble of the motor sound kills all music and only

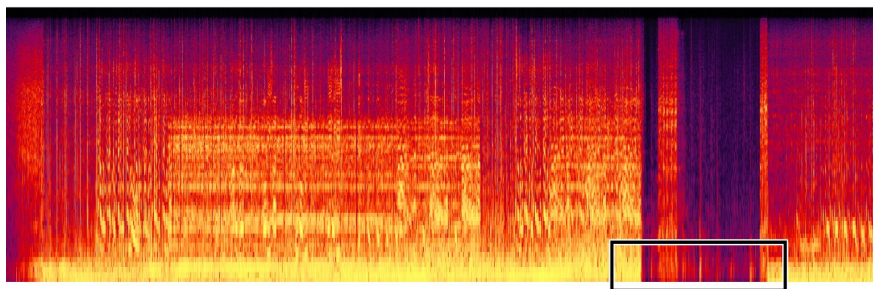
¹⁹¹ http://www.qromag.com/interviews/casper_clausen_of_eferklang_an_island/

when the roar of the ignition turning on resounds—the diesel pumping to the combustion chamber as it starts heating up with it loud old pistons reverberating the whole truck—is that the performance can continue.

Waveform of the full performance of Raincoats.



Motor dies and comes back on after some moments



The spectral analysis appears metaphoric in using the soundscape as the ground to which all else sprouts from. Remove the basis (as the highlighted segment where the motor dies) and music collapses into emptiness.

The Hi-Fi soundscape in Moon's cinematic diagram is then the place where music can orchestrate the noises of the world so that the uniqueness of the voice can interact with the singularity of each

sound. It comes back to the balance of being at the edge, a Lo-Fi soundscape the uncontrolled chaos whereas a Hi-Fi soundscape allows the director to focus on specific interactions.

An Island marks a period where Moon shifts to a view noise as the natural sounds of the world from which music emerges.¹⁹² Moon continued challenging the commodity status of music, but it was more as a consequence of this shift. Music (as also the voice) becomes an opening to interact with the sonic world. To provoke an encounter by resonating together with everything around it, the soundscape, the musicians, the director and the listener.

b) MEDEA *made in the black sea* (2011)

At times music even disappears, as in the films where Moon partners with sound artists to exclusively focus on orchestrating the noises in the soundscape. *MEDEA*¹⁹³ is a film made together with Soundwalk Collective in a sailboat fitted with radios antennas, scanners, and microphones. For two months sounds and images were recorded from the Black Sea in their trip from Turkey to Ukraine, passing through Georgia, Russia, Crimea, Romania, and Bulgaria. The sounds and images almost exclusively were collected from inside the boat.¹⁹⁴ Moon shoots the landscape and the people from the point of view of someone looking from the boat towards the shore. The sounds collected reach the boat either through the

¹⁹² The same period where in parallel he was starting *Petites Planètes*.

¹⁹³ A live-version where the images were reworked on-site together with the Soundwalk Collective was presented at Centre Pompidou on May 4, 2012.

¹⁹⁴ In the final minutes of the movie there are three shots from the docks and a party that happens on the boat while docked.

natural sonic world (the waves, the other boats, shouts from the shore) or through radio waves that are captured by their scanners and antennas.



This self-imposed limitation on what to film and the nature of the project being primarily aural transforms the image into a sidekick to the sonic experience that is developed. After a lengthy introduction take—where the waves of the dark sea blur, shake and merge themselves, transforming into a visual audiorwave of the soundscape—Moon’s first cut is to a close-up of an ear. Vision breaks all the connections to the aural, it is no longer the referential that sound helps to flesh out and render it real. The ear becomes the main site for the encounter. As Soundwalk Collective turn the sounds they captured into music with a “quivering beauty [that]

remains cruel and obscure”¹⁹⁵ Moon reinforces this abstract feeling using the image to reinforce the sensations.



In *Medea*, music is found in the soundscape of the sea. It emerges from the landscape and from the acousmatic sounds that are captured in their radio equipment as an echo from the shore. Sound arises from the objects that can be seen (the sea, the mountains, the people passing by) but also from sonic bodies completely detached from any physicality like the radio voices and music that are caught as they pass by each country. To be at sea, in constant movement, without reaching any shore, turns sound into the primary way to interact with the world.

Salomé Voegelin, in his book *Listening to Noise and Silence*, observes how sound unfolds into an encounter— “However far its sources, the sound sits in my ear. I cannot hear it if I am not immersed in its auditory object, which is not its source but sound as sound itself.”¹⁹⁶ The distance from the sound sources creates the fertile ground for the singularity of each sonic body to be unhinged

¹⁹⁵ Soundwalk Collective’s words in presenting the project *Medea*.
<http://www.lespressesdureel.com/EN/ouvrage.php?id=4085>

¹⁹⁶ Voegelin, S. (2010). *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*. New York: Bloomsbury, p. xii.

from its physical aspect and enter the composition purely for its value in interacting with the other bodies.

Nevertheless, this distance creates a friction in the film. Perhaps, because only in the first opening shots the sound of what is seen (the sea) is heard and thereafter, it becomes a purely abstract sound piece, the music from Soundwalk Collective becomes the soundscape of the film itself extinguishing any link between sound and image. In *An Island*, for example, the “natural” soundscape is always present and gives the basis on which the songs will be created. In *Medea*, however, the original soundscape is extinguished and replaced for the music that was created.

Medea takes this concept of the soundscape as music to the extreme. It tests the limits of how far Moon is willing to go in exterminating any reference back to the image and approach the film almost purely as a sound piece. The sounds of the world are fully orchestrated into abstract music that conserves maintain any link to what the listener is seeing. My personal experience when first watching *Medea* was to close my eyes for I felt that the images were interfering with my listening of the film. After watching it many times it still feels that the link between the visual and the aural is broken in this film.

Recurring once more to Grandrieux’s cinematic diagram helps comprehend this rupture that is present in *Medea*. For Grandrieux the story in his films has this function to draw in the viewer into the world. Grandrieux needs the story as a tenue line to keep at the

“edge of meaning.” The narrative permits him to break any internal or external logic and force the figure to be comprehended not through its relation to meaning (any action that further advances in explaining or giving a development to the account) but as being a bloc of pure sensation. Why doesn’t Grandrieux remove, then, the story and just focus on bringing presence to the figural in a non-narrative cinema?

I don’t feel myself as an experimental filmmaker, because I need to be inside of a kind of a story, maybe if it’s a very simple story, of a man looking for a woman, like in fairy tales, like *Sombre*, you know, the beast... You can build the world that you want with this simple story but I think that you need this story to be able to construct the movement inside of the movie, the movement of what we are following like a wave. So stories are important for me and also this question of [t]aking the audience inside of something that is possible to follow, even if it is very difficult to follow, even if it is very confused, very obscure, very hard to understand, but the structure is very simple.¹⁹⁷

Even if the narrative is barely constructed in Grandrieux’s films, it gives the bones on which he can work his other aspects to wrench sensations in tearing this body apart. How to create the pain of breaking a bone if there is none in the first place? To explore pleasure if there is no flesh? Perhaps a better analogy would be with the nerves, a connection between the corporeal and sensorial that has been ruptured. Of course, this goes back to Bacon denying the purely abstract for a logic of sensations to emerge. In his case keeping the figure but removing the figurative, which for Moon would translate to keeping the connection between sound and image but removing any signification.

¹⁹⁷ Grandrieux quoted in (Hainge, Philippe Grandrieux: Sonic Cinema, 2017, p. 186)

In *Moon*, the bones that keep his cinematic diagram together is this immediate connection of the image to the sound. Music can be performed, the soundscape can turn into music, both can even disappear into noise, but the visual and the aural must be in a constant interaction for the encounter to take place. In *Moon*, finding *sens* is the result of his unique approach to how to connect the aural and visual, and submit both through the diagram. *Medea* is the negative example when the focus becomes on the strengths of each separate medium and not in their interaction. *Moon*'s cinematic body, that he will wrench *sens* out of, is held together by the music. A music that is present aurally and evidenced visually, be it through the body of the performer or from the natural elements that are present in the soundscape and landscape.

His films with the sound artist Jacob Kirkegaard discovers how to work the music in soundscape in a manner unique to film, keeping both in interaction. A year after *Medea*, *Moon* together with Kirkegaard did a series of films called *Now Ethiopia*. This time *Moon*'s spontaneous methods of not planning anything in advance and figuring what to do once he arrives at the place didn't work as expected:

In Ethiopia, people didn't care at all about being recorded. Most of the musicians I ran into were so pretentious and asked for so much money to perform (I never paid any musicians before for the recordings, so the contrast was a bit tough) that I was feeling very awkward – I didn't have any money to give them, being completely broke myself (bad idea, you can travel being broke in many places around the world, but not in Ethiopia), and the simple fact of paying someone to perform was something I avoided always to keep a 'true' relationship to the musicians. Was I wrong? Maybe. So I paid most of the people I filmed in

Ethiopia. Did they play better because of the money? I don't think so. Did it create a weird relationship on my side? Most of the time, but it's my own fault. I remember this quote from Michel Leiris: "Africa does not need me." Well, Ethiopia didn't need me!¹⁹⁸

Even with some problems (and a hint of colonialism), nonetheless, *Now Ethiopia* series is still an appealing part of *Petites Planètes*, as it explores the vast various religious practices unique to the country. Having the partnership of a sound artist resulted in a rich soundscape in the films Kirkegaard collaborated and also in particularly two films that stand out in engaging the soundscape. The first is *METAL MACHINE MERKATO • Jacob Kirkegaard in Addis Ababa* (2012), a film that answers the question raised in *Medea* of finding a balance where the music can emerge from the soundscape without breaking the connection between image and sound. And the second is *YESETAN MENFES • exorcism ritual in Addis Ababa* (2012), an eerie film that precedes Moon's next step in approaching rituals and possession.

c) *Metal Machine Merkato • Jacob Kirkegaard in Addis Ababa* (2012)

As the title already indicates *METAL MACHINE MERKATO • Jacob Kirkegaard in Addis Ababa* has the sound artist as the subject of the film, similarly to how Soundwalk Collective assumes the function of the musician that composes the soundscape in *Medea*. Throughout the film, Kirkegaard is continuously shown pointing his microphones to capture the sounds, adjusting the sound in the mixer

¹⁹⁸ Moon, V. (2013, February 13). "Ethiopia didn't need me" – Vincent Moon on Ethiopia. Addis Rumble. Retrieved November 5, 2015, from <http://addisrumble.com/?p=2347>

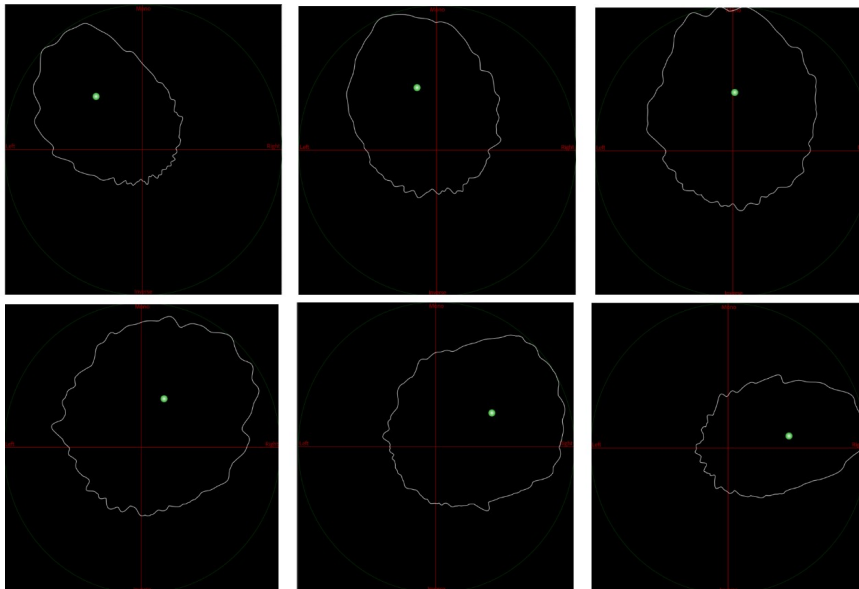
and recorder around his waist, and listening to everything through his headphones. The sound is recorded and mixed to emulate the binaural format, giving the impression that I'm hearing exactly what Kirkegaard was when he recorded.¹⁹⁹

There is a particular pleasure in listening to binaural recordings and being surprised in spatially locating the source of each sound. Moon and Kirkegaard seem to feel the same way. The first 5 minutes of the film explores the sounds of the streets of Addis Ababa by spatially placing each sound so that the listener can recreate in the mind what is being heard. The morning prayer emanates from the distance while birds sing all around, soon another mosque that is closer to the left starts its prayer. A car approaches from the front, its noise getting louder and louder until it crosses over and disappears behind. Someone shouts from one side to another person that answers from the other. A dog barks in the front while a truck passes by from right to left. A friction of the metal wheel of an old handcart produces a dragging sound as it transverses from left to right and slowly fades out lingering in the next scene. Sheep bleat as they cross in front and the crack of the whip is heard as the shepherd direct his flock through the streets.

¹⁹⁹ Purists would call binaural recordings only the ones where a dummy head is used and the microphones are inserted inside where the ear canal would be. I use binaural here in a wider sense—where the sound was captured through two different mics in an A-B stereo configuration mimicking the distance between left and right ear and mixed in post to maximize the spatiality of the sound.



Phase analysis from the sound of the handcart being pushed at 3'37" to 3'50". The green point represents an approximation of the sound source as it moves from left to right.



Soon, though, something becomes clearer—not everything that is shown is heard, and not everything that is heard is shown. Even identifying many objects this isn't purely a soundscape recording;

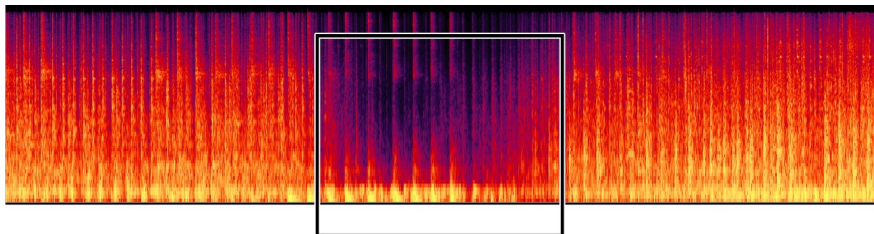
it's a composition using some elements that are visually present to create something else.

This disparity becomes stronger as they move to the primary location of the film, a market where metal and plastic trash are sold to be manually recycled and converted into useful objects. The soundscape of the market is full of noise, according to Murray Schafer it would be a Lo-Fi soundscape. People shout, large plastic containers are thrown and hit the ground, metal barrels are manually cut with a wedge and a hammer, rusty metal objects are hammered into sheets, and many more sounds. But, in the film, Kirkegaard and Moon recreate the soundscape so that each sound is audible enough to be distinguished (a Hi-Fi soundscape).

The market is a playground to both artists as they play in how image and sound interact with each other. Towards the middle of the film, an idea starts to be repeated in different sequences that merits a more in-depth investigation. As the film transitions to focus on how they recycle old metal barrels, the sound of each bang on the different objects pile upon each other layering the various unique timbres of each resonating metal. At a certain point, Moon focuses on one man, slowly but consistently hitting a wedged knife with a hammer into a metal barrel. Other sounds are dimmed to emphasize the crisp metallic bang that each hit produces. Suddenly the bangs that reverberated through the deepest frequency to the highest are muffled, all mid to high frequencies are cut off, and each hit sounds like a dampened drum bass. This only lasts a few seconds, soon returning to its natural sound.



The dampened drum produced by muffling mid to high level frequencies.



The noises from the soundscape can be synthesized, transformed and layered with effects so that they are more similar to an instrument, but doing so breaks the connection to the sonic body that created it. *Medea*, in contrast, makes use of all these tools in transforming the soundscape to a point where the singularity of each sonic body is lost in the process.²⁰⁰

By playing with drastically changing the sonic properties, the film indicates that they could transform it, opting instead for each sound to be heard as music itself. This idea repeats twice after this. The

²⁰⁰ That is not to say that there isn't uniqueness in the outcome of such transformation, but that in reconstructing very little, if any, of the original voice/timbre is left to be sensed.

Hi-Fi soundscape fades out when Kirkegaard and Moon close in on a man hammering the metal sheets into a large kind of bowl. The close-up is followed by a closely microphoned bang in this metal bowl. Slowly as Moon zoom's in each hit is followed by an increasingly outworldly echo that alters its properties to resound as a foley in a sci-fi movie.

Another invitation to listen to the uniqueness in each sound happens moments later when a metal rod is being straightened by a hammer. The mid to high frequencies are maintained while the lower and deeper bass of each hit is slowed down for some brief seconds, causing a dissonance between the hit and its slower than usual reverberation.

After calling the listener to carefully appreciate each timbre, multiple sounds of metal being hit is layered in an almost harmonious manner. A symphony where all parts are played by the metallic percussion that exists continuously outside the need of a composer or musician. The natural music of the soundscape if I only stop to listen.

The concept of music in Moon, in finding a point to balance itself turns out remarkably similar to that of John Cage— “If this word ‘music’ is sacred and reserved for eighteenth and nineteenth-century instruments, we can substitute a more meaningful term: organization of sound.”²⁰¹ Cage’s concept of music is highly influential in contemporary art, and certainly, Moon’s collaborator

²⁰¹ Cage, J. (2011). *The Future of Music: Credo, 1937*. In C. Kelly (Ed.), *Sound: Documents of contemporary art* (pp. 23-26). Cambridge: The MIT Press.

in the film *Jacob Kirkegaard is no stranger to his writings*.²⁰² In *METAL MACHINE MERKATO* the union of both artists crystallizes an idea of noise and sound that directly interacts with the legacy that Cage left and that was developed fully in concrete music:

Where we are, what we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating. The sound of a truck at fifty miles per hour. Static between the stations. Rain. We want to capture and control these sounds, to use them not as sound effects but as musical instruments.²⁰³

METAL MACHINE MERKATO also spins into full gear another idea that underlaid Moon's shift away from *The Take Away Show* and commercial music, that of music as a *becoming* not a *being*. In 1958 Cage delivered a lecture in Darmstadt where he describes (what he perceives) as the essential formal aspect of European art music, that of producing a "time-object":

...the presentation of a whole as an object in time having a beginning, a middle and an ending, progressive rather than static in character, which is to say possessed of a climax or climaxes and in contrast a point or points of rest.²⁰⁴

What Cage meant by using "time-objects" are compositions where the music is separated from the flux of time. An object that only exists in the act of resounding a bounded score that asserts its identity over time and coerces the performers to reproduce the

²⁰² Kirkegaard refers to Cage in an interview and in addition many of the reviews from his work also cite Cage. The former <http://passiveaggressive.dk/jacob-kirkegaard-sound-in-itself-as-a-political-statement-interview/> and the latter reviews that are hosted in his website <http://fonik.dk/pressarticles-english.html>

²⁰³ (Cage, 2011)

²⁰⁴ Cox, C. (2011). *From Music to Sound: Being as Time in the Sonic Arts*, 2006. In C. Kelly (Ed.), *Sound: Documents of contemporary art*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 81.

instructions of the composer. This isn't a criticism against the role of the performer as a copyist or of music becoming dull and boring, but an ontological revision on the notion of music. Music as a *being* is closed in itself, existing and interacting only when it is performed, an interaction based on the time it creates. Opposing this idea, music as a *becoming* is open as it happens in the duration of the existing flux of time.

The success and genius of his work *4'33"* (1952) is based on this notion of music as existing in the duration of a time outside itself versus being a "time-object" where time is created for and only exists during the music. The sequel *0'0"* (1962) radicalizes this notion; in his previous project music was a cut of 4 minutes and 33 seconds from the sonic world I live in, now it is all of it. "What the piece tries to say," according to Cage, "is that everything we do is music, or can become music through the use of microphones; so that everything I'm doing, apart from what I'm saying, produces sound."²⁰⁵ For Cristoph Cox, who observed Cage's importance in reconfiguring the concepts of music in his article *From Music to Sound*, the aim of both pieces "is to open time to the experience of duration and to open musical experience to the domain of sound. It is also to open human experience to something beyond it: the non-human, impersonal flow that precedes and exceeds it."²⁰⁶

Moon's shifting perspective on music, then, can be looked through this idea of it changing from *being*—a "time-object" looking to

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

preserve its own characteristics—to that of a *becoming*—a music that already exists outside that only demands me to stop and acknowledge it. The beauty in Moon’s career is that the seeds for this shift were always there from the beginning. First, by inserting the streets and its noises into these “time-objects” in the *Take Away Shows*. The music at that initial moment still had a beginning, middle and end, but the introduction of the soundscape aimed to distance itself from the concept of “time-object” and approach the idea of being only a creation in that specific moment of time. It gradually progresses (or gradually *becomes*) by fusing and giving more importance to the sounds that existed outside the performance, like in *An Island*. And finally, music as a *becoming*, the sounds that already existed and will continuing existing create the duration of the film that captures only a moment of something independent from the director.

This revisioning of music, of course, directly interacts with the other notions of listening (*écouter*) and that of the singularity present in everything that lives in the sonic world.²⁰⁷ In Moon, music as *becoming* creates a deviation in the subjects of his film and how they are produced. Slowly Moon drifts from recording music that is performed specifically to be filmed, to focus in sounds and

²⁰⁷ Although Cage’s revisioning opens the space for this singularity to be discussed his approach is still modernist in invoking the totality of sound. Fluxus, on the other hand, a group of artists largely influenced by Cage and his series of Experimental Composition classes quickly went beyond this to explore smaller sound worlds and the uniqueness of each sonic body. For a deeper exploration of how they differentiate and how Cage’s ideals transpose his modernist conceptions read CAMPBELL, Iain. (2015). *Experimental Practices of Music and Philosophy in John Cage and Gilles Deleuze*. PhD Thesis. London: Kingston University.

music that are already present and exist outside the notion of “time-object.”

These changes also carried new forms of interaction and encounters. The *renvoi* between oneself, music, and with Moon, locked in the time of the performance, opens to an ongoing *renvoi* with a world that precedes and succeeds the listener. When Moon’s sole interest becomes rituals, the *renvoi* grows to a space where one can listen and interact not only with what is beyond in time but also what is beyond oneself as human.

d) YESETAN MENFES • exorcism ritual in Addis Ababa (2012)

The cornerstone of this last shift can be seen in *YESETAN MENFES*. Recorded in the church of Entoto Mariam, located on the Entoto hills right outside the city of Addis Ababa, the film conveys the exorcism rituals that take place in the church. How the film was produced dramatically differs from Moon’s usual approach. Kirkegaard, in an interview to *The Guardian* talks about how the series was produced and what made this film special:

We did six portraits together in only 10 days. It was very intense and interesting. It was the first time we'd worked together. On some portraits I was more the sound recordist for the films. On other projects we shifted the roles. At Entoto Mariam, for example, we both recorded alone and would pair the recordings afterwards. I am therefore currently putting together a sound piece based on my recordings from Entoto Mariam. Vincent Moon will then edit his footage recordings according to my sound piece.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸Kirkegaard, J. (2012, November 9). *Ethiopia: sounds of the present, past and future*. (A. Hansen, & K. Obling, Interviewers) *The Guardian*. Retrieved June 15,

This unusual approach to how the film is made, paired with the fact that no images are allowed inside the church, ended shaping *YESETAN MENFES* into one of his strongest films regarding ritual and music.

The film starts with the sounds of a bell being rang, birds and a deep reverbing gong. Slowly a distant prayer is chanted while a voice whispers something incomprehensible. Moon shows the landscape of going up the Entoto hills to finally arrive at the Entoto Mariam church. Entering through the gates, the film gradually presents the believers wrapped in white garments coming to the church to pray and participate in the rituals. The steps and voices are contrasted with the chant that is transformed (the time is stretched, echo is added, and the pitch is modified) into a chilling ambient drone sound. Even though it's a sunny day, Moon filters the light entering the camera so that the white clothes are correctly exposed while the rest in drowned in shadows. The people come walking through the woods to receive the blessing and the holy water on their foreheads.

A profound bass begins a rhythm and gains volume together with the metamorphized echoing layers of chants. One of the chants progressively returns to a more natural state. It can now be identified that there are words being said, even if it is layered on top of the droning sounds. As people cue in a line (it doesn't reveal where this line is. Is it outside the church? In the woods for the

2018, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/09/ethiopia-sounds-jacob-kirkegaard>

holy-water?) the sound of a gush of water bridges to the next section where the exorcism will take place.



Moon cuts to a black screen when the first sound of an animalistic screaming is heard. At first, it's hard to know for sure of what this is; it sounds like a high-pitched shriek of something being tortured and in constant pain. The scream is heard together with the water flowing and the drone-like chant. The image disappears during this first encounter with exorcism. For one minute and twenty seconds the image is black while the listener is left to interact with the sounds purely on a sensorial basis, the only explanation whatsoever of what is being heard so far has been the title of the film.

When the image briefly fades back in, a woman helps a drowsy child out of the church where he is conducted in a trance-like state to his family. This sequence suggests that the screams heard before were probably the high-pitched voice of an infant being exorcised.



More voices, this time of adults, are added to the mix. The droning-chant creates the basis for each peculiar sound of the ritual to interact in a musical manner. It is no longer only screams, but the sound of bodies moving, hitting the floor and the walls. As the film continues the sound evolves between the voices and sounds of the ritual, the sounds of water and fire, and the chants in the background.

Moon, meanwhile, jumps between long black screens and shots of the people leaving the precinct after partaking in the ritual. The film ends showing a prayer being sung inside the church while the rites continue in a more calmly manner.

In analyzing the film, it presents a beginning, the development to a climax in the sounds of the exorcism and a resting end, couldn't it be comprehended as a "time-object"? Even with these structural fabrications imposed in post-production, the sound ruptures from this notion of "time-object" as it favors capturing the already

manifested instead of creating a separate time of its own. The film doesn't infer that it is but a fragment, a small duration, of an ongoing ritual that lives independent of Moon's interference.

In *Medea*, the sound is used to create a centripetal abstract sound piece that breaks all the links with the source and draws attention to its own process of operation. It lives by itself with a beginning, middle, and end, barely referring to anything outside of the piece instead pushing the listener to its inner world. In effect, a "time-object" able to create its own time, its own development.

YESETAN MENFES, distinctly, doesn't drive its own separate existence but is always in referral to an ongoing ritual that lives outside the film. The sound is centrifugal, pushing the listener outwards to the world, to continue the film by going to Entoto Mariam and hearing it for oneself.

In addition, by altering certain sounds while preserving others, *YESETAN MENFES* posits that a *becoming* of music is also a reconfiguration between the relations of these preexistent sonic bodies. By rearranging the soundscape, the film opens a site for listening to find a *sens* beyond what is recorded. I first hear these voices and sounds in an interaction with an elsewhere, to only thereafter see the bodies that produced them frozen in space. In doing so, the film grounds the aural as the site for an exchange that supersedes itself.

3.4. Noise: forcing an opposition

With a diagram that englobes and encompasses all aspects of the film, noise is an important trait to also be transformed and subjected by Moon. There are many ways to approach the concept of noise. The first one that has already slipped into this thesis is Murray Schafer's understanding that noise is something undesirable and prejudicial. Noise, as described in the book I previously used *Soundscape: The Tuning of the World*, is something that saturates the environment, it pollutes and suffocates the precise hearing of the world. His Lo-Fi and Hi-Fi concepts derive from this core idea and while it helps flesh out Moon's approach to sound, to view noise purely as something detrimental closes the possibilities of music that Moon grew to in his works such as *METAL MACHINE* *MERKATO* and *YESETAN MENFES*. If Murray Schafer's own opinion on Luigi Russolo's pioneer sound pieces is any indication, he would probably consider these latter films that I mentioned as garbage— "Russolo's experiments mark a flash-point in the history of aural perception, a reversal of figure and ground, a substitution of garbage for beauty."²⁰⁹

This mode of perceiving noise through its physicality and its implications paves the way for future authors. These newer scholars, even without having such a negative opinion on noise, choose to focus purely on the forms noise forces itself upon the listener, how it interacts with the sonic bodies that surround it. Works like Brandon Labelle's book *Background Noise*:

²⁰⁹ (Schafer, 1977, p. 111)

Perspectives on Sound Art (2006), Douglas Kahn's *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in Arts* (1999), and Salomé Voegelin's *Listening to Noise and Music* (2010) are some examples that updated Murray Schafer's approach but still kept noise under its sonic properties.

Parallel to the publication of *Soundscape: The Tuning of the World* in 1977, Jacques Attali published his book *Bruit* (or *Noise* once it released in English in 1985), where he presented an alternative method to investigate noise. Attali stems away from noise as a sonic element to focus on its indexical relation and the power aspects of how noise is ordered and suppressed. Noise loses its fundamental oppositional nature to become a sign of essential violence (based on René Girard). The book focuses on how music orders noise to comprehend and prophesize how society keeps violence in order. Paul Hegarty follows in Attali's steps in his book *Noise Music: A History* (2007) and in the books where he acts as an editor.

Lastly, a third, aberrant route emerges in Greg Hainge's book *Noise Matters* (2013). This work bypasses noise's aural characteristics and its indexical relation to power to search and question the ontological function of noise. I'll expand in this section the first two approaches and how it helps expand Moon's diagram. Later, I'll return to Hainge's ideals on the ontology of noise once the basis for Deleuze's becoming is laid-out in the chapter explaining the encounter-image.

3.4.1. Noisy bodies and noisy voices

Salomé Voegelin playfully defines noise, in his book *Listening to Noise and Silence*, by saying that “Noise is other people’s music: my neighbor’s collection blasting at full volume.”²¹⁰ As such, noise initially may seem like a matter of perception. If it is something that is pleasing it is not noise, or in other words, noise could be seen as any sound that is bothersome, that is unwanted at the moment that it resounds. To stop here, though, would be to only explore the surface without delving into the deeper implications of noise. As Voegelin suggests, noise is also intrinsically connected to the body and sensations— “Noise ingests me and yet it is only noise because it works on my body.”²¹¹ Noise invades the body and forces it open as an organon, as a body without organs. It makes the body loose control, as Voegelin thoroughly described through his experience in a Rave party back in 1993:

I and all the other hundreds of ravers became the visual interpretation of noise: a euphoric mass of isolated movement. The vertical pull of noise intensifies listening’s solitary experience. Noise exaggerates the isolation of my sensorial engagement and tightens the reciprocity between the listener and the heard.²¹²

There are many interesting implications in the quotation above. First, Voegelin visually interprets noise as “euphoric mass of isolated movement.” The body is separated from its environment as it becomes pure movement. Remembering Bacon’s paintings, isn’t Voegelin’s depiction of noise the figure being isolated from the

²¹⁰ (Voegelin, 2010, p. 44)

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 46

figurative? Going back to Deleuze's notion of hystericizing, for him "the hysteric is at the same time someone who imposes his or her presence, but also someone for whom things and being are present, too present..."²¹³ I previously approached the notion of hystericizing the body in parallel to how listening opens the *renvoi* and invokes Nancy post-phenomenological self. For this to happen though, one must listen, to voluntarily assume the stance of searching for a beyond meaning, and here is where noise enters. Noise becomes a weapon to force listening:

Noise does not have to be loud, but it has to be exclusive: excluding other sounds, creating in sound a bubble against sounds, destroying sonic signifiers and divorcing listening from sense material external to its noise.²¹⁴

In this manner, noise is an extreme measure that breaks with all other modes of interacting with sound and imposes the notion of listening to something that can't be understood, but that can be felt, a connection that I see directly related to Nancy's *sens*. Noise becomes the crowbar that forcefully opens a space where the body is hystericized— "Besieged by noise I am concretely the singular body of my formless thinging, speechless but ecstatically me."²¹⁵

a) *Petites Planètes* _ volume 6 _ ZAR (2010)

Take Moon's film *ZAR*, for example, a film shot in Cairo that finds in sound a form for women to rise to the forefront. The Zar consists of an exorcism ceremony to "treat individuals possessed by spirits,

²¹³ (Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 2017, p. 37)

²¹⁴ (Voegelin, 2010, p. 43)

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

or jinns.”²¹⁶ Similarly to Voegelin’s rave party, the exorcism happens by playing specific rhythmic patterns, called “khuyut” which literally translates as threads.

It’s hard to distinguish or even theorize between what is music and what is noise. In the case at hand, what would make a rave party noisy and a ritual musical? Voegelin, similarly to Murray Schafer, take for granted that noise compositions are indeed composed of noise. A rave party, therefore, is pure noise as it eradicates “verbal communications” and insists “that I hand over my body to its force.”²¹⁷ Hainge, on the other hand, criticizes this concept, mainly through how Russolo and John Cage are perceived since noise becomes expected and therefore is not oppositional in nature. Through Hainge’s thought, a rave party is not noisy at all since there is nothing that opposes why the people attending are giving over their bodies to the music. The noise in a rave merely reinforces the pleasure of its own existence. Regardless, Hainge doesn’t properly answer the question of what is and isn’t noise, preferring to research how noise functions. As such, to help explore Moon’s diagram, I will operate in the junction between both, regarding noise as that which is naturally oppositional (sonically and also philosophically). This is not to exhaust the full possibilities that are still being unfolded in noise studies, but rather to find common ground. It also falls in line with Voegelin’s explanation that “noise simply manifests the failure to communicate, it becomes the

²¹⁶ Mangialardi, N. (2017, February 1). *The Zar: Staging an Egyptian Exorcism*. Retrieved March 20, 2018, from Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage: <https://folklife.si.edu/talkstory/the-zar-staging-an-egyptian-exorcism>

²¹⁷ (Voegelin, 2010, p. 47)

negative of what is beautiful, permissive and harmonic,” and lastly that “Noise re-asserts experience over modernist reserve, and gets the body moving.”²¹⁸

In this context, *Zar* is a very noisy film. Firstly, it is highly subversive because it opposes established norms. The rite itself is the only musical tradition in Egypt where women have the most important roles. It is “intended to be a mode through which women can experience freedom and release anxieties and tensions without being restricted by the social norms.”²¹⁹ Furthermore, it also breaks with any modernist rationale for it is a ritual to appease the “jinns.”

Summoning the spirits is an elaborate and lengthy ritual, climaxing with animal sacrifices and their blood being spilled on top of jewelry and amulets. In Moon’s 10 minute film we see only a brief snippet of this rite, two women put in trance another one and heal her by drumming, chanting, and singing the name of Allah all night long.

The origins of the ritual are from the sub-Saharan region and came to Egypt in the mid-19th century with the slaves. The women passed down to the younger generations the ritual but due to religious conservative deeming it un-Islamic nowadays only approximately 25 people still perform the *Zar* in Egypt.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58 and 61.

²¹⁹ Madiha quoted in Kasinof, L. (2010, March 26). *Egyptian music: 'Zar' tradition gives women a rare moment at center stage*. Retrieved March 19, 2018, from The Christian Science Monitor: <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-News/2010/0326/Egyptian-music-Zar-tradition-gives-women-a-rare-moment-at-center-stage>



In his film *ZAR*, the sound grabs Moon holds him hostage. The director, even without any prior knowledge of what was happening, has his body viscerally subjected to the sonic charge. For Voegelin, when “there is no question about your physical engagement, noise is realized in your body.”²²⁰ Moon, in one way or another, felt this and was profoundly changed by it:

I think, like three or four years ago, something happened to me, and I ended up in a ritual in Cairo one night [the Zar], very sacred,

²²⁰ (Voegelin, 2010, p. 60)

a very sacred ritual, and I knew this because of the way people were playing the music. I never expected that ... I didn't make any research or anything between music and spirituality, let's say, or rhythms and trance, and when I saw this, it completely changed my way of thinking about this all, and since then I've been pursuing this quest of how people live with music.²²¹

Zar carries in Moon's oeuvre the importance of forcing through noise a space for listening, where these bodies could resound. It distinguishes itself from his previous films in *The Take Away Shows*, for it is oppositional in nature, sound becomes the force that creates resistance. A resistance to meaning, to understanding, and to the society. As I'll talk later in Hainge, this resistance is the function of noise.

There is another crucial topic to be discussed in *Zar*, that of noise opening a space where censored bodies and muted voices can resound. Could noise, open Cavarero's idealized place for encounters where a voice can be listened to and acknowledged? Voegelin, while more proximately dialoguing with Nadal-Melsió's ideals of the singular in the voice, sees in noise a way to force different voices to be heard through what he calls the noisy voice:

The noisy voice is the thing-ness of the subject, in turn; the subject listening becomes its thing-ness in its voice. They are both on trial producing their own non-sense, sensitive to the intersubjective process that generates them both in simultaneous isolation. (...) The voice as noise pursues no legitimation in language. It is thinging in its most provocative fashion. Embracing me in its breath, it is the sensible sentient, the sensing

²²¹ Moon, V. (2014, July 23). *Filmmaker Vincent Moon talks about the influence of music and rootlessness in his craft, Part 1*. (H. Morgenstern, Interviewer) Retrieved from <https://indieethos.wordpress.com/2014/07/23/filmmaker-vincent-moon-talks-about-the-influence-of-music-and-rootlessness-in-his-craft-part-1/>

body as thing, that senses my sensibility in its sensorial production, as my own sensibility senses it.²²²

Investigating noise through its sonic properties, such as opposition and resistance, invariably also leads to its political implications. As with *Zar*, in *Petites Planètes* Moon inquires and, in some cases, even makes use of noise to resound marginalized muted voices. Voegelin, who tried keep away from this parallel area of research recognizes the intrinsic implications of noise when inserted into a society:

In a more general sense noise amplifies social relations and tracks the struggle for identity and space within the tight architectural and demographic organization of a city. In this sense, noise is a social signifier: determining unseen boundaries and waging invisible wars.²²³

The proponent of researching noise as social signifier is Jacques Attali, whose ideas on how music orders and regulates certain noises helps comprehend the power relation at play when noise is inserted into a larger scenario.

3.4.2. Noise as violence

Despite the fact that Attali is talking about noise and music, his fundamental approach is still through a visually based philosophy on how identity needs to be fought for, gained and exhibited to have any validity. This search for an identity is the basis for essential violence to emerge—the violence where each being has to battle to assert their difference. Faced with this crisis of identity, society

²²² (Voegelin, 2010, pp. 71-73) The stance to listening as the newborn baby in Nancy and Nadal-Melsió seem like the perfect illustration of a noisy voice.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

needs to find ways to extricate and control this violence so it can grow.

Attali, based on René Girard's writings in his on violence and mimesis, sustains that noise is a simulacrum of how this violence is purged. At the heart of Attali's theory is the idea that music is order imposed upon noise. Forcing order upon sounds, therefore is a kind of violence, although it's one that claims to put an end to violence.

Furthermore, for Attali Noise doesn't exist in itself but is always inscribed in a system: emitter, transmitter, receiver. Which is to say, it's not an autonomous being capable of its own reasoning but is subjected to the logic of the system of its insertion. At one end of the spectrum, I can buy a machine that continually emits certain frequencies that are pleasurable for human's ears, and that drowns out unwanted noises. At the other extreme, noise was used as a method of torture for the prisoners of Guantanamo Bay.²²⁴ In both cases, there is a "perpetrator" (or a system set in motion) with its ideology, desires, and goals. Noise is never void of motives, never free from politics.

For there to be a society, there needs to be a mechanism to channel the violence so that the differences, the hierarchy that legitimizes the use of power, is maintained. In similarity, to keep noise from reaching the level of generalized violence, it must find its own techniques to constrain and channel the noise.

²²⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jun/19/usa.guantanamo>

The ways society and music deal in channeling this “essential violence” is an unsteady and fluctuating relationship of dynamics and power shifting through time. Both find ways to impose an order that aims to control violence. In the community, this is reflected by bestowing to an agency the legal monopoly of violence so that it can deliver security and peace. In music, it is imposing certain noises that are deemed acceptable to protect and exclude any unwanted noises.²²⁵

Out of this imposition, a line is drawn of what is considered to be music, and what is noise. Attali, rightly insists that this differentiation is the work of politics. The result being exclusion as a form to create identity. The distinction and exclusion of certain noises to bond the ones that are deemed acceptable, drawing a direct connection between the imposition of order in society and the imposition of sonic order that is music.

Most interestingly, if both are so intrinsically connected he proposes that in music it’s possible to foreshadow big political changes, such as the move to capitalism.²²⁶ “Music is prophecy. Its styles and economic organization are ahead of the rest of society because it

²²⁵ At times, in music this is literally also a gesture to assert peace and security. One older example is Bach receiving a letter from the consistory of Leipzig in 1730 censoring certain tonal arrangements from being played at the divine services (Attali, 63). A modern example is how in more conservative Christian circles there is an ever-ending debate on what instruments and rhythms areas deemed permissible and what is considered to be profane.

²²⁶ Some of his examples for this foreshadowing work better than others. Tracing the genealogy of the star to Liszt and Mendelssohn was quite revealing while arguing that Bach’s exploration of the tonal system “heralded two centuries of industrial adventure” seemed hyperbolic and weak.

explores, much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code.”²²⁷

This is a drastic change from the more common conception that music reflects the manners and culture of each place. A view that is perfectly exemplified by the writings of ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax:

...since a folksong is transmitted orally by all or most members of a culture, generation after generation, it represents an extremely high consensus about patterns of meaning and behavior of cultural rather than individual significance (...) expressive behavior may be one of the most sensitive and reliable indicators of culture patterns and social structure. Apparently, as people live, so do they sing.²²⁸

This view expresses music as a reactive force being shaped by what surrounds it, by “cultural patterns and social structure.” Music here functions as a container of the established views of specific time and place. Why Attali’s vision is different from merely seeing music as reactive is well explained:

...the musician is not a mirror of the productive relations of his time. (...) They are and remain, witnesses of the impossible imprisonment of the visionary by power, totalitarian or otherwise.²²⁹

Here is Attali’s most prominent contribution—the musical process of structuring noise is also the political process for structuring society. Music due to its nature is faster to react, to find new orders within the noise, in effect foretelling bigger social

²²⁷ (Attali, 1985, p. 11)

²²⁸ Lomax, A. (2003). *Alan Lomax: Selected Writings, 1934-1997*. London: Routledge, p. 193.

²²⁹ (Attali, 1985, p. 18)

organizations/changes. Thus, by studying and understanding when noise (violence) breaks the established musical order transforming into something, new or different patterns of changes emerge, a site of creation where due to its malleability one can glimpse what is to come. A container of the underlying desires that are still to be manifested in the larger structures of society.

This concept from his book *Noise* (1977) is very audacious and ambitious as he links the production, performance, and consumption of music to fundamental questions of power and order in society. He constructs four historical phases, or codes, where the ordering upon noise in music epitomized the broader regime of the time: sacrifice, representation, repetition, and composition. Each of these codes marks a distinct way how noise is organized by channeling certain sounds and in specific orders. The first three at times intersect and even coexist in the complex forms that music evolved.

Composition, on the other hand, reaches a conclusion that foregoes these power relations to find in the aural a solution to free noise (music and sound) from politics so that it can resound in and for itself. Music finally becomes an end, now free for it to be used for individual expression, for “pleasure outside of meaning, usage and exchange.”²³⁰

To pursue Attali’s notion of the crisis of identity as the primal motor for the “essential violence” to which noise acts as a proxy would be unfruitful for as I already construed through Nadal-Melsió

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

and Cavarero, in the aural identity is not only constant but an intrinsically-inherited trait. There is no need for differentiating oneself in the sonic world; it is already affirmed. What interests me though in Attali, and the reason to delve into *Noise* is to find how Moon's otocentric approach subverts ocular schemes and unfolds new spaces where identity is a given condition.

An example of Moon's intersection with Attali is the film *Gaby Amarantos • Live in Jurunas* (2011). A project, made in partnership with the director Priscilla Brazil, about the Brazilian tecnobrega singer who helped spread and popularize a marginalized sub-culture of the northern city of Belém to the rest of the country. The work unfolds a celebration of opening the singer's own space using noise as a weapon and also through Attali's notion of noise as an instrument to subvert established codes.

a) *Gaby Amarantos • Live in Jurunas* (2011)

Primordially, the production of music has as its function the creation, legitimation, and maintenance of order. Its primary function is not to be sought in aesthetics, which is a modern invention, but in the effectiveness of its participation in social regulation. Music—pleasure in the spectacle of murder, organizes the simulacrum masked beneath festival and transgression—creates order.²³¹

Attali's question above may seem contradictory within this thesis, but it lays the ground to how the insertion of noise into music can subvert a regime that oppresses and is deaf to the unheard voices.

²³¹ (Attali, 1985, p. 30)

Noise, as proposed by Voegelin, has the power to force a voice to be listened to. Going back to Calvino's story, the sounds of the unknown prisoner banging an undecipherable rhythm in the palace's basement sequestered the king's attention and was the responsible for inducing (or shocking) a new mode of listening into existence.

Attali doesn't pay much attention to this. For him, music has a function (to purge violence through the simulacrum of sacrificial murder) and what changes is only the path to how music achieves this function. That noise is furthermore capable or affecting how it is listened to falls outside his jurisdiction. Nevertheless, this is adamant to Moon. His film about *Gaby Amarantos* celebrates the tecnobrega movement appropriation and reconfiguration of noise as a form to force their previously silenced voices to be listened.

This film is symbolical for it connects conceptions such as the role that new technologies had in forcing open the order of composition through noise. At the beginnings of the 2000s, an exciting phenomenon started happening in the northern Brazilian city of Belém. With the absurd prices of original CDs and DVDs, an elaborate network of pirated-copy sellers started spawning around Belém and in Brazil as a whole.²³² Illegal distributors and copiers stocked the sellers at the traffic lights and the informal shops crammed in the busiest streets. As soon as an album or film was released, it would immediately be available in almost every city for

²³² The price of an original music album was around 10% of the monthly minimum wage and of an original DVD around 20-30%.

a fraction of its price. With limited internet connection, buying from these sellers was the easiest way to get highly sought releases.

Such as scenario, of course, is not an exclusive phenomenon of Belém or even Brazil, many countries where the price of the original media was outrageously high ended up with similar networks. What is unique about Belém, though, is how artists made use of this network of pirated copiers and sellers to promote and find a public that the record labels were not interested in.²³³

Belém musically got famous in Brazil for a style of music called Brega which would best be translated as a mix of tacky and kitsch; cheesy romantic songs that assumed its simplicity and lack of refinement as a strong point. With the rise of digital instruments and computers getting cheaper, the musicians of Belém adapted this older style into something called Tecnobrega, still tacky and kitsch but now made entirely with pirated computer instruments with a vocal track slapped on top of it.²³⁴

The film *Brega s/a* (2010) documents its popularization and consolidation from 2006 to 2009 and gives a panorama by showing all the steps from production to consumption. Being able to make the songs in the readily available programs, new artists started fashioning and adapting popular hits to the tecnobrega style. Local radio DJ Alex mentions in the documentary, that every day he gets

²³³ Chris Anderson, Wired magazine's editor in chief until 2012 made tecnobrega famous by including it in his book *Free: The Future of a Radical Price* (2009).

²³⁴ Mainly from a program called *FruityLoops*.

around 20 singles from new artists asking to play their songs in his program.

With the record industry having no interest in signing these artists, the solution they came up with is to give the “matrix” of their album for free to the copiers that after printing thousands of copies would then send them to the pirate sellers in the streets. In a matter of days, it would be available all over the state of Pará. The musician himself doesn’t get a single dime from the copies that are sold, but in exchange, benefit from the larger ecosystem that is activated by this—the local tv, radio shows, and most importantly the nightclubs and parties organized around the tecnobrega (where they are paid to perform).

The style of the music is crazily fast-paced, the dance that became popular with it carries out at a breakneck speed where the closest the dancer seems to be convulsing the best. The urbanist Paulo Cal, interviewed in *Brega s/a* see these characteristics as the result of the style being from Belém:

To exist this thing, the city of Belém was fundamental because of the urbanistic disorder and the violence that comes out of this mess. It's because of this that the music ended up like that. I need a crazy rhythm to feel like I'm hallucinating, to follow the speed and craziness of this city.²³⁵

Tecnobrega came from the voices that were at the margins of any order, from the violence that spread through the streets. It was disorder that gave space for the artists to adapt an illegal network to their own benefit. It was outspread violence that dictated the rhythm

²³⁵ Translated from the original interview in Portuguese.

of the music. It was noise that opened a space where their voices could interact and be acknowledged.

Rearranging and reorganizing noise violently opened a space for these musicians. The sound itself is a site of conflict. *Brega s/a* describes the ongoing dispute to have the most potent sound system, to be the loudest possible. For journalist Flavio Pinto (giving his opinion from the comfortable position of his silent office), this will end up taking music back to the stone age.

From this [dis]order Gaby Amarantos is born. It is not a coincidence then that the first song in *Live in Jurunas* is an a cappella version of *Canto das Três Raças*,²³⁶ a song mourning the voices that could never resound. The voices that inserted into a society of power and dominance were left at the margins of [visually] having any identity:

Nobody heard
The sob of pain
In the singing of Brazil

A sad lament
Has always echoed
Since the Indian warrior
Was brought to captivity
And from there has sung

The negro intoned
A song of rebellion in the air
In the Quilombo dos Palmares
Where he took refuge

Not to mention the struggle of the Inconfidentes

²³⁶ A song by Clara Nunes from 1976 translated as The Song of the Three Races.

For breaking the chains
To no avail

And from war to peace
From peace to war
All the people of this land
Whenever they can sing
Sing in pain
ô, ô.....

And it echoes day and night
It is deafening
Ah, but what an agony
The singing of the worker
This singing that should
Be a song of joy
Sounds just
As a sob of pain²³⁷

Amarantos sings about the frustration and impossibility that music had in Brazil as an instrument of revolution. That the noise of the Native Indians couldn't prevent their extinction. That the noise of the enslaved Africans didn't stop the destruction of Palmares.²³⁸ That the separatists of Minas Gerais were also unable to achieve their goals and ended with its leader being killed to suppress the noise against the Portuguese crown.

Amarantos grew in the poor suburb of Jurunas, one of the most violent neighborhoods in already one of the most violent cities in the world.²³⁹ To start with this song references the hardships that she and those around her must struggle everyday. However, what

²³⁷ Adapted and translated from the original in Portuguese.

²³⁸ Quilombo de Palmares was a safe-have created by a community of fugitive slaves in the northern state of Alagoas during 19th century. It lasted for 89 years before being destroyed.

²³⁹ According to the Mexico's Citizens' Council for Public Security rankings.

follows isn't a sob. Differently from the previous attempts, they managed to make their voices heard. Due to accessible technology they can create their own place of interaction, they don't need traditional media to accept what they are doing, or established critics to validate their music. Tecnobrega has forcefully opened through noise their own place of encounter. A site where they can resound, resonate in the *renvoi*, without being censored. These noisy voices are forcing a space where they can be heard, from the possibility to compose they are creating their own order.²⁴⁰

While finishing *Canto das Três Raças* Amaratos prepares her outfit to leave her house and start the show that will happen in front of her apartment. Using a cocar (a type of war bonnet typical to the native Indians of Pará), she opens her door and singing *Faz o T* constructs through the lyric the *raison d'être* of tecnobrega:

The tribe invades the forest
Face painted, with arrows and cocars
Everyone in their posts waiting for the leader
The ship of sound will command us
The chieftain's war shout will echo

²⁴⁰ In hindsight, this ecosystem was heavily reliant on physical copies of CDs and DVDs and the informal market that came with it. As smartphones and digital platforms became more popular and better organized (like Spotify), unfortunately very few were able to adapt and navigate the bureaucracy and requirements to have their work available. The initially disruptive technology, gradually was transformed by the industry, making it harder for the new coming order to effectively break the patterns of repetition.



As the chieftain, she commands her tribe in the streets to invade the city, to impose their place through sound. To echo the music of a parallel order to those who have forsaken them. Contrary to *Canto das Três Raças*, this film and Gaby Amarantos herself, isn't a sob of

pain but that of the joy of music, of finally being able to sing freely. The lyrics mostly have references to making sounds, noises and “aparelhagens.”²⁴¹ It seems that a big slice of the pleasure is in being able to own and make noise, their noise, their music, their order, without any censorship.

The live band that accompanies her—a luxury in tecnobrega as mostly it all comes out from loops and playbacks—is set in a manner to reproduce the electronic sounds that would usually be related to MIDI instruments. One set of drums are actually pads, and together with the keyboard, they are configured to sound like the ones in the program FruityLoops. There are though real guitars, bass and a second pair of drums, putting this show in the upper echelons of tecnobrega.

Midway through the show, she gets up on a sound truck and takes the noises through the neighborhood. Everyone has to listen; everyone has to acknowledge and interact in the *renvoi*.



Gaby Amarantos’ show *Live in Jurunas* was produced and filmed to be a celebration of the possibilities of composition. Amarantos returns to Jurunas the noise that made her and her career. It

²⁴¹ The name given to the full equipment to make a tecnobrega concert: Extravagant costumes, led lights, loudspeakers and stage props.

successfully presents a parallel order born out of the lack of essential living conditions, but ironically, with an overflow of media commodities. An excess due to piracy, the spoils of stockpiling. The options in such a situation either leads to submission and acceptance of being a sub-consumer in repetition (of literal everyday violence in the streets) or in turning this excess into production, reorganizing and using noise as a weapon to become producer and consumer. Subverting the visual search for identity and instead forcing down the fleshy throats of those who previously denied any possibility to resound, one's own uniqueness.

3.4.3. Producing noisy compositions

Attali's path to a place where music is free to resound is a torturous one. Steven Shaviro critiques Attali's conception of repetition as a being "lazy and obvious." For him it falls short to "plumb the commodity experience to its depths", and that the best way to grasp the power of music is to work "through the logic of repetition and commodification pushing this further than any capitalist apologetics would find comfortable."²⁴²

Articulating such an approach is not easy, Shaviro recognizes that he is not able to do so and thus can't blame Attali also but sees, at least an attempt in this direction, in his last code of composition. It's in composition where due to the technological advancements music is entirely liberated from commodity; it's no longer a product but a process open to everyone. This argument is precisely one based on

²⁴² Shaviro, S. (2005). *Attali's Noise*. Retrieved March 16, 2018, from The Pinocchio Theory: <http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=397>

taking to the extreme the intensification of music as a commodity. From the excess of consumption of music (and of images) in an even more privatized way, Attali argues that it mutates into a practice of freedom:

Pleasure tied to the self-directed gaze: Narcissus after Echo. Eroticism as an appropriation of the body. (...) The consumer, completing the mutation that began with the tape recorder and photography, will thus become a producer and will derive at least as much of his satisfaction from the manufacturing process itself as from the object he produces. He will institute the spectacle of himself as the supreme usage.²⁴³

The way to reach such level is not only a psychological one but a technological one also, for it needs to give access to all consumers to the tools of production also. From this aspect, since the book was written, it took almost 30 years for the production tools to reach the level of mass availability. Only becoming widespread with the popularization of computers and smartphones.

For Attali and Shaviro the only way out of repetition is storming through it, of taking repetition to such an extreme that “the loss of meaning becomes the absence of imposed meaning” and from this freedom composition can exist free of any simulacrum of society and artifice. This presupposition stands on the assumption that every person will become the producer and their own consumer and therefore unlikely to ever fully being able to achieve realization.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ (Attali, 1985, p. 144)

²⁴⁴ On the section about the encounter-image Moon offers a solution to the problem that Shaviro raises that not everyone wants or can compose and be their own producer.

Such a scenario would only be possible if music and media commodities reached such a point of saturation that it would become useless altogether, a doubtful outcome any way you look at it. For Attali's version of composition to arrive, it would necessitate "the destruction of all codes."²⁴⁵

When music is approached through the otocentric philosophy, the core argument of it being an organization of violence falls to the ground. As a sonic body, since being gestated in the womb of the mother, each heartbeat from her slowly opens the fetus as an echo-chamber. The first cry of the neonate is an interaction that was already carries the body's own unique timbre and the singularity of the voice. When approaching music being all ears, instead of all eyes, it organizes noise not as a form of control, but as a form that makes possible to listen to the singular in each element. Noise, furthermore, becomes a tool, an instrument to impose listening and create a space where noise, voice, music and sound can interact and be free of any power relations.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

4. IMPLICATIONS: UNFOLDING THE ENCOUNTER-IMAGE, THE DATABASE AND EXPERIENCE

4.1. The encounter-image: altering the production of sense

In 2013, Moon had another radical change when he shifted from shorter films that usually took days or a few weeks, into a three-year journey with the project *Híbridos, The Spirits of Brazil* (2016).²⁴⁶ The project marks another step into his diagram, as he advances in reconfiguring his vision of how sound and image relate. The years of practical research in *Petites Planètes* show its result in *Híbridos*, since it pushed him to his limits and in doing so uncovers something that has been there all along—the encounter-image.

First, some context about *Híbridos*. The project holds a database of all the rituals captured in Brazil as short films (in the format and structure more common to Moon's previous film), but it's also comprised of an installation, a live-cinema project, and a feature film. The feature film is the output that has been more thoroughly worked on, going to extended amounts of time in post-production which is unusual for Moon. Also unusual is that he rarely writes descriptions about his films, but this time, there is a brief explanation that merits further examination:

From 3 years of research around Brazil, *HÍBRIDOS, THE SPIRITS OF BRAZIL* dives into the sacred culture of the largest country in South America through a poetic and sensorial approach.

²⁴⁶ *Híbridos* also sets a new precedent in being Moon's longest collaboration with another filmmaker—the French director Priscilla Telmon (who co-directed and co-developed the project).

As a cinema-trance experience, the film breaks down the distance between viewer and subject, from Indigenous rituals to Afro-Brazilian traditions, from north to south, from the jungle to the ocean; revealing the fraternal bonds between healers, shamans, mystics, adepts and devotees. An adventure into meditation, a musical journey in its purest form.

A musical and ethnographic journey through sacred ceremonies and their diversity, as well as a trip through cinema as pure poetic language. Without any commentary, an inner voyage, only with the voices and songs performed in the rituals.²⁴⁷

The description appears pedantic in its affirmations of being a “purely poetic language,” notwithstanding, many aspects of this description coincide with Moon’s diagram. It defines that the approach is a sensorial one and clearly mentions that there will be no explanation or commentary whatsoever. It also situates the film in the realm of music. With many of the rituals included not even being chanted—using spoken words, screams, or even orgasms—calling it a musical journey is to be understood from Moon’s larger conception of music being the soundscape. Lastly, the question arises of what a “cinema-trance” experience is? Cine-trance is quite known due to Rouch, but for him it was mainly a mode of extreme attentiveness the he would try to enter when capturing his documentaries, a sort of barbaric state of creativity, as I’ll return in the second part of this section. But the description mentions “cinema-trance” and not cine-trance, would it be an experience that is extended to how the listener interacts and views *Híbridos*?

²⁴⁷ Translated from French, available at: <http://hibridos.cc/fr/themovie/> The website also offers a very different presentation in Portuguese and in English. As both Moon and Telmon are French I resorted to what I suppose is their original version.

To start with, *Híbridos* finally gives birth to a visual that is unencumbered by sound. What do I mean by this? Moon started his career with the *Take Away Shows*, as previously explained, a format meant to listen on the iPod with the visual as evidence to the spontaneous conditions in which the performance was recorded.²⁴⁸ The most significant loss in closing the eyes and only listening to the early *Take Away Shows* would be to not have a clear notion from where the sounds are being originated. It was a film meant to be taken in the pocket and to be watched while commuting to work, or whenever there are some spare minutes. Many times, this meant putting it in the pocket while getting off the bus, still hearing the video but not watching it. The hierarchy of the format was that sound is more important than the visual, a heritage from music video and television. A topic that I already related to Michel Chion, but that Serge Daney also comments on:

Because the image serves only as the pretext for the wedding of commentary and viewer, the image is left in an enigmatic state of abandonment, of frantic disinheritance, which gives it a certain form of presence, of obtuse significance (Barthes' third meaning), which (with a certain element of perversity) can be enjoyed incognito, as it were. To see this, mute the sound on your television and look at the images left to themselves.²⁴⁹

One can listen to the *Take Away Shows* but in no case, only watch it. There is a catch, though, why release these performances as videos instead of releasing it only as sound files to be downloaded? My personal attraction to them, as I mentioned in the introduction,

²⁴⁸ In October 2015, five months before the *Take Away Shows* started the first iPod that supported video was launched.

²⁴⁹ (Daney, 2013)

is in the intimacy they conveyed, the sensation of partaking in an unexpected performance that could go anywhere. In Sergi Sánchez's book *Hacia Una Imagen No Tiempo*, he analyses Jonas Mekas *365 Day Project* (2007), a project also released for the iPod. Sánchez suggests that the small screen and the digital image are connected to a sense of intimacy present in this kind of miniature cinema:

...the experience of cinema in miniature tends to bring us closer, to retrieve our perception and identity, embracing the logic of the private and the domestic. (...) As such, it seems that the notion of portability in digital cinema has as its objective to underline its interiority while transforming intimacy into an abstraction that requires our maximum attention in unveiling its secrets.²⁵⁰

The visual in the *Take Away Shows* asks to come closer, to lift the iPod closer to the eyes so that one can enter what is happening, to see Moon's encounter with the sounds of the performance, to hear how the bodies are moving through space. It is an attempt to visually capture the experience of participating in the *renvoi*. As such, it opens a space where the listener can intrude into this aural exchange together with Moon.

In *Petites Planètes*, though, the visual starts gaining more importance, and instead of only reinforcing what is being heard, instances where image dialogue in a more significant way with the music start appearing. In *Mezzo Morra*, as has been studied already, Moon used the landscape to ground the voices of the tenors that

²⁵⁰ Sánchez, S. (2013). *Hacia una imagen no-tiempo: Deleuze y el cine contemporáneo*. Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo, p. 182. (Translated from the original in Spanish)

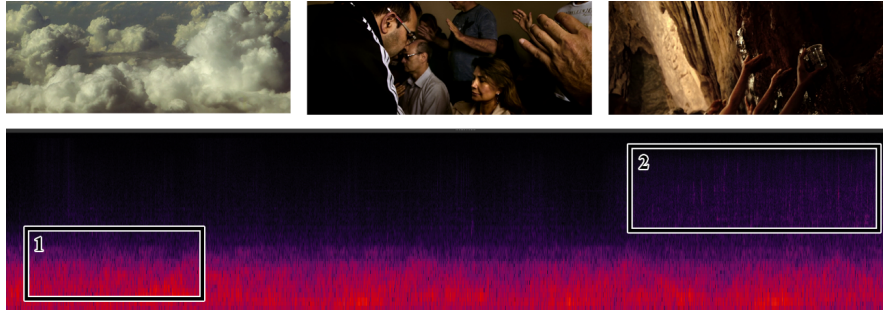
are singing. The unique reversal here is that having the central axis of the film being the music, these shots of the environment act as an out-of-[sonic]field. The visual expands on the core of the film that is the sound. The image is still not central, but it fleshes out the structural bones of the sonic interaction. Just hearing *Petites Planètes* becomes more prejudicial in capturing the full extension of Moon's intention, but there is still a significant overlap between sound and image.

In *Híbridos*, on the other hand, sound and visual become fully distinct—each a discrete entity with specific functions that neither can assume. Sound carries the function to express what can't be seen—the literal search of each sonic body for an encounter. The visual, on the other hand, concentrates on inscribing the *self* opened in the interaction (through the hysterization of the image as explained through Bacon). Tellingly, when well done the result is intriguing, like the sequence in *Híbridos*, expanded in the following paragraph, that surfaces a connection between three distinct rites from the tangential borders of sound and visual.

After an intense moment where hundreds of people squeeze together in the procession of “Círio de Nazaré,” that ends with the coarse sound of a wooden cross being lugged through the asphalt, Moon cuts to a long shot that rises above the clouds. While the sound is almost muted the image goes from the cross to the sky, indicating the transcendence of the ascension of Christ as pertaining exclusively to the visual. With the transition to the next shot, a muffled hum of an airplane's motor (number **1** in the spectral

analysis) persists while Moon cuts to a group of spiritism-adepts gathered inside a room.²⁵¹

Sequence of Hibridos with the corresponding spectral analysis of the sound



Slowly and very discretely, something inaudible emerges from the constant hum. Instead of hearing the noises of the people in the room, the sound locates the interaction in a high-above elsewhere (sonically extending the notion of the sky). The focus on the hand as a corporeal evidence of what I'm hearing connects to the next shot, where, the sonic interaction condenses and starts dripping down back to the visual. Back to the hands of the Catholic pilgrims gathered to celebrate the “Bom Jesus da Lapa.” The crisp sound of each droplet (2) joins the persisting hum as the pilgrims collect the miraculous water, the condensation of an elsewhere that is expected to open an encounter to interact with the divine. As the sequence

²⁵¹ I'm using the name of the events and explaining what is happening to facilitate my description, but the film never explains anything and only specifies location and event in a very confusing way in the final credits (some rites are omitted and there is no visual link). The sequence being discussed here starts at around 22”.

ends, the shells of the “búzios” hit the wood collapsing sound and visual back in sync.²⁵²



Returning to the initial story of Calvino in *A King Listens*, as the king emerges from the darkness and is asked to open his eyes the vision no longer is the same, it had been reconfigured anew. Likewise, when Moon reaches *Híbridos*, an image gestated from sound now becomes able to live independently. In the example above, the visual explores the opposing depths, the separation between the earthly world where the adepts pray and an ascended Christ beyond this world. The interaction, though, between here and hereafter occurs in the sonic. It is sound who can travel back and forth between these polar points, only in the aural the spoken prayers can rise, and the answers condense and fall back. Man and God, two opposites that are fixed and immobilized in the image,

²⁵² Búzios or Cowrie-shell divination (in English) is form of divination with origins in West Africa that became very prominent in Afro-American religions.

only able to unfold an exchange in the present-time opened by a sonic interaction.²⁵³

In addition, once Moon reaches this comprehension of how to use the distinct characteristics of the sound and visual, he also reaches a drastically different kind of image.

4.1.1. The audiovisual tear

Gilles Deleuze, in his series on cinema, throughout the whole first book and in almost all the second one, posits the sound as always coming attached to the visual with terms like “pure optical and sound image” or “pure optical and sound situations.”²⁵⁴ Only in the ninth chapter of *Cinema II*, entitled *Components of the Image*, will sound assume a central position, even if it’s mostly positioning sound as subservient to the visual in classical cinema. He reminds how sound is transposed and viewed through an ocular-centric approach throughout the better half of the 20th century:

Rather than invoking the signifier and the signified, we might say that the sound components are separate only in the abstraction of their pure hearing. But, in so far as they are a specific dimension, a fourth dimension of the visual image (...), then they all form together one single component, a continuum. And so far as they rival, overlap, cross and cut into each other, they trace a path full of obstacles in visual space, and they do not make themselves

²⁵³ The question of the image immobilizing and therefore limiting the depiction of God is central to Judaism (and Islam). The prohibition of any visual artefact has a curious affect in the Old Testament—the interaction with God occurs mainly through sound (the thunderous voice in Mt. Sinai) and through time (Sabbath as a place for encounters that is sculptured in time).

²⁵⁴ Deleuze’s use of the term “image” not only relates to the visual but is more akin to any individual aspect that is a part of the whole. Throughout this section every time I use the word image it is the Deleuzian sense, reserving the term “visual” to express the optical.

heard without also being seen, for themselves, independently of their sources, at the same time as they make the image readable, a little like a musical score.²⁵⁵

Deleuze develops an interesting point between sound and the Actual/Virtual (which I'll come back soon) throughout his whole ninth chapter, albeit sound is always in service of the visual. More examples of this view: "In fact, all sound elements, including music, including silence, form a continuum as something which belongs to the visual image";²⁵⁶ "In short, sound in all its forms comes to fill the out-of-field of the visual image, and realizes itself all the more in this sense as component of that image...";²⁵⁷ "... sound cinema adds a direct, but musical and only musical, non-corresponding presentation to the indirect representation of time as changing whole. This is the living concept, which goes beyond the visual image, without being able to do without it."²⁵⁸

He recognizes at that time that such situation is changing and that it may not always continue like this— "At the present junction, cinema remains a fundamentally visual art..."²⁵⁹ It is then only in the conclusion of *Cinema II* that he indicates sound as a disruptive force in the merging of cinema with electronics. There is a part that is usually left entirely out in a widely quoted paragraph (that I also will use in the Fold chapter) on the screen losing its vertical position and the brain city, that is of great importance when talking about sound:

²⁵⁵ (Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 2013, p. 241)

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

... information replacing nature, and the brain-city, the third eye, replacing the eyes of nature. Finally, sound achieving an autonomy which increasingly lends it the status of image, the two images, sound and visual, enter into complex relations with neither subordination nor commensurability.”²⁶⁰

As the cinema screen is transformed and loses its verticality, as the movement-image turns into time-image and even further as a “no-time-image” the whole of the “pure optical and sound image” is torn apart.²⁶¹ The visual and sound can’t form a whole anymore, instead they enter into an irrational relation, “the audiovisual image is not a whole, it is a fusion of the tear.”²⁶²

That the sound must liberate itself from the image is then one of the outcomes of cinema in the age of electronics. This is reinforced throughout the concluding chapter, “sound must itself become image instead of being a component of the visual image...”²⁶³ In admitting this total separation, Deleuze frees the sound from the ocular-centric theory of cinema and recognizes its potential— “the visual image will never show what the sound image utters.”²⁶⁴

In doing so, he envisions a kind of cinema that operates in the intersection between sound and visual. However, an impasse occurs when Moon’s pure becoming of sound clashes with how his image functions, the becoming of the image as explored in Deleuze. Cox uses *4’33’’* to exemplify the musical becoming as a slice of the

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

²⁶¹ Sánchez’s book *Hacia una imagen no-tiempo* (2013) explores well this transition.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 276.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

sound world. In his appropriation of Bergson's theory, becoming in sound is an answer to move past the "time-object" and have an experience that unfolds only in the present. In cinema, on the other hand, Deleuze's transposition of Bergson becomes to fold the past and future into the void of a present that never happens: creating the "time-object" that Cage condemned. Two visions of Bergson's becoming that couldn't be farther apart.

4.1.2. Two opposing visions of becoming

Pure becoming, in Deleuze, results in him positing the time-image as a direct presentation of time. The perfect ideal of what a pure becoming should be is to sidestep the present, to be always forthcoming and already past, which he explains at the beginning of *The Logic of Sense*. Pure becoming, the paradox of going in opposite directions, being suspended sequentially and directionally, growing while also shrinking.

As such, in Deleuze's becoming, the present is a void which never happens, while also being the place of this suspension. Sergi Sánchez, updates this discussion commenting that the digital image would better be understood as an "eternal now." It "makes the present a ritual that seems to capture *in media res*, the no man's land that transforms the daily routine."²⁶⁵ A cine-becoming, as viewed in *Cinema I* and *Cinema II*, consequently, is the opening-up

²⁶⁵ (Sánchez, 2013, p. 137) This is my personal translation of the original in Spanish, when he talks about the digital image and Kiarostami's film *Five*: "*Five* se entrega a lo que podríamos denominar 'ahora eterno'. El digital hace del presente un ritual que parece haber captado 'in media res', en la tierra de nadie que convierte lo cotidiano".

of all times in the zero of the present, so that past and future may coexist in a present that is no more.

Oppositely, Cox sees a sonic becoming as the destruction of a music that folds past and future and that instead insists only in the present. The sonic becoming an elimination of all times except the now. The difference between music and time-image is that in Cage (and more so in the artists that expanded his ideas) music is transposed to the sounds that envelops oneself in the present, there is no longer any need for an apparatus to capture the present as the ear is the only requirement to interact with the music of the landscape.

In cinema, such a conception appeared in the Lettrist movement (dialoguing with Fluxus when they were experimenting with happenings), achieving what a musical becoming is through the destruction of the cinematic apparatus. French artist Ben Vautier (a disciple of both Lemaître and Fluxus), created what he called “My Ten Films,” which I quote his first one:

My first film.

During the 1963 Cannes Film Festival I put a poster on the walls that read, 'Ben, creator of the total art, presents and signs his extraordinary film City of Cannes 1963. Movie created through the invention of a total reality.

Screening locations: Everywhere.

Screen : Your Eyes.

Author : (The Whole) Ben.

Cast : You.

Music : (The Live) Ben.

Mise-en-Scene : (Ben).

Length : Unlimited.

Color : Natural.

For this film Ben requests the First Prize for Creation and will authenticate you as total actors (certificate upon request).²⁶⁶

Conversely, to call this cinema is controversial, for it foregoes any cinematic apparatus and is closer to performance art. Nicole Brenez, previously to writing her book on the Lettrist movement preferred the term “expanded cinema.”²⁶⁷ It is interesting, nevertheless, to see how Vautier’s musical becoming (the elimination of all times except the present) recasts the eyes as the “screen.” It is not you who look to the world, as if what surrounds you is the screen but it is the world that looks towards you; you become the screen, the cinematic body to which others will interact with, your eyes will resonate and echo back, create the *renvoi* from the gaze of the others.

For Deleuze, though, such type of “expanded cinema” is not considered in his *Cinema* books as he prefers to focus on the time-image. Surprisingly, in the last chapter, he contrasts both music and time-image and its potential to directly present time. For him, music is the simpler form since it already directly presents time. The image, on the other hand, can only achieve such function, of being a “direct time-image” when time is presented in its transcendental

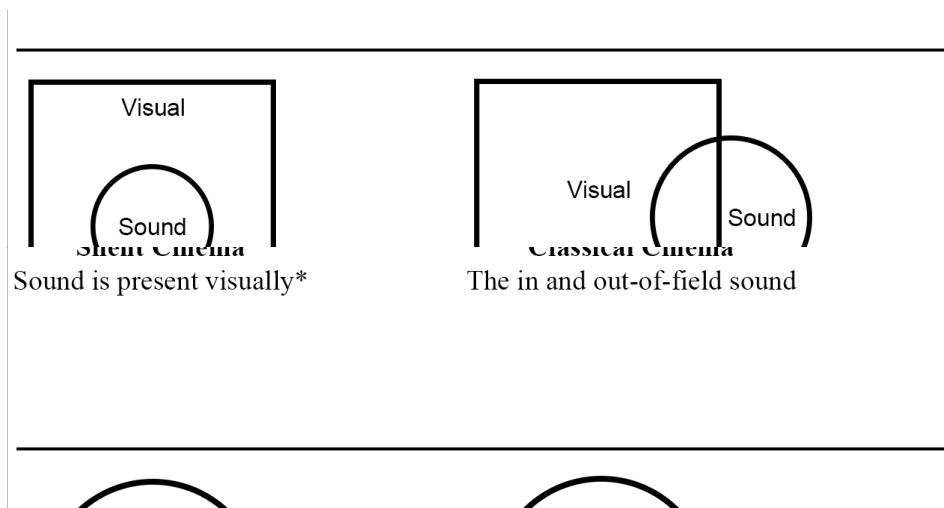
²⁶⁶ Brenez, N. (2015). “We Support Everything since the Dawn of Time That Has Struggled and Still Struggles” *Introduction to Lettrist Cinema*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.

²⁶⁷ <http://mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ43/Brenez.html>

form in the crystal of time. Thus, what looked like a deadlock can be seen through how becoming affects two very distinct forms of art—music and cinema.

Returning to Moon, his film practice departs at a moment that not only is past the tear between visual and sound that Deleuze mentions, but at a point where the visual has been enslaved to sound in the television and music video through the 80s and 90s (as Chion’s and Daney comment when regarding the television). Moon’s artistic backtracks reverses the historical relationship between the visual and sound, reaching, as a result, a different understanding of the function of the visual. A crude visualization of such differences can be seen in the following comparison:

Deleuze's mapping of cinema's historic relation between sound and image ending in the tear vs. Moon's reversal path from music video to the tear.



* This is an oversimplification as Rick Altman in his book *Silent Film Sound* (2004), Alberto Cavalcanti in his article *Sound Film* (1985) and Eisenstein in the aforementioned *Landscape of Music* discuss how sound was already present (and not just visually) in Silent Cinema.

With the sound being the site of interaction and the main axis of Moon's diagram, the visual gets stuck in a limbo, it is never actualized as a movement-image and never fully virtualized in a time-image. In other words, using the questions that Deleuze proposed to understand the drive that distinguishes both images, when I see Moon's films I neither ask "what is there to see in the next image?" (movement-image) and neither "what is there to see in the image?" (the time-image).²⁶⁹ I'm also not asking "what is there to feel in the image?" as Grandrieux's films may indicate, instead, in Moon the question is "what is there to experience in the image?"

4.1.3. The production of sense

In Moon's film, the encounter with *sens* is what is at stake. The sound opens oneself as an echo-chamber to enter the *renvoi* where the visual inserts the listener before the moment of actualization, in the passage between the Virtual and the Actual. Sound image and visual image combine to form the encounter-image. The encounter-image, hence, is the coagulation of the stream between the Virtual (where one can find *sens*) and the Actual (where one is ready to resonate). To inspect this halt between the Actual/Virtual circuit, it is helpful to follow Moon's route and backtrack Deleuze philosophy having a start at sound and before advancing to the visual.

To properly dissect this, it's necessary to recap that Deleuze's elementary coordinate is the opposition between the Actual (acts in

²⁶⁹ In *Cinema II* (2013, 279) Deleuze asks these questions as a simplified example to portray the change of the viewer's interaction between movement-image and time-image.

the present, what is experienced, and the person as an individual) and the Virtual (“outside” elements, time, singularities, what I’ll later synthesize into my experience of reality). Sound acts in the Actual, sonic waves bouncing off bodies going back and forth in endless referrals, changing at each new moment of the present. The *renvoi*, in that case, is in the Actual, sonic bodies interact in the present. Yet, to hear, to understand is in the Virtual, for one has to recollect information on what is known about each sound and bring it back into the Actual (to actualize). The Virtual though is not a parallel dimension without depth; it could be better visualized as a Y-axis (the X-axis is the flow of time in the Actual). The farther up the Y-axis, the deeper in the Virtual, the closer to the X-axis the closer to the Actual. The Actual/Virtual circuit is better understood through the process of thought, a person lives in the present but continuously goes to the Virtual to find meaning, memories, or any other sensation that is applied back to the present. An endless loop of interaction.

The concept of virtuality renders another layer to Nancy’s and Nadal-Melsió’s allusion to the newborn infant as the perfect model of listening (as *écouter*). A neonate only has senses and instincts. It doesn’t find meaning in sound for there are no memories yet developed. It only lives in the Actual, gradually unfolding the depths of the Virtual as it grows. To idealize along this line is to advocate a mode of interaction that is the closest possible to the Actual. Acknowledgment as the recognition of another singular body that one is interacting with in the present.

The sound in *Hibridos* carries this aim of acting always in the Actual, to bypass any Virtual associations one might have and open itself as a *renvoi* where it's possible to resonate. Such a stance, though, is as utopic as the possibility to purely listen as one can't go back to a neonate state. It is more sensible to postulate a sound that is at the edge of the Actual. The visual in *Hibridos*, similarly, is stuck at the edge of the Virtual. The continuity of the movement doesn't describe the figure as in the movement-image and avoids elucidating any mental process as the time-image. It is in this edge, at the borders between the sonic *renvoi* and a not "fully developed" visual that the encounter-image emerges—stuck in the middle of the Actual/Virtual circuit, an image that must be interacted with to free it from the passage of becoming, the site that Žižek calls the site of production:

The proper site of production is not the virtual space as such, but rather, the very passage from it to the constituted reality, the collapse of the multitude and its oscillations into one reality—production is fundamentally a limitation of the open space of virtualities, the determination and negation of the virtual machine.²⁷⁰

The encounter-image stops short of completing its own production. It is halted in the passage back from Virtual to Actual before the multitudes of the Virtual are collapsed. It preserves the "open space of virtualities" provoking an encounter with one's own *sens* as the path through the passage is completed by the listener.

²⁷⁰ Žižek, S. (2003). *Organs Without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences*. Abingdon: Routledge Press, p. 20.

In its feature form, *Híbridos* is a letter of intent of the encounter-image. In the sequence of the “congados,”²⁷¹ a hand suspended against the golden walls of an old church holds the music while I recompose myself and get ready for another encounter. The previous sequence was quite fierce, connecting Candomblé to Evangelical practices of exorcism and a medium entering trance and being possessed. The brief pause enticed by this suspended hand, where only some distant crickets can be heard, is a welcome moment to gather some strength for the joyous experience that follows.



²⁷¹ Starts at 40” of *Híbridos*.

A single powerful voice opens the *renvoi*, piercing the listener as the film cuts to a close-up of the singer's contorting face. As the verse repeats new voices join in, first a woman, then the chorus, and lastly the percussion instruments. Trusted into this interaction, the following crescendo of the volume and the voices resonate stronger. The listener's body echoes back the transformed sound that entered into an exchange with it. What is being encountered though? What is the listener interacting with? The sequence only reveals a couple of details: it's happening inside a church, there are a couple of people in the group (impossible to figure the size), and a very fast glimpse of a banner with one of the titles of Virgin Mary.

Foregoing a what, when, where, who, or how, the "congados" is in *Híbridos* for the encounter of a sensorial experience, one that produces *sens*. Comparing to the full ritual, in *Congado de Nossa Senhora do Rosário e Santa Efigênia* (2017) that is available in the database, evidences the process of what ended up in the final edit of the feature. The film from the full ritual lasts almost 27 minutes and was already edited from the hours of footage captured. It shows the congados, preparing themselves, walking through Ouro Preto, better showcases the city, the people and the tradition that is being shot.

In *Híbridos* though, instead of choosing from the many scenes that could hint some understanding of the "congados" the film opts for the less revelatory segment, the single take three-minute sequence that most obfuscates meaning. The chosen segment is the one that best carries the interaction between each voice while only giving away its singularity. It is where the figure is most isolated. Where

the diagram reveals its max potential. As with Bacon's isolation of the figurative, Moon hystericizes the body in relation to its signification so he may invoke *sens*. The screaming mouth is letting the forces of sound open the singer as an echo chamber, becoming the body without organs.



In the Actual/Virtual circuit the body without organs is an intricate figure. While it attempts to live only in the Actual, as the newborn that only can sense and reverberate back its environment, there are traces and fragments that are accumulated from this total opening and merging of all the senses (as I'll get to explore deeper in the chapter on experience through Walter Benjamin). In this flesh that

vibrates in the *renvoi*, a uniqueness is emanated from the voice and body of the singer.

The sonic interaction distorts the body, an impression that lingers throughout the whole film. Bridging Nancy's echo-chamber to the figural in Bacon, the body in *Híbridos* is subject to the forces of sound. It shakes in trance, falls during possession, contorts during exorcism, amalgamates in processions, and merges into the earth.



The physical body in the encounter-image exists at the border between visual and sound. It's similar to Grandrieux's nightclub scene in *La Vie Nouvelle* (2002), where the director transforms the actor into the primal organon of *sens* (as in Nadal-Melsió's newborn primal-scene), a transformation impossible to achieve just from the outside (the filmmaker) for it needs an invaginating, folding/unfolding, of resonance between the inside and outside.

In *La Vie Nouvelle*, the scene starts with the dance between Bayan (the pimp/owner) and Mélania (the prostitute). Bayan apparently is directing her dance as a puppeteer in this undistinguishable "Lynchian" room. As the techno music flows in and the scene

becomes more intense the music and dance consume both bodies. They turn into a blur of light and movement carried by the music. Each beat, each turn, each movement, breaking down the organs to form the organon. The music is resonating within them and transforming, in this, resonance what was previously a human body into a “skin stretched over its own sonorous cavity.”²⁷² As Mélanie spins faster and faster time in the film becomes elastic, in a systolic-diastolic pulse going faster and slower. Sound is not only opening the echo-chamber but in doing so is preparing them for the attack of time that is to come. The body becomes the instrument in which this is made visible: “To render time visible, to render the forces of time visible... there is the force of changing time, through the allotropic variation of bodies, done to the tenth of a second, which involves deformation...”²⁷³

The body is Grandrieux’s scene fully transformed by sound. The organon, even though wanting to exist purely in the Actual, becomes a conduit for an unconscious stream that trickles from the Virtual. It reminds Nancy ending words, when listening ends in a “body beaten by its sense of body, what we used to call its soul.”²⁷⁴

Likewise, in *Hibridos*, the body is no longer in control of its gestures as its purpose becomes to open and interact with the *renvoi*, to find this raw untouched experience in the virtual and transform it into *sens*. The function that the body assumes in Moon’s work is a crucial process in creating the encounter-image. It

²⁷² (Nancy, 2007, p. 43)

²⁷³ (Deleuze, 2017, p. 48)

²⁷⁴ (Nancy, 2007, p. 43)

also helps elaborate on how he short-circuits the Actual/Virtual and stops the image from being actualized.

4.1.4. Halting the sense-event

The key to the question above is to go even deeper in what is becoming in Deleuze. To be at the passage of becoming is to halt, pause, or freeze, at the sense-event. In cinema, It is the sense-event that virtualizes the image and frees it from its corporeal cause. Žižek sums up nicely the correlation between both when he asks—“is cinema not the ultimate case of the sterile flow of surface becoming? The cinema image is inherently sterile and impassive, the pure effect of corporeal causes, although nonetheless acquiring its pseudo-autonomy.”²⁷⁵

The possibility of halting such becoming—suggesting that the existence of an encounter-image is possible—can be found in the fifth chapter of the *Logic of Sense* where Deleuze discusses the paradoxes of sense.²⁷⁶ What he calls the “paradox of sterile division, or of dry reiteration.” Using language as a ground to develop his theory, Deleuze before exploring sense will delve into how its structure through the concept of proposition. He describes that pausing the proposition, fixating it, not only is possible but is

²⁷⁵ (Žižek, 2003, p. 21)

²⁷⁶ As the word “sense” is going to be heavily used in this section, I would like to point out that whenever I write *sens*, in italic and without the “e” I’m referring to Nancy’s idea of *sens* elaborated previously in the chapter where listening is discussed. When the word appears in this chapter, in its common form—sense—it is referring to the Deleuzian connotation and all that it implies: As the ideational event of the proposition; as the expressed of the proposition; as being at the surface of things; as not being an object and neither an idea; as not existing but rather insisting or subsisting in the event; in its relationship to nonsense; and as being neutral.

developed as a solution to the infinite regress paradox of sense.²⁷⁷ The logic is “to immobilize it, just long enough to extract from it its sense—the thin film at the limit of things and words.”²⁷⁸

I’ll soon come back to the proposition, but for now, it’s important to note that immobilizing the proposition has its issues. The first implication is that sense, when extracted from a frozen proposition, becomes independent “since it suspends its affirmation and negation, and is nevertheless its evanescent double: Carrol’s smile without the cat or flame without a candle.”²⁷⁹ Such a reading leads to the effect being released from its corporeal cause. Žižek will later use the same example of the cat’s smile to propose that cinema would be better understood as an “Organ without a Body” instead of the more common Body without an Organ.²⁸⁰ It would be erroneous though, to grasp all cinema as an apparatus that fixes propositions, for even if the gaze itself is an autonomous organ, no longer attached to a body, it still completes the Actual/Virtual circuit.

The second implication in halting the proposition is that whoever interacts with it becomes responsible to release it from its frozen state— “the task is to combine the sterility of sense in relation to the proposition from which it was extracted with its power of genesis in

²⁷⁷ The infinite regress being exemplified through Lewis Carrol’s segment where Alice encounters the Knight and asks the name of the song. The question provoking a regression where each answer (sense) gives rise to a new proposition, and so forth.

²⁷⁸ Deleuze, G. (2015). *The Logic of Sense*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, p.

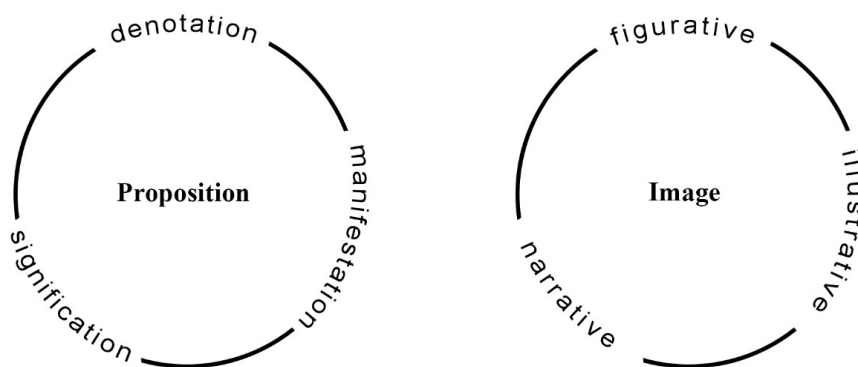
34.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ (Žižek, 2003, p. 30)

relation to the dimensions of the proposition.”²⁸¹ In other words, in immobilizing the proposition, whomever/whatever interacts with it is delegated the task to unfreeze it so that the sense-event can occur.

The encounter-image, thereby, relies on delaying the proposition, an idea that in the *Logic of Sense* is not really explained. How to immobilize it, how to fix the circle of proposition that is composed by denotation, manifestation, signification? A lead to the answer comes at the beginning of Deleuze’s book on Bacon, where another circle very similar to that of proposition pops up. One that transposes the terms from language to that of the image. So, before getting back to the encounter-image, its adamant to explore the proposition and how connecting these two circles potentially unlocks modes of altering the Actual/Virtual circuit.



The correlation between how language and image express sense insinuate an intrinsical connection. *Denotation*, the proposition’s relation to the world connects to the *figurative*, the indexical relation of an image to an object. *Manifestation*, the proposition’s

²⁸¹ (Deleuze, 2015, p. 34)

bearing of its speaker's desires and beliefs together with the values of veracity or illusion is linked to the *illustrative*. *Signification*, the connection of the proposition to other propositions is transposed to the *narrative*, the link between an image in relation to the others that surrounds it.²⁸² Additionally, as Daniel W. Smith notes, Deleuze's proposition can be grounded on Kant and his three terminal points in "Transcendental Dialectic": the world as denotation, the subject as manifestation, and God as signification.²⁸³

In Bacon, for example, the circle is altered by disrupting the figurative through isolation for it is the "simplest means, necessary though not sufficient, to break with representation, to disrupt narration, to escape illustration, to liberate the Figure."²⁸⁴ This is the aim of his diagram, to break the circle of proposition (not to freeze it as Moon) and extract sense from the isolated figure that lives continuously in the Actual. "The forms may be figurative, and there may still be narrative relations between the characters — but all these connections disappear in favor of a 'matter of fact,' or a properly pictorial (or sculptural) ligature, which no longer tells a story and longer represents anything but its own movement, and

²⁸² The conception of each element of the proposition is in the chapter *Third Series of the Proposition* in the *Logic of Senses*. Regarding the image circle I preferred to use the terms as they appear in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*.

²⁸³ Smith, D. W. (2006). *From the Surface to the Depths: On the Transition from Logic of Sense to Anti-Oedipus*. Symposium: The Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy, 10(1), 135-153. doi:10.5840/symposium200610111

²⁸⁴ (Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 2017, p. 2)

which makes these apparently arbitrary elements coagulate in a single continuous flow.”²⁸⁵

The technical explanation of a short circuit is handy here. In its simplest form, a short-circuit is an electrical circuit that allows a current to travel along an unintended path with no impedance. The result is that the circuit is overcharged as an excessive amount of current flows back. Bacon, using this analogy, short-circuited the Actual to the Actual, a powerful flow with no barriers that comes back to its own origin. By doing so, he exemplifies how the circle of proposition/image can be altered, in his case by the opposition of an isolated “figural” to the figurative. Grandrieux’s diagram non-surprisingly also follows Bacon’s lead, but this time it’s the narrative that is responsible for the short-circuit. By isolating segments from the rest of the narrative, unconnected and incomprehensible, like the thermographic scene in *La Vie Nouvelle* (that follows Bayan’s and Mélania’s dance sequence) where the bodies become heat maps that devour each other. Grandrieux’s diagram is set-up to achieve moments that bypass the circuit Actual/Virtual, also relating the actual back to itself.

Both artists alter the proposition/image circle to create an unexpected path that subverts the Actual/Virtual circuit. It offers an insight into the potential of such an approach, but, still doesn’t mean that it’s an encounter-image. Bacon and Grandrieux are not

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

interested in halting at the passage of becoming but to sabotage its natural flow.²⁸⁶

Moon's diagram, on the other hand, doesn't have a severe break in any specifics of the proposition. Instead all of them never seem to be fully formed. The whole circle is waiting for it to be unfrozen. The body doesn't go to an extreme like in Bacon, but it's still transformed and isolated through sonic forces, undermining the denotation/figurative. The manifestation/illustrative is perverted in a shift from the desires of the gaze (in the *Take Away Shows*) to the filmmaker's body (how he filmed the latest ritual possessions); released from concerns of truth or illusion, what matters is to inscribe an interaction. Signification/narrative is transposed to a surface that needs to be folded and unfolded while I navigate in the database. The surface becomes central for it is the site of production where sense is delayed and interaction takes place.

For Moon, to never fully form the proposition/image is a method to ensure its interaction— "I truly think that the more you know about how a ritual works the less you will interact with it, the less you will, really, be inside the moment."²⁸⁷ As such, the proposition is not severed but is faltered. The encounter-image isn't a total circumvention of the Actual/Virtual circuit like that of Bacon and

²⁸⁶ Understanding the variables of the circle of proposition/image can also produce an interesting rereading of Deleuze's cine-brain, for through the proposition it would mean that a non-human force like the concept of brain city could be able to repair the proposition and unleash the expression of sense.

²⁸⁷ Moon, V. (2016, August 8). *A fortuitous rendez-vous with Vincent Moon*. (G. Leașcu, Interviewer) theAttic. Retrieved May 5, 2018, from http://the-attic.net/features/1814/a-fortuitous-rendez_vous-with-vincent-moon.html

Grandrieux, but a temporary short-circuit, one that is waiting to be fixed.

4.1.4.1. The noisy resistance in the Actual/Virtual circuit

As a brief addendum, noise once more plays an important role, now as an integral part to the Actual/Virtual circuit (and not in the physical or historical implications that was explored previously). Greg Hainge proposes in his book *Noise Matters*, that the Virtual is a site of pure white noise, and that actualization is the process of contracting from these infinite multiplicities specific noises that are expressed into becoming.²⁸⁸ To view noise as ontologically insistent in the sense-event adds another layer to understand Moon's temporary freezing of the proposition in its path to actualization.

To illustrate how noise is rather an operation in the process of becoming that drives away any indexical meaning, Hainge, also recurs to the notion of the electrical circuit:

Noise is then indeed oppositional, but the opposition that it presents is irrecoverable (*contra* Hegarty and Attali). It does indeed resist, but the resistance that it proffers is better conceived of not merely as political, as a 'resistance toward the dominant ideals of music, and consequently, of the larger society', but rather as the kind of resistance found in electrical circuits.²⁸⁹

The scholar goes into lengthy details to apply the notion of the resistance as noise to how electricity flows through a current:

In a metal conductor, for instance, the outer electrons of the lattice of atoms are able to dissociate from their parent atoms and float in such a way that they form a fluid environment that makes of the

²⁸⁸ (Hainge, *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise*, 2013, p. 18)

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

metal a conductor since when a voltage is applied to the circuit the electrons in this fluid travel from one end of the conductor to the other. What electrical resistance illustrates beautifully, then, is the way in which any expression, which is to say any material entering into expressive relations (which is to say, of course, everything) necessarily enters into a systemic process with its own material ontology (read medium). This medium *resists* the transmission of the expression at the same time as the expression is entirely dependent on the system at the most fundamental level of base materiality, for its expressive potential can only be actualized in a material assemblage formed between the system and the expression that reconfigures both of them.²⁹⁰

At the core of Hainge's idea is his desire to focus on how medium and content are integral to one another, how becoming is a process that denies binaries and how the Actual/Virtual circuit subjects and transforms the whole body into expression. As such, the concept of noise intrinsically creating resistance in the path of becoming helps explore how Moon's films can temporality create the short-circuit, how he's able to pause the proposition. Noise, in Moon, becomes the agent that coagulates the path back to actualization by creating enough resistance between the system and the expression that it stops short of being expressed.

Hainge furthers his inquiries by correlating Deleuze and Guattari's notion of abstract machine to noise. The abstract machine is a figure that is purely virtual, with no substance or fixed form, a machine that is only function, thus why it's called abstract. In *Noise Matters*, this abstract machine is to be regarded as noise—without form or substance, noise as the function to pass from the virtual to the actual.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16-17.

In Moon, though, the abstract machine is paused through his notion of cine-trance. Attending to Hainge's notion of "everything is in noise, and noise is in everything"²⁹¹ posits that through cine-trance (as I'll explain next) Moon saturates the passage of becoming with the overflow of soon-to-be-expressed noise, the unexpressed noise from the virtual pauses waiting for the abstract machine to resume and contract the multiplicity into the singular once it's actualized.

4.1.5. Short-circuiting the Actual/Virtual with Cine-trance

The name Cine-trance, obviously, brings a clear link to Rouch, who coined the term in 1971 to talk about a possession-like experience he felt while shooting *Les Tambors d'Avant: Tourou et Bitti* (1971). A film that, in comparison with *Híbridos*, assists in differentiating how cine-trance is regarded by Rouch and Moon.

Beginning with Rouch, the importance of this film and why it merited a new term like cine-trance is thoroughly described by anthropologist Paul Henley.²⁹² The film happens in a Zerma village north of Niamey, the capital of Niger. Very similarly to Moon, the film was shot in a single take that lasted the duration of the 16mm reel (approximately 11 minutes). As Rouch explains in the voice-over of the film, he and the sound recordist were waiting for the mediums to enter into trance and be possessed. After four hours of the music being performed and nothing happening, they decided to

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁹² Henley, P. (2010). Postcards at the service of the Imaginary: Jean Rouch, shared anthropology and the ciné-trance. In R. Parkin, & A. de Sales (Eds.), *Out of the Study and Into the Field: Ethnographic theory and practice in French Anthropology* (pp. 75-102). Oxford: Bergahn Books.

not waste the opportunity and at least capture the drums that were rarely played anymore (Tourou and Bitti are the names of the drums).

The single take starts by entering the village and exploring its surroundings. After a brief reconnaissance, it glides through the musicians and shows the drums being played. The narration indicates that suddenly a shout calling for “Meat!” is heard. The medium, that so far has been unsuccessful, goes into trance in front of the camera and is possessed by the spirit of “Kure, the Hyena.” As Henley notes, Rouch afterwards claimed that the fact that they were shooting a film provoked the trance to happen.²⁹³ Rouch walks to the other side of the drum players and kneels to capture the face of “Kure” from a lower angle, while the villagers come to negotiate with the spirit that possessed the medium. In the meantime, another medium goes into trance and is possessed by the spirit of “Hadyo, the Fulani captive.” Rouch explores both mediums, investigating their reactions, their manners, how they move and speak while in trance. As the 16mm magazine reaches its end, to conclude the single take, the camera moves backward leaving the village and capturing a final glimpse in a wide angle shot.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 90.



After the shooting of *Tourou et Bitti*, Rouch described that he was trembling with exhaustion. He thought that the rhythm of the drums besides helping the possession of the two mediums also sent him into trance. His idea of trance though, very differently than Moon's, is a sort of "enthusiasm which cannot be defined but which is essential to the poetic creativity."²⁹⁴ He also attempted to explain trance through Nietzsche's concept of the Dionysian—cine-trance as creativity being spontaneous and intuitive instead of being rational. Deleuze in *Cinema II* when talking about Rouch and cine-trance mentions his film *Dionysos* (1984) as an example. A strange choice, since he chooses a film shot in France that obscures the origins of cine-trance. Deleuze reinforces Rouch's notion of cine-trance within the western idea of creativity, instead of the more literal

²⁹⁴ Rouch quoted in (Henley, 2010, p. 91)

possession rituals that originated cine-trance a decade before in Niger.

This spontaneous creativity as filmmaking invokes a performance on both sides, the filmmaker provokes the subjects through the situations and enters into a trance state, where free of theory, he can release what Rouch called “la barbarie de l’invention.” He even suggested that, ideally, the process of making a film would be closer to a jam session, or perhaps even closer to Moon, to “the flashes of revelation that could arise from the electrifying effects of an encounter between strangers.”²⁹⁵

Moon’s idea of cine-trance started very similar to Rouch’s conception but has gradually developed through his oeuvre. The first fundamental difference is that while Rouch diverts trance and possession into the realm of creativity, Moon, on the other hand, has expressed a more literal interpretation of cine-trance. Seeking ways to incorporate trance and possessions in their full meaning:

Interviewer: Do you personally believe that people are interacting with spirits or their deities during trances, or are they overcome by the intensity of the atmosphere at the ceremonies?

Vincent Moon: Of course I believe. To make such researches and bringing along the old anthropological point of view would not make sense. Those barriers are exploding nowadays and Brazil is definitely the land of the re-creation of new forms of identity - in between various levels of reality. As I have been working myself in such directions, I have started to incorporate spirits on a few occasions, but once more words can't explain it all, and actually,

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

words should not try. A new language is needed, we are working towards it.²⁹⁶

Cine-trance, in Moon's diagram, should not be seen in analogy to creativity but in the full context of what happened that first time when Rouch saw the mediums in the Zerma village in Niger. Reinforcing, even more, this position, Moon, in the same interview also mentions exploring "new uses of technologies mixed with plants used for expansions of consciousness."²⁹⁷

Rouch, when first presenting the article where he defined cine-trance, explains the process of trance and possession in the Songhay-Zerma culture. They believe that every individual has a "shadow," "reflection" or even "soul" (what is called *bia*). Rouch, though, prefers the term double (the more common term at the time in anthropological literature); this double leaves the body in death or in other specific circumstances. When the possession happens, the individual's double is replaced by the double of the spirit. This is an important differentiation; the body remains the same, but the double is replaced. The adept becomes the physical incarnation of the double of a spirit. The possessed is believed to enter a different order of relation with the world through the substitution of his double. The analogy made in Rouch's article is that the filmmaker

²⁹⁶ Moon, V. (2015). *Capturing Trance Rituals: Vincent Moon: Filmmaker / Explorer*. (M. Lawry, Interviewer) The Terrestrial. Retrieved February 10, 2018, from <http://www.theterrestrial.com/interview/vincent-moon/>

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

when in cine-trance transitions from “the world of the real to the world of the imaginary.”²⁹⁸

What does it mean to supplant the analogy of cine-trance with an actual cine-trance and cine-possession? I comprehend such an intention through the concept of the encounter-image. Cine-trance is the final (and utopic?) goal of Moon’s diagram, the most drastic step in short-circuiting the Actual/Virtual. It’s a search for an outside double that replaces subjectivity, but that keeps the body participating in the *renvoi*. The camera ceases to be a cine-eye and merges with the body, a body without a brain, organs and free will; a body possessed from the outside as an answer to the trance induced by the rhythm of sound.²⁹⁹ As with his subjects, the filmmaker becomes a mass of flesh that vibrates exclusively in the Actual.

In *Híbridos*, it’s the sound that enables the trance and mediates the possession. The preparation of the “Santo Daime” (the religious name and ritual for ayahuasca) is synced to the hymns being sung. In the film, to prepare for the ritual, all movements must become sound. The hand of the woman who is collecting the leaves follows how she sings; the cutting of the root is syncopated with the guitar that starts playing; the men who are squashing the root, are instructed on when to hit it based on the rhythm of the chant; each

²⁹⁸ Rouch quoted in (Henley, 2010, p. 94)

²⁹⁹ Moon’s merging of the camera to the body is an active research is the last years: “My work these past years has been researching on the integration of the camera into my own body as much as possible” (MOON, 2015)

gesture of preparation to the upcoming ritual becomes one with music.



Only when all the bodies are synchronized (subjects and filmmaker), can the ritual take place. In silence, the ayahuasca is ingested, and all the bodies wait the *renvoi* to open, to resonate within it and be transformed (in this case, possessed). As a new chant starts, Moon concatenates the next scene to show the bodies entranced by Ayahuasca being possessed by the spirits of Umbanda. The camera, which in the preparation of the tea has been mostly observing from eye-level, now becomes frantic, a transformation has taken place, from the camera as gaze to the camera-body.



I'm interpreting cine-trance to its extreme literality, and conversely, it's impossible to know how literal Moon is possessed during *Hibridos*. Nevertheless, to even have such a concept as cine-trance shows a desire to explore alternative methods and alter Actual/Virtual circuit. Seeking an ideal camera-body that expresses a sense that is lost in the Virtual, to the outside double of a possessed subjectivity, freezing the sense-event in the passage of becoming. And, as such, preserving the multiplicities of the Virtual as it never collapses back to the Actual.

It also exposes a longing to be able to experience the encounter-image; to aim for a viewing experience that is also a first encounter as Moon finally finishes the Actual/Virtual circuit that his body started in the *renvoi* but was unable to finish. The idea of the creator arriving late to its own creation, as I explored in Bacon. Encounter-image and cine-trance are inseparable in his work, for it is the

former that coagulates the Virtual in its path to actualizing freezing the proposition/image. Moon is utterly unabashed in his search:

Is consciousness within us or outside of us? It's a huge, wonderful question. I'm convinced that consciousness resides outside of us, and that we can connect to it via various methods. Brazil is fascinating because it presents a range of relationships to the invisible and to entranced bodies which push us to our limits via altered states of consciousness that are constantly accessible at different levels. There is no distinct rupture – there isn't a person in a trance and one who isn't. There are only rising vibrations, which can become incredibly intense, to the point that a person experiences a loss of consciousness, is totally possessed. There are many more interesting stages in between, intermediary stages where you are in a state of pure reception to outer energies that are modifying your way of being, while being utterly conscious.³⁰⁰

Moon's spiritual pursuit shouldn't be considered as an isolated quest, as it hints a larger scenario in the resurgence of Baroque ideals, that I'll develop in the next chapter. Continuing to take cine-trance to its maximum consequences also carries another enticing innuendo. The film's ambition is to inscribe this outside double (a Virtual double) through the body of Moon. Apart from breaking the idea of cine-eye to this organic camera-body, it also means that by cine-trance the perspective of this camera-body can either be the pure resonance of the body interacting in the *renvoi* or that of an outside double. Comparing to how Žižek views cinema uncovers the extent of how having sound as the starting point distances Moon's works from the more common visual regime:

³⁰⁰ Moon, V. (2016, November 30). *Vincent Moon, Filmmaker and Explorer of the Invisible*. (G. G. Sedita, Interviewer) Retrieved January 10, 2018, from <https://gabriellesedita.uk/2016/11/30/1091/>

...when we watch a movie, we see that flow of images from the perspective of the 'mechanical' camera, a perspective that does not belong to any subject; through the art of montage, movement is also abstracted or liberated from its attribution to a given subject or object—it is an impersonal movement that is only secondarily, afterward, attributed to some positive entities.³⁰¹

Cine-trance is also, then, a way to make the interaction personal, to tie the camera to an actual body, the perspective of the double that soon becomes my own. It also further differentiates Moon from Bacon and Grandrieux, that also alter the proposition/image, it's his method for creating an encounter-image.³⁰² Reiterating that such image solely exists for the act of unfreezing sense, in the experience of completing its passage and being part in originating the flow of becoming. In cinema, this is a rare trait, one that Deleuze comments on, but that usually is in the backseat of film theory, that prioritizes how sense insists in the image:

The most general operation of sense is this: it brings that which expresses it into existence; and from that point on, as pure inherence, it brings itself to exist within that which expresses it.³⁰³

Moon's films live in the first phase of how the sense-event operates. The encounter-image is modeled to give the experience of unleashing the power of genesis that expresses sense into existence. As such, the encounter-image correlates to Attali's idea of composition—the possibility for everyone to compose their way out of repetition—it also answers how to partake in creation even without producing (the problem that Steven Shaviro found in

³⁰¹ (Žižek, 2003, p. 20)

³⁰² If there are other models of producing the encounter-image is out of the scope of my research, but nevertheless, it's an interesting question that deserves further investigations.

³⁰³ (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 2015, p. 170)

Attali). In the encounter-image to compose is to express one's own sense, to go through the passage of becoming.

Additionally, it is also an ephemeral image, for once interacted with, the encounter-image collapses into time-image, always alluding back to the first encounter, to the experience in emancipating it. It can be argued that all films pass through this first experience process. Raymond Bellour in discussing the contemporary importance of the collective experience of cinema writes that "one can rewatch a film in various situations, but only if, first time around, it has been seen and received according to its own aura."³⁰⁴ I'll come back in the next chapter to explore what this auratic experience means, but what would difference the encounter-image from the regular cinematic experience? Bellour answers this quandary by complimenting that the spectator first experience is what "triggers the desire, afterwards, to go deeper."³⁰⁵ While Bellour recognizes the importance of Deleuze's operation of sense as "expressing into existence" in the first encounter with a film, it leads to a deeper interaction in each repeated viewing of the film.

With *Moon*, and the encounter-image, on the other hand, the initial experience is the only level of interaction. There is no other layer than that of the surface. This disposability, in turn, is a strong propulsor for the sheer volume of films that Moon released. For

³⁰⁴ Bellour, R. (2012). The Cinema Spectator: A Special Memory. In G. Koch, V. Pantenburg, & S. Rothöler (Eds.), *Screen Dynamics: Mapping the Borders of Cinema*. Vienna: Synema Publikationen, p. 15.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

once the question “what will be encountered?” is known, the next interaction needs to be a new and unknown experience.

In Moon’s route from the aural to the visual, the encounter-image is born to bridge the musical experience to the visual. His first experiments between 2005 and 2006 already asked: “how to visually transpose music?”³⁰⁶ As his interest expanded beyond the indie rock music, this question remained at the core of his practice. It isn’t a question of how to make music visually appealing, but how to connect the sonic encounter to the visual. How to include new models of capturing the present that preserves the *renvoi* that is opened in the Actual.

Returning to Rouch, for all his explorations on cine-trance, it only operates in his relation to his subjects. *Tourou et Bitti* has a following commentary track where Rouch is constantly explaining what is happening, talking about the ritual, the drums, how they were frustrated, etc.³⁰⁷ “La barbarie de l’invention” was something that he went through but that by the time the film reached the listener was already collapsed into a specific meaning and narrative, the Actual/Virtual already completed. Sense is already inherited in

³⁰⁶ The series of films on *The National* (2005-2006), *Sonic Youth - How to catch an Explosion with a Soul* (2005) and *LIARS LIARS LIARS! (or how to play nirvana in 2006)*.

³⁰⁷ In the versions I found, including in the official *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* website that are the associated producers of the film, the commentary is always embedded without any option to see the film without it. In addition, the technical information cites that the film is composed by “Music and Voice Over”. I’ve searched for information regarding if originally its screenings happened without the commentary track but was unable to find anything useful. The link for the full movie at the CNRS website:
<http://videotheque.cnrs.fr/doc=559>

Rouch's film. With *Moon*, though, the idea of cine-trance as "la barbarie de l'invention" is an invitation to interact with the encounter-image, to possess Moon's camera-body and express sense by making it one's own. To fold/unfold sense through navigating the database, which is the next trait in Moon's diagram.

With its birth in sound, the encounter-image carries in its DNA the singularity of each sonic body but can only express it in interaction (as Cavarero defends). Thus, it is an image that is all ears, that is attentively listening and waiting to celebrate the moment of the encounter that will open it up as an echo-chamber. Exceeding cine-trance to cinema-trance implies such an interaction, the listener enters the film analogously to entering into trance. As short-circuit (of the passage of becoming) is fixed, whoever interacted with it becomes the one responsible for opening Maldoror's body so that it can finally scream.³⁰⁸ A unique and unrepeatable instant that now enables the *sens* to freely flow between Actual and Virtual.

³⁰⁸ The mute character of *Les Chants de Maldoror* that finds his voice in his necessity to scream.

4.2. The fold: the (Neo-Baroque) production of beings

The last aspect of Moon's cinematic diagram chronologically was one of the early traits to appear and is characterized by moving *sens* to beyond the film object. Furthermore than an encounter-image that requires the listener's interaction to unfreeze itself, Moon expands the place for encounters to a database, to the virtual space that each listener will have to navigate and create his own path in order to find a greater *sens* that emerges from this interaction.

This move to beyond the film can be seen in a later Deleuze, that starting with his book *Anti-Oedipus*, shifts his focus from the production of sense (as was explained in the previous chapter) to the production of beings (as I'll explain next). In his words, "I've undergone a change. The surface-depth opposition no longer concerns me. What interests me now is the relationships between a full body, a body without organs, and flows that migrate."³⁰⁹

In Moon, through the fold and the database, a similar move happens, shifting from the cinematic body to the flow between these bodies. One can no longer only study his films and ignore that they are interrelated and connected in such a way that enables for new reconfigurations each time someone comes in interaction with it. What emerges from Moon's model of interacting with the database of films also is part of his diagram.

³⁰⁹ Deleuze, G. (2004). *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-1974*. New York: Semiotext(e), p. 261.

Žižek when remarking the difference in a later Deleuze that shifted away from the logic of sense, synthesizes the change that now the event is an effect of the “virtual intensities out of which bodies emerge through actualization (the passage from Becoming to Being).”³¹⁰

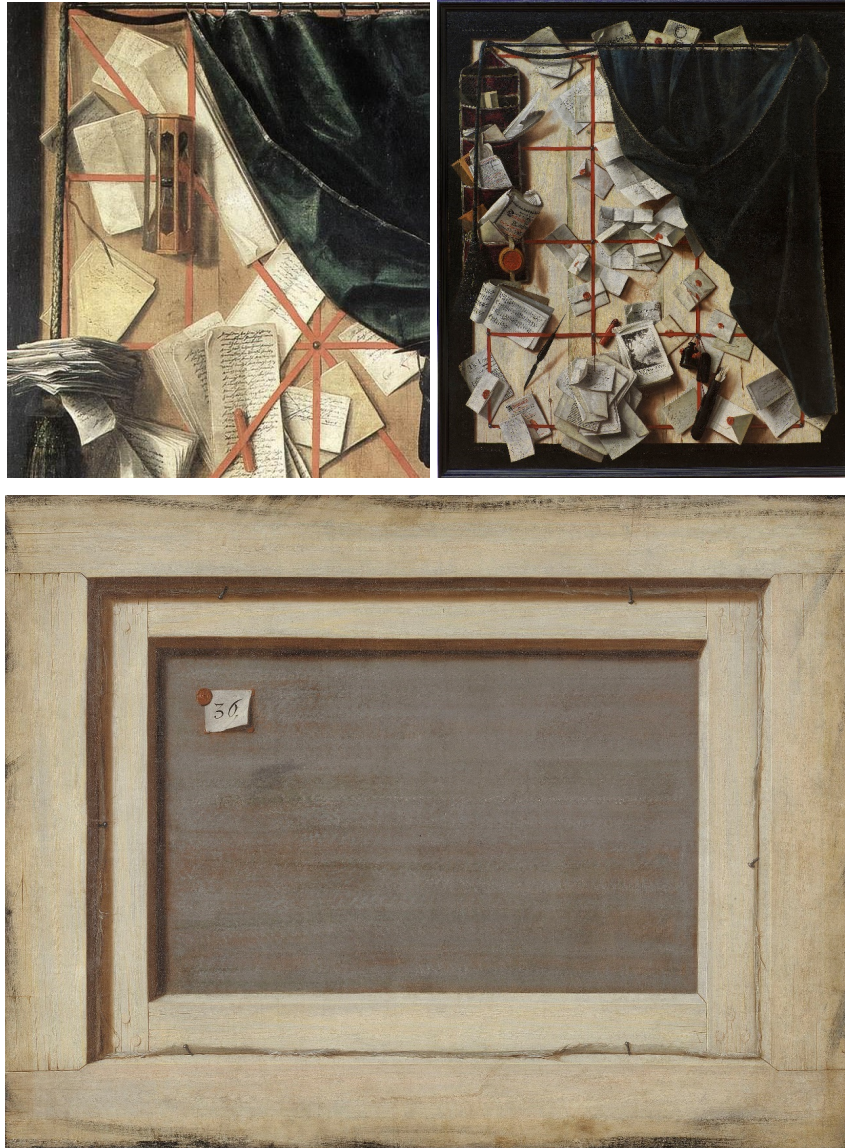
Deleuze’s book *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993) concerns itself with how these virtual intensities take place. An idea that, also briefly appeared in Nancy, though it takes the spotlight in Moon. Nancy used the term fold/unfold, silently noting Deleuze’s book, to talk about the invaginating body that transforms into an echo-chamber. Additionally, Deleuze refers to his own idea in observing the isolation of the figure in Bacon and on how his triptychs work. The fold came as a response for the Cartesian notions of duality, and as a critique of his own surface/depth paradigm present in the *Logic of Sense*, offering instead the model of the folding/unfolding when applied to human subjectivity. The book *The Fold* discusses that human subjectivity transformed from a linear projection model (that can relate to the traditional cinema screen) to a model more similar to an origami, or a fold. This model of subjectivity perceives reality as endlessly folding itself into diverse meanings and signifiers. It is not broken and fragmented but a whole that can divide and unfurl itself to infinity.

To illustrate, Deleuze gives us Foucault’s analogy of the Renaissance madman that being put in a ship becomes a passenger, or “prisoner” in the interior of the exterior, the fold of the sea. In

³¹⁰ (Žižek, 2003, p. 21)

this sense, we can see examples in the *Trompe l'oeil* paintings from the Baroque as a way of exemplifying the inside fold as a repetition from exteriority.

FCornelius Nobertus Gysbrechts – Trompe-l'œil with letters and pens (left, undated), Trompe-l'œil with letters (right, 1668), Trompe-l'œil. The Reverse of a Framed Painting (bottom, 1668)



Deleuze further develops the fold by saying that it is also the name for one's relation to oneself. This gives the fold an explicitly ethical dimension, but also a political/technological one. For him, the emergence of new kinds of struggle inevitably also involves the production of new kinds of subjectivity, new kinds of fold, new kinds of beings. Although he was thinking in the political situation of France in 1968, this struggle is updated in Timothy Murray's book *Digital Baroque* to reflect the subjectivity in digital technology. The explanation that Deleuze writes in his book sheds light on the concept here at stake:

A flexible or an elastic body [that] still has cohering parts that form a fold, such that they are not separated into parts of parts but are rather divided to infinity in smaller and smaller folds that always retain a certain cohesion. Thus a continuous labyrinth is not a line dissolving into independent points, as flowing sand might dissolve into grains, but resembles a sheet of paper divided into infinite folds or separated into bending movements, each one determined by the consistent or conspiring surroundings.³¹¹

To better understand this concept Murray discusses the fold applying it to digital arts as “a deeply significant archaeological shift from projection to fold that is emphasized, if not wholly embodied, by the digital condition. While still often inscribed in models of knowledge and representation derived from the single-point perspective and Euclidean systems of projection (whether the stuff of the cinematic apparatus or the variants of GPS tracking), the

³¹¹ Deleuze, G. (1993). *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, p. 8.

fold embodies the elasticity of seriality and the continuous labyrinth of single points (1's and 0's).”³¹²

In his work *Moon* transforms the unidimensional projection experience that Rouch utilized in his ethnographic films to an intricate polydimensional experience that closely resembles the Leibniz fold. His films, while independent in themselves, suggest the existence of a greater body created in the listener's mind when navigating through the various fragments/films of the databases (like Moon's website and *Hibridos* database).

To fold is viewed as a *modus operandi* in Baroque and not only as an aesthetic trace, in this sense Deleuze finishes his book saying that “we are discovering new ways of folding, akin to new envelopments, but we all remain Leibnizian because what always matters is folding, unfolding, refolding.”³¹³

As of 2018, Vincent Moon's website and his Vimeo account are the main repositories to find his films. The 538 films are archived with only a loose hierarchy (by year of creation or by the location on a map), flattening everything to the same level of importance. His feature documentaries are undistinguishable from the weekly films he published of musicians from around the world. To see everything, to fold/unfold through the database is a task that can take weeks, months or even years. Such structure also reinserts the concept of noise, similar to Cage's piece *Organ²/ASLSP* (As Slow

³¹² Murray, T. (2008). *Digital Baroque: New Media Art and Cinematic Folds*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 5.

³¹³ (Deleuze, 1993, p. 158)

as Possible) where the music is extended to an absurd amount of time, and each note becomes intertwined with the soundscape and noises of life.³¹⁴ The listener is expected to return to the world “outside,” to let noise come in, and occasionally come back to re-enter these petites planètes.

The listener can maintain with Moon an ongoing continuous fold/unfold that can last for many years. Already in the first works, there is a stride towards a film that foregoes narrative to focus on an intensified experience that can be unlocked in a short time either in isolation or within a more extensive database.

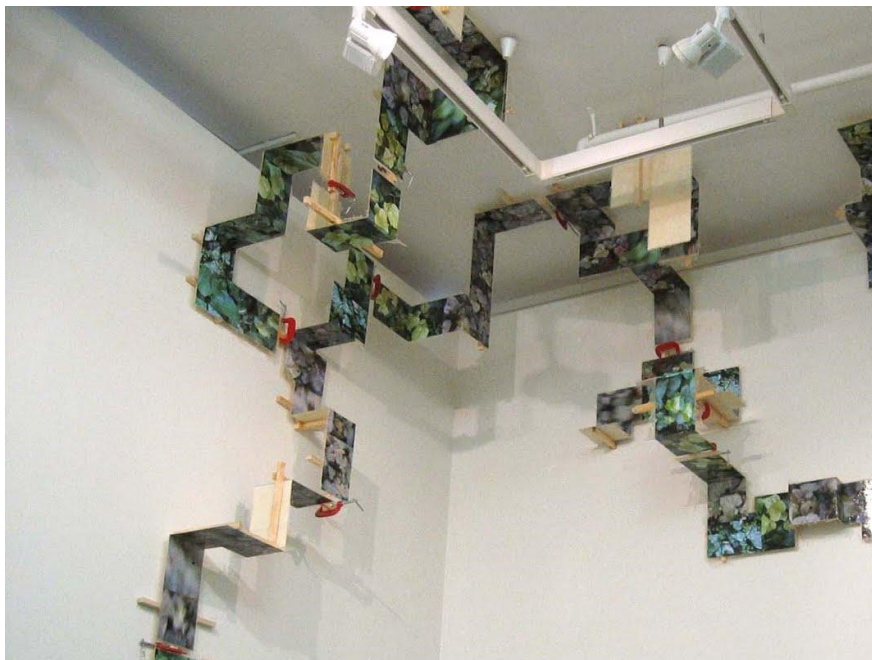
As Deleuze’s book title indicates (*The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*), there is a direct correlation between the operative fold to the Baroque; I’ll soon comeback to explore how the Neo-Baroque concept applies to Moon. Before, its noteworthy to fix in place the ways that a listener navigates this intricate database by contrasting it with Neo-Baroque artist Richard Reddaway. His installation *The Wieskirche* (2004) exemplifies three-dimensionally how users can find any entry point and navigate through the database opening their own *sens* in the gaps between.

Angela Ndalianis synthesizes in her early texts about Neo-Baroque that “Rather than providing a statically ordered perspectival

³¹⁴ *Organ²/ASLSP* is a piece where the performance in St. Burchardi church has begun in 2001 and will continue until 2640, the last note changed in October 5, 2013. The next change will not occur until 2020.

arrangement, the 'centre' (in baroque) continually shifts, the result being the articulation of complex spatial conditions."³¹⁵

In the installation depicted below, Reddaway created a box-like construction that climbs the walls and ceiling of the space. It even spreads its tendrils into side rooms. The work seems to replicate itself, and there is a sense of growth as it spreads insidiously throughout the exhibition space. On the surface of each tile is a glossy surface, like the upwards side of a leaf, with fragmented blown-up photographs of ivy plants.



³¹⁵Ndalianis, A. (1999, December 19). *Architectures of Vision: Neo-Baroque Optical Regimes and Contemporary Entertainment Media*. Retrieved June 2, 2018, from Media In Transition: http://web.mit.edu/m-i-t/articles/index_ndalianis.html

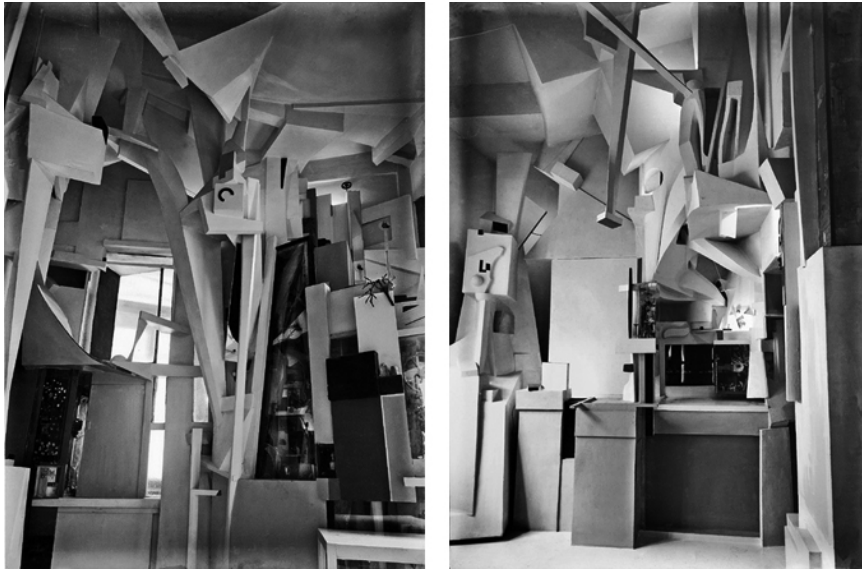
As photography folds into sculpture and sculpture into installation, Reddaway elicits how over history one idea folds into another and creates echoes over time. The attendee that enters the gallery can choose various entry points between the maze created in *The Wieskirche*. With the installation taking up the side rooms it is possible to choose either to linearly navigate the path taken by the photographs or view the installation as fragmented pieces.

Brian O'Doherty calls attention to Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* (1923-1943), who ahead of his time, resurfaced the concept of interacting with a place that continuously unfolds where one comes to interact with it to modernity. Even though it is not canonically inserted into either Baroque or Neo-Baroque periods, the *Merzbau* is impressive in predicating an essential change on how folding and unfolding assumes an essential position as an operative function. How the *Merzbau* was created already integrated the fold/unfold. In Schwitter's words:

It grows about the way a big city does. (...) when a new building goes up, the Housing Bureau checks to see that the whole appearance of the city is not going to be ruined. In my case, I run across something or other that looks to me as though it would be right for the KdeE [Cathedral of Erotic Misery], so I pick it up. take it home, and attach it and paint it, always keeping in mind the rhythm of the whole. Then a day comes when I realize I have a corpse on my hands-relics of a movement in art that is now passé. So what happens is that I leave them alone, only I cover them up either wholly or partly with other things, making clear that they are being downgraded. As the structure grows bigger and bigger, valleys, hollows, caves appear, and these lead a life of their own within the overall structure. The juxtaposed surfaces give rise to forms twisting in every direction, spiraling upward. An arrangement of the most strictly geometrical cubes covers the

whole, underneath which shapes are curiously bent or otherwise twisted until their complete dissolution is achieved.³¹⁶

Kurt Schwitters (1923 - destroyed in 1943). Merzbau, Hanover, Germany.



Schwitters' work perfectly illustrates the fold as the interior of the exterior (Foucault's analogy of a ship passenger as the "prisoner" in the interior of the exterior, the fold of the sea). For 20 years his studio space was being continuously transformed, invaginating the outside into a world of its own, an organic metamorphosis based on accumulation. O'Doherty explains that "as the structure grows bigger and bigger, valleys, hollows, caves appear, and these lead a life of their own within the overall structure."³¹⁷

When navigating through the *Merzbau* the logic is not that of a linear path, but of a swaying congruity of roads similar to how one

³¹⁶ Schwitters, K. Quoted in O'Doherty, B. (1999). *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. San Francisco: University of California Press, p. 44.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

navigates through a city. At any moment any turn can be taken, a new course can be traced or erased, one can walk through with an objective or just distractedly peruse over the details as Benjamin's *flaneur* interacts with Paris. O'Doherty applies this to the transformation of the gallery space but it also is possible to view from early traces of a baroque aesthetic being reborn:

The energy powering this invasion is not recognized, though mentioned by Schwitters, for if the work had any organizing principle, it was the mythos of the city. The city provided materials, models of process, and a primitive esthetic of juxtaposition — congruity forced by mixed needs and intentions. The city is the indispensable context of collage and of the gallery space.³¹⁸

Going even further back, at the end of the 16th-century Baroque artist Annibale Carracci used a similar method when painting his fresco at Palazzo Farnese. With various entry points the person when confronted by the fresco has various possibilities of navigating the imagery presented by Carracci.



³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Similarly, when navigating the works of Reddaway, Schwitters or Carracci when entering Vincent Moon's series (*Take Away Shows*, *Petites Planètes*, *Híbridos*, etc.) I can take any path to watch the movies. Vincent Moon's website and *Híbridos* collection of rituals (both screenshots below) act as a database, any random movie is turned into an entry point since each film doesn't relate to any linear order within the series.



In the forward of Deleuze's book *The Fold*, Tom Conley further connects the idea of the contemporary artist, its relation to the fold and to the baroque.

The last question that Deleuze poses involves what it means to live in the world. Our experience of a shrinking glove inflects the vision of the monad, since compressions of time and space modify 'the difference of inside and outside and of public and private'. Thus, contemporary artists and musicians in the line of Leibniz transform *monadology* into *nomadology*. They are emigrant thinkers who deterritorialize accepted notions of space.³¹⁹

Understanding this in light of the work of Vincent Moon and his traveling around the world, living as a nomad while attempting to record the local culture independent of any borders, symbolizes the way a contemporary artists fold, unfolds and refolds. Moon, a Neo-Baroque artist par excellence. His use of the fold, as Deleuze observes, is at the heart of the Baroque:

The Baroque refers not to an essence but rather to an operative function, to a trait. It endlessly produces folds. It does not invent things: there are all kinds of folds coming from the East, Greek, Roman, Romanesque, Gothic, Classical folds... Yet the Baroque trait twists and turns it folds, pushing them to infinity, fold over fold, one upon the other. The Baroque fold unfurls all the way to infinity.³²⁰

Neo-Baroque theory emerged in late 80s with Omar Calabrese, but subsequent researchers have since expanded what the term means in contemporary society.³²¹ One of the main theorists, Angela

³¹⁹ (Deleuze, 1993, p. xvi)

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³²¹ Some of the most notorious contributions has been Peter Wollen's article *Baroque and Neo-Baroque in the age of the spectacle* (1993), Ndalians book *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment* (2005), Kelly Wacker's book *Baroque Tendencies in Contemporary Art* (2007), William

Ndalianis, calls attention to the ramifications that the theory took in the last decade and justifies the use of Neo-Baroque to study contemporary artists:

Yet it's been in the last few decades that a Neo-Baroque logic has taken deeper root across diverse areas of the arts, continuing restlessly to move on to new metamorphic states and contexts while being nurtured by a culture that's attracted to the visual and sensorial seductiveness that's integral to Baroque form.³²²

Baroque characteristics such as seriality and polycentrism reappear anew as connection, intersubjectivity, and elasticity in digital media (as discussed in Murray). An outcome of the conceptual shift from linear projection to the fold. A shift in large part due to the initial wonder and possibility of accumulating and “freely” making available such large amount of data.³²³

Furthermore, Murray discusses that digital Baroque relies on a model of knowledge that bonds energy, possession, and mystical intensity, creating a paradoxical doubling of digital media with analogy and mysticism. The term doubling, chosen by Murray, another connection between the baroque and Moon's idealized “doubling” of his body (of being possessed by something beyond). And even though not taking it literally as Moon does in his concept of cine-trance, Murray expands on why possession is such a strong

Egginton's book *The Theater of Truth - The Ideology of (Neo)Baroque Aesthetics* (2010), and Timothy Murray's *Digital Baroque* which I previously introduced.

³²² (Ndalianis, *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment*, 2005, p. 13)

³²³ The initial wonder in the possibility of accumulating data appears to be in a sharp decline as at the time of this writing the repercussion that the 2018 Facebook scandal took, seems to have been a landmark in raising awareness that nothing is truly free (something Jenkins already said in 2013).

call in the Neo-Baroque as he defines it as “a phantasm positioned analogously in the contrasting machineries of philosophy, psychoanalysis, science, and literature as a liminal figure conjoining per-version and certainty, imagination and cognition, desire and mind, along with, I would now add, subject and archive.”³²⁴

Moon recently echoed such views in an interview regarding one of his latest exhibitions:

A few months ago, I set up film installations on three screens at the CTM Berlin, which is a kind of temple to technological and electronic ultra-intellectualism. Not everyone is going to like what you’re doing, especially when you’re talking about spirituality – some people won’t be able to go there. But we’re trying to loosen things up a bit.

In the end, one of the best gateways is for shamans and hackers to meet, because they cultivate the same relationship to the code of life. Shamans are playing on the spiritual code of life, whereas hackers are playing on the digital code of life. You quickly come to understand that digital and spiritual fields overlap – it’s amazing.³²⁵

Walter Moser, in the book he edited regarding the baroque resurgence, also connects possession to the baroque. Faced with the excess of aesthetic intensity, the Baroque spectator, reader, or listener is said by Moser to be enveloped in an emotional state of ecstasy or delirium well before being able to attribute to this intensity the sense of an attraction or repulsion.³²⁶ Murray compliments, adding that, moreover, “such a machinery of possession rekindles the early modern attraction to fantasy and

³²⁴ (Murray, 2008, p. 21)

³²⁵ (Moon, Vincent Moon, Filmmaker and Explorer of the Invisible, 2016)

³²⁶ MOSER, W., & GOYER, N. (2001). *Résurgences Baroques: Trajectoires d'un processus transculturel*. Brussels: Éditions de La Lettre Volée, p. 35.

fancy.”³²⁷ And lastly, this mysticism is also analyzed by Deleuze when he conveys that “The essence of the Baroque entails neither falling into nor emerging from illusion but rather realizing something is illusion itself or of tying it to spiritual presence.”³²⁸

To neither fall nor emerge from illusion (from the Latin *in* “at, upon” + *lūdere* “to play, mock, trick”) is then to be at the edge of the play, to balance between emerging into the chaos of what is outside and falling into the closed meaning of the world inside. It is to be always in the *renvoi*, folding and unfolding the resonances that echo through all the spaces of the outside (noise) and inside (meaning). To search for the creation of the encounter-image, an updated ideal of being at the edge of the illusion, always at the impasse between Actual/Virtual.

It is by navigating through the database (the endless virtuality), folding and unfolding the *sens* of each film, jumping through and creating a new narrative that produces the becoming of being. As the listener interacts with each unique body (the films) in the “the bodies themselves emerge, actualize themselves, from this field of virtuality.”³²⁹

4.2.1. Database

To store, accumulate and make data available is then another characteristic in Moon’s cinematic diagram that expands to outside the film and that is also intrinsically connected with the fold/unfold.

³²⁷ (Murray, 2008, p. 21)

³²⁸ (Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, 1993, p. 124)

³²⁹ (Žižek, 2003, p. 22)

Apart from his 538 films, there are full albums of his *Petites Planètes* recordings available to download, which include an even greater range of sound material that is not present elsewhere.

This over accumulation of material without any strict goal or objective was apparently a result from the philosophical and practical approach of Moon towards his craft, however naïve it may sound:

I do not try to refine it as, what's my goal? My goal is to keep traveling and experience these exciting moments with people, and to share all these recordings for free. I just want to use the new technologies, the internet, in ways that I think that are strong points, and to make films that are exciting and just give them to people.³³⁰

Moon's belief in the platform functioned as a reason and an end, similarly to how Walter Benjamin analyzed the authors of the German Baroque and their vision of the platform as a miracle:

For it is common in the literature of the Baroque to pile up fragments ceaselessly without any strict idea of goals and, in the unremitting expectation of a miracle, to take the repetition of stereotypes for a process of intensification. The Baroque writers must have regarded the work of art as just such a miracle.³³¹

In Moon, the piling up of fragments is visible through the sheer amount of releases. During 2006-2014 this was the constant release of new films almost every week. In an event in Barcelona that I attended in 2014, Moon stated that sometimes he doesn't even watch the edit until the end, indicating a belief that the constant flux

³³⁰ (Moon, "Ethiopia didn't need me" – Vincent Moon on Ethiopia, 2013)

³³¹ Benjamin, W. (1998). *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*. London: Verso.

of releasing his movies is more important than a detailed and minutiae tailoring of each movie. It also strengthens the argument of the encounter-image being ephemeral since the film is meant to be experienced through the first interaction.

This has slightly changed since *Hibridos* (2017). Moon and Priscilla Telmon spent three years recording and investigating before making any of the films available. Nevertheless, even if the process changed and there wasn't a constant flow, once the feature documentary was released it was followed by a live-cinema event, an art installation, and 94 films that were made available online confirming this attraction in maintaining a database that can be accessed and navigated.

Murray further attests to this connection between Baroque ideals and new media artists strengthening the link between the miracle of the platform:

While new information systems enhance the intensity of this flow, their displacement of possessive individualism by the wonder of data accumulation evokes the very ideal of knowledge that Walter Benjamin argued to be characteristic of the Baroque: the process of storing and schemata to which the emergent libraries of the seventeenth century were a monument.³³²

Although seriality is one of the strong characteristics within Neo-Baroque, the concept of the database would better suit the series of Vincent Moon. What in the Baroque was a lure towards libraries is translated at the turn of the 21st century as attractiveness to

³³² (Murray, 2008, p. 7)

databases, becomes the space of virtualities from which new beings emerge. Moon's website being such a place.

The play is that, when navigating this database, the listener has a certain amount of control. To fold/unfold the database is to become a composer (or compiler) that vibrates and transforms one's own experience.

The key, for this composition (or compilation) to happen is in Thomas Elsaesser comment on this shift from linear narrative (projection) to database (fold) when researching the motives behind the rise of mind-game films, like *Memento* (2000), *Lost Highway* (1997) and *Mulholland Dr.* (2001):

It would therefore be not altogether unreasonable to assume that new technologies of storage, retrieval, and sorting, such as the ones provided so readily and relatively cheaply by the computer or internet servers, will in due course engender and enable new forms of "narrative", which is to say, in other ways of sequencing and "linking" data than that of the story, centered on single characters, and with a beginning, a middle, and an ending.³³³

Other studies related to contemporary cinema and culture can also enlighten this shift to databases. Hiroki Azuma when studying the Japanese Otaku culture devises a theory that defines the way the world was grasped in modernity as a "tree model" or as Azuma himself adds in parenthesis "or projection model," a term that I have previously discussed and that permeates the study of Neo-Baroque through the Leibniz fold.

³³³ Elsaesser, T. (2009). The Mind-Game Film. In W. Buckland (Ed.), *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*. Hoboken: Wiley, p. 22.

While in modernity there was still a functional grand narrative it shifts to become more similar to a rhizome,³³⁴ a “database model (or a reading-up model).” The use of the word “reading” is no mere coincidence, connecting contemporary art practice back to the miracle of the printed book. Azuma goes on to explain the difference between these two models:

An easily understandable example of this is the Internet. The Net has no center. That is to say, no hidden grand narrative regulates all Web pages. However, it is not a world established through the combination of outer signs alone, as in the case of the rhizome model. On the Internet, rather, there is a distinct *double-layer-structure*, wherein, on one hand, there is an accumulation of encoded information, and, on the other hand, there are individual Web pages made in accordance with the users “reading them up.” The major difference between this double-layer structure and the modern tree model is that, with the double-layer structure, the agency that determines the appearance that emerges on the surface outer layer resides on the surface itself rather than in the deep inner layer, i.e., it belongs on the side of the user who is doing the “reading up,” rather than with the hidden information itself. In the world of the modern tree model, the surface outer layer is determined by the deep inner layer, but in the world of the postmodern database model, the surface outer layer is not determined by the deep inner layer; the surface reveals different expressions at those numerous moments of “reading up.”³³⁵

“Reading up”, thus, is the act of organizing and appropriating the material. Through Deleuze and his study of the Baroque “reading up” becomes the act of folding/unfolding: “to have or to possess is to fold, in other words, to convey what one contains ‘with a certain

³³⁴ The rhizome a figure that clearly references Deleuze’s and Guatarri’s conception explained in their book *Capitalism and Scizophrenia*.

³³⁵ Azuma, H. (2009). *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 32.

power.”³³⁶ The viewer that “reads up” the database is given this “certain power” as a result of his efforts.

Moon, although probably not aware of these connections, also uses the database as the best method to expand and empower the listener within the universe of his films. By not assuming control over any linear and narrative experience, he exempts himself and passes to the listener the function of “reading-up” through the database.

The database enables Moon’s films to link to one another by a different manner than the story, but which one is it? It could be argued that since 2009 with the creation of *Petites Planètes* the link is an ethnographic interest since he shifted to record local musicians from around the world. But to assume this would be erroneous. Even though during some years Moon described his work as experimental ethnography, it would be more appropriate to understand his recent reluctance to use the term as indicating that what links them is the experience of unfolding the encounter-image, in interacting with the *renvoi*, and not the more common ethnographic text.

The database isn’t linked through a common subject or theme, but as a collection of experiences. And I mean experiences not as a recounter of Moon’s lived moments, but as a collection of an awaiting experience for the listener to unfreeze it.³³⁷ It is an accumulation of sensual, spatiotemporal, directional and signifying sense. This experience-to-be as the object of the database is what

³³⁶ (Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, 1993, p. 110)

³³⁷ The next section I’ll get into a detailed account of what experience means.

distinguishes the interaction of folding/unfolding Moon's work than that of a random database of objects (a user-created playlist on YouTube for example).

The visionary Chris Marker, in his project *Ouvroir* (2010), created an idealized version of how someone can fold/unfold through a virtual database. *Ouvroir* is an island-museum that was created inside the game *Second Life*. Instead of merely laying the objects inside a museum like structure, the island is full of "cat-shaped coves, roving humpbacks, a castle keep, and a downed 747; a massive red orb hovers in the pixelated cerulean firmament above..."³³⁸ The user thus, is not there only to access and see a virtualized version of his films and installations, but also to explore, play, and find something that surpasses each object in the form that he folds and unfolds all the interactions that can be had at the island.

Another inviting exercise is to compare Moon's work with *Les Archives de la Planètes*. Both databases host a collection of audiovisual material collected from all around the world but assume very distinct functions. Moon aims to blur and be at the edge of meaning, while *Les Archives de la Planètes* follows the ethnographic guidelines in indexing every material to make it understandable and comprehensible.

Les Archives de la Planètes was the work of French banker and philanthropist Albert Kahn, who during 1909 to 1931 collected over

³³⁸ Finnegan, J. P. (2010). *Site Specifics: Chris Marker and Second Life*. Film Comment (November/December). Retrieved June 15, 2018, from <https://www.filmcomment.com/article/site-specifics-chris-marker-and-second-life/>

72 thousand color photographs and hundreds of hours of film from 50 countries. His objective—to preserve and record practices and places that soon could disappear:

The stereoscopic photograph, the projection, and most of all the cinematograph, this is what I would like to make work on a grand scale, to fix once for all the aspects, practices and modes of human activity whose fatal disappearance is only a question of time.³³⁹

Ana Grgić views Kahn’s archival impulse as a response in modernity to “the disappearance of tradition and the replacing of natural memory with the institution of history.” European society at the turn of the 20th century, faced with such conditions and simultaneously amassing a great number of artifacts through colonial exploits felt the emergence of “a fear of forgetting roots and identity—a fear that can only be countered by the drive to keep everything – that is, to archive.” The initial objective then, wasn’t to make the footage available for commercial or educational purposes, but to keep them in an archive. Grgić adds the example of how the footage shot in 1912 in Albania was first seen by an audience 100 years later in 2012.³⁴⁰

Similarly to this attempt in finding a connection between the films in Moon’s database, Jean Brunhes was appointed the scientific director of *Les Archives de la Planètes* to also connect all the

³³⁹ Personal translation from the original in French available at the Albert-Kahn’s Museum website: <http://albert-kahn.hauts-de-seine.fr/archives-de-la-planete/presentation/presentation-detaillee/>

³⁴⁰ Grgić, A. (2016). *The Archaeology of Memory: tracing Balkan(ist) fragments in Albert Kahn's Albanie*. KinoKultura(16). Retrieved from <http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/16/grgic.shtml#6>

material that was being collected. His unifying link between all these fragments would be called “human geography”:

The ensemble of all these facts in which human activity has a part forms a truly special group of surface phenomena—a complex group of facts infinitely variable and varied, always contained within the limits of physical geography, but having always the easily discernible characteristic of being related more or less directly to man. To the study of this specific group of geographical phenomena we give the name human geography.³⁴¹

The neatly cataloged archive, with calligraphed labels and handwritten fiches in drawers and on shelves, was planned and organized by Brunhes. In his words each piece needed to have:

-the date (day and month, and if applicable, because of certain lighting effects, time).

-the place (indication of the name of the village or place in question and also indication of the region).

-the subject (do not be afraid to develop the idea that made you choose such subject, even if your interpretation is later considered as inaccurate, it will be very useful that you have noted your first impression).³⁴²

After a ten-year process of digitalization, in 2016 the photographs were freely made available in an online archive (the footage still is only available in the physical archive). By using the data that Brunhes required a century before the viewer can now navigate by a map, by themes, by places or by the photographer who took the picture.

³⁴¹ Brunhes quoted in (Grgić, 2016)

³⁴² Personal translation from the original available at <http://albert-kahn.hauts-de-seine.fr/archives-de-la-planete/presentation/presentation-detaillee/>

Effectively, the archive and subsequently the online database of *Les Archives de la Planète* operate to “mummify time as a historical object.”³⁴³ The experience of the encounter gives way to a scientific dissection of human practice. Kahn’s archives return to the Baroque library and the recent transposition to a database to the Neo-Baroque. In both cases, the user can create and navigate through this library. The difference, when comparing to Moon, is the outcome when creating my own path through the photos. The operation of folding/unfolding has a drastically different objective when paralleling both. In *Les Archives de la Planète* it doesn’t end in a new *sens* or in a new narrative. The data is meant to be informative and provide clarification on what is being shown. *Les Archives de la Planète* behaves under an ocularcentric perspective, the final objective to understand.

Vincent Moon’s database, conversely, operates in an otocentric manner. Moreover, than knowledge the model of thought is focused in acknowledging, in opening all senses to something that can’t be intellectually comprehended. The data, moreover than being informational, is the gateway to experiences. To escape the mummification of time Moon strips everything that can indicate any historical status to what is being filmed. The human body is not seen as a site for scientific dissection but as a body to interact with. As Moon explains— “The idea is to leave behind any preconceptions so as to connect with the moment, with bodies.”³⁴⁴

³⁴³ (Grgić, 2016)

³⁴⁴ (Moon, Vincent Moon, Filmmaker and Explorer of the Invisible, 2016)

Each film is frozen, expecting the listener to open its *renvoi* and interact with it. Furthermore, in the act of unfolding the film, the listener also resonates in the database where each data vibrates as a sonorous body and where the listener through the operative fold/unfold creates its own voice, interacting in search for *sens*.

Reading how the fold operates in the database together with Deleuze's idea of becoming as production of Being implies that the operative function in folding/unfolding creates a pure being out of the intensities of the Virtual, couldn't this be Nancy's post-phenomenological self? Out of the intensities of the database, a new being is born through the folding and unfolding, the *self* in the *renvoi* through which the listener finds *sens*.

A review about Moon's *Rituals* (2016) by Hannah Drayson enlightens the experience of someone folding/unfolding in search for understanding and instead finding something else (*sens*?) both inside the film and in how the work is presented:

Moon's beautiful films are incredibly engaging and left me troubled, perhaps because of the way the selections do show us the worlds within which these rituals take place, while at the same time their informants are not able to explain from their own perspective what they mark or how we should see. The clips neither introduce their subjects nor do they acknowledge the presence of a camera; preamble, welcome and explanation are not included. The leveled view of the clips is perhaps intended to erase the differences between the apparently timeless human actions they depict. The shift between documentary and artwork makes our own troubled impulses as viewers all the more

apparent; Moon leaves us with a feeling that we have stumbled across something barely understood.³⁴⁵

In Moon's cinematic diagram, the database assumes this function of breaking the narrative seriality in ordering the films, leveling everything to the same random entry point, and especially important—the data not being something to be understood but to be experienced (to encounter *sens*). Having in mind this otocentric approach the database in Moon contradicts what Deleuze nominates as the new database method in *Cinema 2*, a form of cine-brain where “information replacing nature, and the brain-city, the third eye, replacing the eyes of nature.”³⁴⁶ It goes against Deleuze, first it circumvents the brain-city that searches for meaning and patterns. A new figure emerges, that of the “cine-ear” that listens to all images and sounds.³⁴⁷ Secondly in venturing to recover nature through data, for the sound refers not to information but to the uniqueness in the sonic bodies that produced them. Additionally, the idea of the encounter-image being one to experience relates it back to nature, for, according to John Dewey, experience is always in relation to nature:

...experience is *of* as well as *in* nature. It is not experience which is experienced, but nature—stones, plants, animals, diseases, health, temperature, electricity, and so on. Things interacting in certain ways *are* experience; they are what is experienced. Linked in certain other ways with another natural object—the human organism—they are *how* things are experienced as well. Experience thus reaches down into nature; it has depth. It also has

³⁴⁵ Drayson, H. (2017). *Ritual by Vincent Moon (review)*. *Leonardo*, 50(1), 100-101. doi:10.1162/LEON_r_01364

³⁴⁶ (Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 2013, p. 273)

³⁴⁷ Reminding the ear-palace that the king of Calvino's story sits in and listens to everything.

breath and to an indefinitely elastic extent. It stretches. That stretch constitutes inference.³⁴⁸

This is why Drayson's lasting impression of Moon's work *Rituals* was that of stumbling on something barely understood. The feature-documentary incorporates the database ideals by showing a collection of the rituals that were recorded with little to any connection between each segment. That is not to say that it is merely a collage of the separate rituals (that are also available in length as separate films). The edit is precise in selecting the crucial moments of each ritual, and the sound was extensively reworked, so it could be projected in 5.1 surround sound. What I mean, by *Hibridos* being heavily influenced by how Moon uses the database, is that in composing the final edit, each ritual remains integral without any need to resort to the next or previous segment. The sequence in which it is presented guides the listener through varying degrees of sensation and experiences, being cut to intensify what is being encountered. As for meaning and narrative, one could start the film from the end, or from any point in the film and still understand as much as someone who watched from the beginning.

For someone who grew-up interacting with databases in education, work, media and art, Deleuze's brain-city is a natural process when

³⁴⁸ Dewey, J. (1929). *Experience and Nature*. London: George Allen & Unwin, p. 4a-1. On the next section specifically on experience I'll focus on Walter Benjamin instead of Dewey. The reasoning behind is how Benjamin develops the notion of experience in relation to mediums of mass communication, permitting a deeper inquiry into film as a medium of experience. For a discussion on the differences and similarities of the notion of experience between Dewey and Benjamin I recommend reading Yasuo Imai's article *Walter Benjamin and John Dewey: The Structure of Difference Between Their Thoughts on Education* (Journal of Philosophy of Education, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2003).

encountering any non-linear data or narrative.³⁴⁹ Encountering a database that evades meaning, that can't be anatomized by logic becomes quite bothersome—a database that was created to express *sens*. This bypass of the brain-city is what troubled Hannah Drayson when encountering *Rituals* and what makes Moon's database a vital aspect in his diagram.

With each body in the database being “at the edge of meaning” (the idealized stance of interaction posited by Nancy), dedicating time and “reading-up” the database doesn't end in gaining more knowledge. The “certain power” that is given for the user/ listener as a reward is in the realm of experiences, of having interacted with more people, more sonic bodies; the prize is expressing the voice through the *renvoi* and finding one's own singularity, of encountering a new *self* outside oneself.

³⁴⁹ Conversely, searching for meaning in data is not something new as trying to find patterns in order to better predict the best course of action is a natural human behavior. The episode *Do the Patterns in Your Past Predict Your Future?* from the NPR podcast *Invisibilia* explores this topic and how corporations and sociologists are attempting to predict long-term human behavior through big data and failing to find any possible pattern.

4.3 What is there to experience? Fragments of existence in Walter Benjamin's concept of aura

Throughout this research, “experience” has grown to be an overarching subject. Moon's interest, since his first explorations into music, was to create an experience (or later to enter an experience) and figure a way to capture his interaction and give the listener the possibility to make that experience his own. To achieve this, he proposes a series of methods to figure out how to balance his work at the impasse of meaning/chaos and the actual/virtual. Moon's cinematic-diagram discovers in the sonic the tools for what I termed the encounter-image. A frozen experience in route to actualization that depends on the encounter to collapse the virtual infinity of possibilities into a unique interaction.

For the attentive reader, the underlying subject of experience directly dialogues with Walter Benjamin's notion of aura, a concept that became widely recognized due to *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936).³⁵⁰ At a superficial look, though, *The Work of Art* seems almost exclusively concerned with vision and the gaze, attempting to find a solution in film for the problem of the modern alienation.

The most popular understanding of aura amplifies this ocularcentrism. The definition of aura that became more common is “the unique appearance of distance, however near it may be” and

³⁵⁰ Benjamin, W. (2003). *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*. In M. W. Jennings (Ed.), *Selected Writings Volume 4* (pp. 251-283). Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Unless noted otherwise, I'll be using the third version of the text and abbreviating it for *The Work of Art*.

the understanding of aura as a form of perception that endows a phenomenon, so it may “look back at us.” Both, axiomatically, related to the sense of vision.

Nevertheless, a more in-depth investigation through Walter Benjamin’s body of work expands the popular concepts of aura developed in the artwork essay and helps apprehend aura as belonging to all senses and not just the sight. Conversely, as Susan Buck-Morss will discuss, reading *The Work of Art* through the broader notions of aesthetics and aura (present in Benjamin’s other works) supports the suggestion that it is a text discussing how the domination of vision germinates into a poverty of experience with severe consequences (that become most apparent when studying the work of art that is mechanically reproduced). It is here that Moon and Benjamin cross paths. Both are seeking a way to regain the ability to experience reality, to counter the sovereignty of vision that results in alienation. Moreover, their proposals, as I’ll develop, may be closer than it seems.

In this section, Moon’s cinematic-diagram is associated with Benjamin’s ideas of experience and aura. Avoiding repeating an already extensively detailed explanation of aura and to not recapitulate what has already been written about Moon’s diagram, the aim is to converge the implications of Moon’s intense focus on experience with the relevance of his work outside film theory.

4.3.1. Aesthetics as sensory perception

The concept of the encounter-image relies on a central core, that of the experience. The listener that interacts with the film unfreezes the proposition and is inserted in the middle of the circuit of actualization. In *Moon*, this leads to a film that aims to be, moreover than a historical object for appreciation, a medium for a singular and unrepeatable experience to take place. In the description of an event where Moon and Priscilla Telmon presented the live-version of *Híbridos* and another project they shot in Morocco called *Labyrinths* (2017), the introduction for the performance reads:

Studying one of their films or experiments (all freely available on the internet), is like entering into the very sensation generated by the music. The smooth image becomes a vibration through the details absorbed by the camera; as though they are allowed to live until the very moment of their deliverance.³⁵¹

As the organizers of the event astutely described, Moon's work is one that dies when it's delivered; it annihilates itself once it's experienced. The encounter-image grasps through Deleuze the functioning of such deliverance, in Benjamin, however, experience and actualization merge into one, not one as the result of the other but as mutually dependent. To unpack this connection, it is necessary to pave the way for what experience is in Benjamin and the problem of alienation.

³⁵¹ Description for their performance at *FÈS – Musiques Sacrées du Monde*: <http://fesfestival.com/2017/en/event/dedales-creation-cinematographique-et-musicale-pour-fes/>

Susan Buck-Morss, in her article *Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered* (1992), questions the reasoning behind the strange ending of the text where Benjamin writes that “*Such is the aestheticizing of politics, as practiced by fascism. Communism replies by politicizing art.*”³⁵² What does a politicized art mean? Is it merely art that is used as a vehicle for communist ideas? In her pursuit to decipher the intentions of the author, Buck-Morss uncovers Benjamin's underlying inquiry into the role of the senses in countering alienation:

He is demanding of art a task far more difficult — that is, to *undo* the alienation of the corporeal sensorium, to *restore the instinctual power of the human bodily senses for the sake of humanity's self-preservation*, and to do this, not by avoiding the new technologies, but by *passing through* them.³⁵³

The term aesthetics, in the writings of Benjamin, carries a great significance. It is not only a congealed artistic value for beauty and taste, but instead, it resurfaces its original etymological meaning: *Aisthitikos*, which in ancient Greek is “perceptive by feeling,” and *Aisthisis*, the sensory experience of perception. Buch-Morss reminds that “the original field of aesthetics is not art but reality—corporeal, material nature.”³⁵⁴ It is within this expanded understanding of aesthetics that Benjamin works. Alienation,

³⁵² “Human-kind, which once, in Homer, was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, has now become one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached the point where it can experience its own annihilation as a supreme aesthetic pleasure. *Such is the aestheticizing of politics, as practiced by fascism. Communism replies by politicizing art.*” (Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*, 2003, p. 270)

³⁵³ Buck-Morss, S. (1992). *Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered*. October, 62(Autumn), p. 5.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

therefore becomes an aesthetical problem, for it is a numbing of the senses that perceive and experience reality.

Buck-Morss has the insight to connect this numbing of senses to *anaesthetics* (or anesthetics), the literal disconnection of the senses to reality. She historically links aesthetics to how the use of drugs in modern society advanced the medical field— especially surgery after the popularization of anesthetics—and uncoupled the sense of sight from all the others. It's a brilliant association that returns to why film is spotlighted in *The Work of Art* as symptomatic of alienation. More specifically Buck-Morss' incursion into the medical history of aesthetics and anesthetics elucidates Benjamin's comparison between the painter and the cameraman to the magician and the surgeon:

The magician maintains the natural distance between himself and the person treated (...) The surgeon does exactly the reverse; he greatly diminishes the distance from the patient by penetrating the patient's body (...) In short: unlike the magician (traces of whom are still found in the medical practitioner), the surgeon abstains at the decisive moment from confronting his patient person to person; instead, he penetrates the patient by operating.—Magician is to surgeon as painter is to cinematographer. The images obtained by each differ enormously. The painter's is a total image, whereas that of the cinematographer is piecemeal, its manifold parts being assembled according to a new law.³⁵⁵

The root of this difference lays in perception. With anesthetic, the subject of surgery is blocked out from any perception, but most importantly to this case, the surgeon also becomes sensorially limited. The cries of the patient no longer bother, the scalpel cutting

³⁵⁵ (Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*, 2003, p. 264)

through skin and nerves is not heard or felt, and only what's necessary is touched while the rest of the body lays isolated under clean sheets. The patient loses its uniqueness; it's a compartmentalized body where the surgeon is only responsible for a specific section. It becomes an anonymous flesh scrutinized under the cold lights of the operating room.

The difference, therefore, between painter and cinematographer is that the painter can perceive and interact through sight, sound, touch, and smell. Therefore, recognizing the uniqueness and singularity (the aura of which I'll delve into soon) of its subject. The painter captures the "total image," which could also be the undivided body (if remembering back to the body without organs). The cinematographer, on the other hand, with his senses anesthetized, frames through the viewfinder a surgical perception of reality where neither sound, smell, taste or touch can reach. Only vision exists. The cameraman dissects the guts of the subject but is unable to have any kind of experience while the painter, keeps a distance from the subject but is still able to have a full experience nonetheless. From this perspective, the popular definition of aura as "the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be" is enlightening—moreover than an opposition between close/far, it seems to concern how all senses influence the perception of experience (aesthetic in other words).

In Moon, there is an attempt to merge magician and surgeon, or painter and cinematographer. Through Accompaniment and especially in Cine-trance, there is a drive in his work to refuse the

camera a surgical vision by denying its authority, by fusing the camera to the body and using all his senses by approaching possession and plant-induced altered states of mind while shooting his films. The most axiomatic connection, however, is in the sonic, for as I analyzed in the section of noise and in the illustration of *Les Chants de Maldoror* in the theoretical framework chapter, sound opens the body for a sensuous experience that subverts the supremacy of sight. A dominance that Benjamin explicitly views as problematic by quoting George Simmel in his text on Baudelaire:

Someone who sees without hearing is much more uneasy than someone who hears without seeing. In this there is something characteristic of the sociology of the big city. Interpersonal relationships in big cities are distinguished by a marked preponderance of the activity of the eye over the activity of the ear. The main reason for this is the public means of transportation. Before the development of buses, railroads, and trams in the nineteenth century, people had never been in a position of having to look at one another for long minutes or even hours without speaking to one another.³⁵⁶

The preponderance of the optical since modernity, when contrasting with the other forms of perception, becomes one of the factors to alienate and dominate the masses. It offers only a limited perception of what surrounds a person, both physically and historically. In his text *Marseilles*, that opens with the quotation “The street ... the only valid field of experience”³⁵⁷ he plays with how vision ends

³⁵⁶ SIMMEL, George quoted in Benjamin, W. (2003). On Some Motifs in Baudelaire. In M. W. Jennings (Ed.), *Selected Writings: Volume 4. 1938-1940* (pp. 313-356). Cambridge: Harvard University Press. An interesting argument would be to question this text based on the proliferation of portable music devices which ends stimulating even more isolation.

³⁵⁷ BRETON, A. quoted in Benjamin, W. (1999). *Marseilles*. In M. W. Jennings (Ed.), *Selected Writings: Volume 2. Part 1. 1927-1930*, p. 232. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

alienating the body from experiencing the environment in which its inserted:

Noises. High in the empty streets of the harbor district they are as densely and loosely clustered as butterflies on a hot flower bed. Every step stirs a song, a quarrel, a flapping of wet linen, a rattling of boards, a baby's bawling, a clatter of buckets. Only you have to have strayed up here alone, if you are to pursue them with a net as they flutter away unsteadily into the stillness. For in these deserted corners all sounds and things still have their own silences, just as, at midday in the mountains, there is a silence of hens, of axes, of cicadas. But the chase is dangerous, and the net is finally torn when, like a gigantic hornet, a grindstone impales it from behind with its whizzing sting.³⁵⁸

While listening to the sounds, everything is close; each step is echoed by a song, the world in which the listener walks through interacts back as sonic bodies vibrate together. Once the net appears—the gaze that searches to capture the subject—all sounds run away and die into stillness. It ends tragically, from behind (outside the field of vision) a “whizzing sting” punctures the net, destroys the gaze. Can the *flâneur* go back to listening to the life in the empty streets once he cannot capture any sounds?

In *The Work of Art* Benjamin searches for a new reconfiguration of image (or images if talking about film) that enables through vision a reopening of the other senses. His concern appears to find a way so that one can go back to listening to the song of each step, to “a quarrel, a flapping of wet linen, a rattling of boards, a baby's bawling, a clatter of buckets.” Similarly to the surgeon that has forgotten the experience of interacting with the body that now lays

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

anesthetized in the operating room, the individual no longer can go back and vibrate in the *renvoi* of the empty street.

Coincidence or not, Buck-Morss calls attention to the fact that in 1936, the same year that Benjamin published his artwork essay, Jacques Lacan delivered a paper to the International Psychoanalytic Association where his idea of “mirror stages” also connected the dominance of sight to the division of the body:

[Jacques Lacan’s paper] described the moment when the infant of six to eighteen months triumphantly recognizes its mirror image, and identifies with it as an imaginary bodily unity. This narcissistic experience of the self as a specular "reflection" is one of mis(re)cognition. The subject identifies with the image as the "form" (Gestalt) of the ego, in a way that conceals its own lack. It leads, retroactively, to a fantasy of the "body-in-pieces" (*corps morcele*).³⁵⁹

Both Benjamin and Lacan, synchronously, connect sight to the compartmentalization of the body, a problem that as Buck-Morss interprets can be read as a theory of fascism. To regain the senses, to counter alienation becomes a matter of reopening the body so it may experience through all the senses. A decade later, Antonin Artaud, in his piece *To Have Done with the Judgment of God* (1947), invoked the body without organs as prefiguring freedom from alienation:

When you will have made him a body without organs,
then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions
and restored him to his true freedom.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁹ (Buck-Morss, 1992, p. 37)

³⁶⁰ ARTAUD, A. (1976). *To Have Done with the Judgment of God*. In S. Sontag. (ed) *Selected Writings*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 571.

For Moon to ground a cinematic practice on listening is a method to amalgamate all these separated body pieces into one. To create the organon that reverberates, forming the sensuous body that resonates not in a compartmentalized existence but in the form that many posterior philosophers will advocate. To posit listening as a stance that is idealized in the neonate baby, as Nancy and Nadal-Melsió do, comes as a direct answer to Lacan's *corps morcele* and Benjamin's ending words in the artwork essay, of "politicizing art." To aim for the uncompartimentalized body of a newborn is to prevent reaching a stage where the body itself alienates the senses and is unable to resound. As Buck-Morss paraphrases, it is "the crisis in cognitive experience caused by the alienation of the senses that makes it possible for humanity to view its own destruction with enjoyment."³⁶¹

Aura appears as an answer and simultaneously as an inquiry on how to regain this lost experience. In Benjamin's early texts (his texts on hashish for example) this was more apparent, but the key is to comprehend how in *The Work of Art* the notion of aura as a form of unlocking the aesthetic (sensing the world) leads to a theory of how to recover the ability to experience. Miriam Hansen, who dedicated many years studying Benjamin's work writes that furthermore than the problematic readings that ignore the aesthetic notions of perception and experience that were explored above, to narrow down Benjamin's aura to *The Work of Art* is also to miss how the idea of aura developed and changed through his work as the text

³⁶¹ *Ibid.* She paraphrases Benjamin's last sentences in *The Work of Art*.

that made it famous is also one of the most limited explorations on the subject that he did:

With the denigration of the auratic image in favor of reproduction, Benjamin implicitly denies the masses the possibility of aesthetic experience, in whatever form (and thus, like the Communist Party during the 1920s, risks leaving aesthetic needs to be exploited by the enemy). More important yet, he cuts himself off from a crucial impulse of his own thought - crucial at least to a theory of experience in the age of its declining communicability.³⁶²

What is this crucial impulse of his own thought? For Hansen, it is to comprehend the concept of aura through Benjamin's "wider, anthropological, visionary, and psychoteleological dimensions." It should not be reduced to the opposition of binary mutually exclusive terms: the relationship of aura vs. technical reproduction, and aura vs. the masses.³⁶³ By restoring these lost dimensions to aura, Hansen highlights the conflicting roles that aura played throughout his endeavor to theorize experience (*Erfahrung*), how it named a specific type of experience for Benjamin, and not least:

Aura's epistemic structure, secularized and modernized (qua "profane illumination," Weimar *flânerie*, "mimetic faculty," and "optical unconscious"), can also be seen at work in Benjamin's efforts to reconceptualize experience through the very conditions its impossibility, as the only chance to counter the "bungled" (capitalist-imperialist) adaptation of technology that first exploded in World War I and was advancing the fascist conquest of Europe.³⁶⁴

³⁶² Hansen, M. B. (1987). *Cinema and Experience: "The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology"*. *New German Critique*, 40 (Special Issue on Weimar Film Theory), p. 186.

³⁶³ (Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*, 2012, p. 130)

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

4.3.2. Encountering fragments of one's own existence

Benjamin's auratic experience is developed on top of Bergson's notion of *durée* and *élan vital*, which in broad strokes can be translated to Deleuzian terms as corresponding to virtual duration and the moment of actualization. Benjamin's conceptualization of alienation as being deprived of the senses that perceive reality only makes sense due to his understanding of a person in Bergsonian terms: "for a conscious being to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly."³⁶⁵ Endlessly creating oneself, in Bergson, happens through the *élan vital* (actualization). An individual, therefore, is formed by the accumulation of actualizations, of collapsing the multiplicity of the virtual into the actual. Deleuze notes that Bergson's most important contribution to philosophy is precisely in defining duration as a type of multiplicity, in separating two major types, "the one discrete or discontinuous, the other continuous, the one spatial and the other temporal, the one actual the other virtual."³⁶⁶

Furthermore than only help Benjamin define what a consciousness is, it is Bergson's duration (*durée*) that lays the founding blocks for the notion of experience. The word experience itself translates poorly from its German source *Erfahrung*. Claire Blancowe, in her article *Destroying Duration: The Critical Situation of Bergsonism in Benjamin's Analysis of Modern Experience* (2008), brings up the importance of what *Erfahrung* means for Benjamin and how similar to *élan vital* it is— "It is the experience that is accumulated

³⁶⁵ Bergson, H. (1944). *Creative Evolution*. New York: Random House, p. 10.

³⁶⁶ Deleuze, G. (1991). *Bergsonism*. New York: Zone Books, p. 117.

throughout an individual's, or collectivity's, passage through the temporal flow of qualitative transformation."³⁶⁷

In other words, experience for Benjamin is what is accumulated from the individual's, or collectivity's, actualization; what is retained (conscious and unconsciously) in passing from the virtual to the actual. This becomes clear in *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*, where Benjamin connects Bergson to Proust to develop the importance of memory (*mémoire volontaire* and *involontaire*). Here, an interesting phenomenon happens, which will help understand Moon's approach to his cinematic-diagram. Similar to the magician vs. surgeon analogy, Benjamin contrasts the journalist, who merely provides information, with the figure of the storyteller, someone who takes hold of his own experience in the process of actualization:

[In regard to newspapers and other media outlets] there is a contrast between all these forms and the story, which is one of the oldest forms of communication. A story does not aim to convey an event per se, which is the purpose of information; rather, it embeds the event in the life of the storyteller in order to pass it on as experience to those listening. It thus bears the trace of the storyteller, much the way an earthen vessel bears the trace of the potter's hand.³⁶⁸

The take hold of one's own experience becomes the auratic experience. As it is embedded into the life of the storyteller, such experience carries the traces of the singularity of the event, of the actualization. In this example, there is a bipartite splitting of

³⁶⁷ Blencowe, C. (2008). *Destroying Duration: The Critical Situation of Bergsonism in Benjamin's Analysis of Modern Experience*. Theory, Culture & Society, p. 143.

³⁶⁸ (Benjamin, *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*, 2003, p. 316)

experience: what the storyteller experienced and what the listener experienced hearing the storyteller. The auratic experience, in this case, is not intermediated by an object or a work of art, since it is intrinsically connected to the “storyteller” by coming directly from her/his mouth, hands or body. In modernity though, this direct connection between storyteller and listener is fractured. Benjamin uses the newspapers as an example of the anaestheticization of the story; it no longer is connected to its source, becoming as alienated as the person who wrote it and also as the reader. Susan Buck-Morss finds another useful example to talk about this splitting by connecting the changes that anesthetics implied to surgery:

What happened to perception under these circumstances was a tripartite splitting of experience into agency (the operating surgeon), the object as hyle (the docile body of the patient), and the observer (who perceives and acknowledges the accomplished result).³⁶⁹

These are not ontological differences, but positional ones that became characteristic in modernity with the emergence of mechanical reproduction. In this formation, the listener can no longer actualize his own experience as he now encounters the docile anaesthetized “body” that split from the “storyteller,” becoming incapable of accumulating auratic experiences (of creating the involuntary memories that keep the traces of the uniqueness of each interaction) and thus alienated from history and tradition.

Benjamin has some differences, though, from Bergson, he criticizes him for being isolated from history—too attached to forms of

³⁶⁹ (Buck-Morss, 1992, p. 30)

experiences that no longer carry any relevance since modernity. For Benjamin, going back is not a viable solution, one has to go through this splitting and find forms to regain the ability to actualize and accumulate the experience of passing through the actual/virtual passage. The artwork essay posits that film can be one of the solutions:

Benjamin's insight that film, because of both its technological and its collective status, provided the most significant perceptual and social matrix in which the wounds inflicted on human bodies and senses by technology—in its industrial-capitalist and imperialist usage—might yet be healed, in which the numbing of the sensorium in defense against shock and the concomitant splitting of experience could be reversed, if not prevented, in the mode of play.³⁷⁰

Without anyway back, in this tripartite configuration, the object of reproduction must find a way, that similar to the storyteller can provide the auratic experience. Unearth methods to embed the object so that through interaction, the listener can actualize and accumulate traces of that singular event. It is a search for a self to emerge in this new agent, the docile body.

Nancy's call to be all ears and his post-phenomenological self that insists in the *renvoi* could be seen as an answer to this problem.³⁷¹ Bacon's diagram to insert randomness and Deleuze's reading that "Bacon has obtained the subject of what Merleau-Ponty calls the

³⁷⁰ (Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*, 2012, p. 126)

³⁷¹ I have not discussed specific artists in relation to Nancy's concept of listening, nevertheless, Sara Nadal-Melsió in *Allora & Calzadilla* (2018) greatly expands on the practice of the duo as an example of a long-term art practice based on listening.

‘continual rebirth of existence’: the Figure”³⁷² also addresses this question (even if speaking about painting). Additionally, Moon’s notions of cine-trance and the encounter-image carry the possibility for such a unique auratic experience to happen between film and listener. Even though these three are drastically different—the have in common trying to preserve an unconscious, untouched experience in the object of art, as if a third separate self could insist in this middle point of the modern experience. Through Benjamin one could call this a grafting³⁷³ of the involuntary memory into the work of art:

Put in Proustian terms, this means that only what has not been experienced explicitly and consciously, what has not happened to the subject as an isolated experience [*Erlebnis*], can become a component of *mémoire involontaire*.³⁷⁴

To connect the involuntary memory with a third self that exists in the object of art may seem mystical, but it was initially an integral part to Benjamin’s notion of aura. As Hansen notes, Benjamin had just finished reading his friend’s, Gershom Scholem, article entitled *A Kabbalist Account of Prophecy as Self-Encounter* (1930) when he first wrote about aura.³⁷⁵ Apart from thanking Scholem enthusiastically for the article’s enormous value, he appropriated two important ideas. The first is *tselem*, a belief that a person’s own

³⁷² (Carraro, 2014, pp. 61-62)

³⁷³ Benjamin, in my opinion not coincidentally, was an avid researcher of graphology.

³⁷⁴ (Benjamin, *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*, 2003, p. 317) *Erlebnis*, here bracketed by Benjamin is related to *mémoire volontaire*, an incident isolated from the passage of time that through shock that ends not constituting the lived experience.

³⁷⁵ (Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*, 2012, p. 127)

being emanates and becomes independent, a self-alienation of the self. The second is a form of visionary self-encounter with this emanation (the *tselem*). Hansen translated a segment from Scholem's article that inspired Benjamin:

The complete secret of prophecy to the prophet consists in that he suddenly sees the form of his self standing before him, and he forgets his own self and [is removed from it; *entrückt*] . . . and that form [of his self] speaks with him and tells him the future.³⁷⁶

Self-alienation becomes the pre-requisite to implant, at the moment of creation, the work of art with unconscious raw experiences. It grafts the reproducible object with an involuntary memory that will become unique when the listener encounters and interacts with it. Isn't this how Moon attempts to insert the auratic experience through the encounter-image and in cine-trance? Looking for an encounter with this alienated self in the editing room? Similarly, when discussing the possibility of reintegrating the body into the experiencing of art, Brian O'Doherty also ties modernity to this need of alienation— "It often feels as if we can no longer experience anything if we don't first alienate it. In fact, alienation may now be a necessary preface to experience."³⁷⁷

Benjamin, in his reading of Kafka, not only reinforces self-alienation importance for a future self-encounter but reaches the key point of the auratic experience:

The invention of motion pictures and the phonograph came in an age of maximum alienation of men from one another, of unpredictably intervening relationships which have become their

³⁷⁶ Scholem, G. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 128.

³⁷⁷ (O'Doherty, 1999, p. 52)

only ones. Experiments have proved that a man does not recognize his own gait on film or his own voice on the phonograph. The situation of the subject in such experiments is Kafka's situation; this is what leads him to study, where he may *encounter fragments of his own existence*—fragments that are still within the context of the role.³⁷⁸

To encounter the fragments of one's own existence is at the core of what an auratic experience is. In light of the condition of an anesthetized living—alienated from perceiving the world and unable of actualizing one's own experience—the object of art, even if mechanically or digitally reproduced, has to continue the study that opens a space for these fragments to be found: "*In the representation of human beings by means of an apparatus their self-alienation has been put to a highly productive use.*"³⁷⁹

In Moon's work, to talk about the listener's encounter and interaction is to talk about the auratic experience created by a self-alienation that happened during the creation of the film. Not only the director is part of a self-encounter, but the listener can, once again: actualize his experience from the virtual (*durée*); accumulate these auratic experiences (*mémoire volontaire* and *involontaire*); reopen the senses to escape alienation; and lastly, through all the

³⁷⁸ Benjamin, W. (1999). Franz Kafka. In M. W. Jennings (Ed.), *Selected Writings: Volume 2. Part 2. 1931-1934*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 814; emphasis added.

³⁷⁹ (Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility* [First Version], 2010) While self-alienation and self-encounter are ingrained in Benjamin's notion of aura it appears in the artwork essay unrelated to aura in an attempt to distinguish aura from its mystical influences. Hansen points out that both Giorgio Agamben and Harold Bloom also share her assumption of the notion of aura being influenced by Jewish mysticism. The texts are AGAMBEN, G. (1999). *Walter Benjamin and the Demonic: Happiness and Historical Redemption* in HELLER-ROAZEN, D. *Potentialities*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. And BLOOM, H. *Ring around the Scholar* (review of *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910–1940*), *Artforum* 32 (Nov. 1994).

above, encounter fragments of his own existence so he may take part in history and tradition.

CONCLUSIONS

The cinematic diagram, as mapped out through this research, is a mutable point in time subjected to the endless transformations of the *renvoi* of Moon's work. To write an explanation of his diagram is parallel to freezing the proposition circle and excluding the possibilities that can still arise through his practice. With this in mind, it's noteworthy to recap the main contributions of Vincent Moon during this first decade (twelve years to be more exact) of his career. In this research the key aspects that I defend that make Moon a relevant subject to film and audiovisual studies are:

- The incorporation of a non-ocular stance to filmmaking (Nancy's listening) opens new paths to what a music video can be at a critical time where new technologies and platforms were emerging.
- Moon's cinematic diagram further expands and exemplifies how to integrate a sonic approach to cinema. This attempt to balance at the edge between meaning and chaos is one that subverts understanding and favors sensory acknowledgement.
- His enthrallment with experience unfolds into an investigation on how film can carry an unrealized latent interaction for the listener to unlock and create his own experience (in Benjamin's words, to find "fragments of oneself").
- An unusual phenomenon emerges in Moon's work—what I call the encounter-image. His determination to rethink

cinema exclusively as a medium to experience unearths an image made anew; one that is more worried with the process of becoming (of how sense is expressed into existence) than with what will insist and last in the work itself. As such, the film becomes ephemeral. A one-time encounter that dies as soon as it is experienced.

- This ephemeral nature, in turn, impels Moon to accumulate and comprehend each film as a mutable part of a larger database of experiences. Concepts like interaction and subverting hierarchy, present in his cinematic diagram, are extrapolated to the larger sphere of how his work is distributed. To navigate through this database one has to fold/unfold a unique path in unison with folding and unfolding the experiences contained in each film.

Questions for a future research

The concept of the encounter-image can be extended to a broader range of pieces that also focus foremost on opening an experience rather than implanting the object with layers of meaning and signification. The format of the cinematic-diagram, as I have transposed to Vincent Moon can also be converted to other artists. Such a format can even be extended to embrace other senses like touch, smell and taste as long as the artist in question is preoccupied with finding how to balance at the edge of chaos.

To further progress this thesis it would be interesting to also inquire into the transient aspect of the encounter-image. Something that only in the last months of this research has started to surface into

the methods that Moon is currently investigating. The film, relegated as the instigator that opens the encounter, quickly becomes ephemeral, for once the proposition is unfrozen, and the listener experiences the encounter between the multiple voices (film, subject, listener, director) the encounter-image loses its allure. To find new forms and create new experiences with previous encounters becomes as essential as creating the films itself, hence, incentivizing forms, like the database, where a new *sens* can arise and new *beings* can be produced.

Since the release of *Híbridos* in 2017, Moon, in inquiring a solution for the ephemerality of the encounter-image, has focused in live-cinema presentations. The task, which currently Moon is occupying himself with, is how to give his archive of films an after-life. To seek ways to create new experiences for a film whose sole purpose is accomplished when it opens the first unrepeatable encounter. In these live-performances, the shots of the film are simultaneously mixed with the music created by an accompanying DJ or by live musical performances. Is this the destination for the encounter-image? To be in a constant changing flux of interactions, being made each time anew? Producing new experiences without having to shoot a constant stream of new material?

This new moment, of live-cinema, is still in its foundational moments in Moon's career. It gained more of his attention in 2017, and so far, it resembles Moon's initial experiments back in 2006 when he was still trialing with more experimental aesthetics. In his live performance's images are superimposed on top of each other,

effects that invert the colors are applied, specific channels are made transparent, images merge and distort. At a quick glance, it would seem that he threw away all his cinematic-diagram that he worked for over a decade. Nevertheless, looking closer reveals the director's desire to recreate that first encounter that he felt— "I'm working on this form of 'live cinema' as a way of returning to the intuition I experience when I'm filming."³⁸⁰ Creating a fleeting encounter, opening the renvoi, listening to a new *self*, they all are transposed to the concept of performing live the creation of a new experience. The fold/unfold of the database returns to Moon, as he now navigates and unfolds his own database each time he performs, surfacing new beings in front of an audience. Unlocking at each presentation, through the randomness of how the aural and visual will be uniquely reconfigured, the proposition circle so that a new unknown *self* can emerge and an auratic experience may take place.

Lifting the eyes

If you raise your eyes, you will see a glow. Above your head the imminent morning is brightening the sky: that breath against your face is the wind stirring the leaves. You are outside again, the dogs are barking, the birds wake, the colors return on the world's surface, things reoccupy space, living beings again give signs of life. And surely you are also here, in the midst of it all, in the teeming noises that rise on all sides, in the buzz of the electric current, the throb of the pistons, the clank of gears. Somewhere, in a fold of the earth, the city is reawakening, with a slamming, a hammering, a creaking that grows louder. Now a noise, a rumble, a roar occupies all space, absorbs all sighs, calls, sobs...

August 1, 1984

³⁸⁰ (Moon, Vincent Moon, Filmmaker and Explorer of the Invisible, 2016)

What happened to the king at the end of Calvino's story? It appears that sound overtakes everything, that noise fills all space, that the reborn vision attempts to gain a life of itself but ultimately is subjugated and drowned in noise. The king that started the story alienated from the outside world in his throne due to the supremacy of vision ends alienated in the world where noise absorbs all sight. Moon's concept of his cinematic diagram comes as an answer to avoid the same faith of the king, to keep a balance at the edge of meaning, to create a site where voices can interact and experience finding fragments of one's existence. If the king's story followed the principles of Nancy's listening, the ending would have been one where there is no concept of crown anymore; the sonic interaction would have eliminated all appearances of authority, no longer remaining any hierarchy within the sonic bodies that now interact free from a power that "sees" all sounds and assigns significations and menaces to each noise.

Calvino's story was originally an opera piece that he wrote for the Italian composer Luciano Berio, only later it was adapted to be included in a book. In its format of inception, Berio would reveal to Umberto Eco that "it's the musical processes that are primarily responsible for the narration."³⁸² To have this sonic basis also influenced how the work was structured:

³⁸¹ (Calvino, 1988, p. 64)

³⁸² Berio, L. (1989). *Eco in ascolto*. (Umberto Eco, interviewer). *Contemporary Music Review*, 5, p. 4.

My concern was not to create a "system of expectations", but (and maybe you'll tell me it's the same thing) to control developments and relationships between the various musical characters, their conflicts, and the polyphonic density of the whole. The spectator, your "theatrical consumer", can select his "system of expectations" for himself from the expressive range that I offer him. So I would say that *Un re in ascolto* elaborates various levels of reading, the simplest of which is perhaps that of opera.³⁸³

The link between how Calvino's and Berio's *Un re ascolto* was conceived recalls the writings on the database and the production of beings; creating the possibility that each interaction is as unique as the body that is encountered. Equivalently to Moon, a practice that is based in listening transforms not only the work of art but also how the work itself interacts with the bodies that it meets, each experience grafting singular traces and fragments. Berio assimilates the function of the listener of his opera to that of a detective:

(The same sort of thing happens in a book with which you're not unfamiliar which, on its most immediate level, can be read here and there as a detective story.) I would really hardly know what name to give to the more complex modes of reading, nor do I intend to try. I'm all too well aware that the problems raised by *Un re* are on such a scale that they won't easily lend themselves to being pinned down verbally. As well you know, what is linguistically evident is not necessarily what is made evident by things themselves, especially when music is involved.

Music becomes an object for the listeners to investigate, for an unnamed interaction, one that, as Berio notes, is not focused on understanding, since many ideas cannot be evidenced linguistically, but to be experienced. The composer assumes the position of creating a puzzle for his listeners to unfold and interact with. Moon take this a step further, by abdicating his position as the all-

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

powerful dictator (the king at the “ear-palace”) for an unrehearsed collaboration to take place, but most importantly, to attempt a self-alienation through cine-trance, so that an unconscious raw interaction can be preserved untouched in his films.

Creation becomes enabling an experience, an interaction, that in turn, shadows the object produced to the background. Image and sound become the medium for an interaction that lives only in the present. Paraphrasing Berio, Vincent Moon elaborates various levels of reading, the simplest of which is perhaps that of film.

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VINCENT MOON'S FILMOGRAPHY (by year)*

August 2000	SIBIRSKY EXPRESS
August 2001	LE PASSAGER INDIEN
December 2001	TANGO APASIONADO
March 2004	PARIS? LIVE
August 2004	BEIJING VENDREDI 13H07
August 2004	THE ESCAPE (chinese requiem)
March 2005	JAMIE LIDELL & THE CRYSTAL OF NEVER-ENDING RHYTHM
April 2005	ILLUSION
April 2005	CLOGS _ LANTERN
May 2005	THE TRIUMPH OF OUR TIRED SOULS
June 2005	THE NATIONAL • DAUGHTERS OF THE SOHO RIOTS
July 2005	THE NATIONAL • LIT UP
August 2005	SILENTLY AT NIGHT BURNING DEL CORONADO
August 2005	SYLVAIN CHAUVEAU _ NEVER LET ME DOWN AGAIN
October 2005	TOURNER EN ROND ET SE LAISSER CONSUMER
December 2005	THE NATIONAL _ LIFE!
February 2006	Take Away Show #01 _ SPINTO BAND
March 2006	Take Away Show #02 _ JENS LEKMAN
April 2006	Take Away Show #05 _ RAMONA CORDOVA
April 2006	Take Away Show #04 _ JEFFREY LEWIS
April 2006	Take Away Show #03 _ THOMAS DYBDAHL
May 2006	Take Away Show #11 _ STUART STAPLES

* I preserve how the films are presented on Vincent Moon's site, which is ordered by the recording date rather than publication date. It appears that he prefers to sort his films by the date that he experienced the recording rather than when it was published. I also leave the titles as presented in his website.

May 2006	Take Away Show #10 _ GRIZZLY BEAR
May 2006	Take Away Show #09 _ XIU XIU
May 2006	Take Away Show #08 _ CASIOTONE FOR THE PAINFULLY ALONE
May 2006	Take Away Show #07 _ NEIL HALSTEAD
May 2006	Take Away Show #06 _ OKKERVIL RIVER
June 2006	Take Away Show #14 _ VOLCANO!
June 2006	Take Away Show #12 _ THE KOOKS
July 2006	Take Away Show #16 _ MY BRIGHTEST DIAMOND
August 2006	Take Away Show #32 _ STARS LIKE FLEAS
August 2006	Take Away Show #39 _ ESSIE JAIN
August 2006	Take Away Show #29 _ BEAR IN HEAVEN & FIRST NATION
August 2006	Take Away Show #23 _ AU REVOIR SIMONE
August 2006	Take Away Show #19 _ DEAN & BRITTA
August 2006	Take Away Show #17 _ DOVEMAN (with SAM AMIDON)
August 2006	Take Away Show #15 _ ELYSIAN FIELDS
September 2006	Take Away Show #26 _ LAPIN MACHIN
September 2006	Take Away Show #20 _ POLAR
September 2006	Take Away Show #18 _ THE DIVINE COMEDY
September 2006	Take Away Show #40 _ THE NATIONAL
October 2006	Take Away Show #30 _ ALAMO RACE TRACK
October 2006	LIKE ANTENNAS TO HEAVEN
October 2006	Take Away Show #24 _ I'M FROM BARCELONA
October 2006	Take Away Show #22 _ HIDDEN CAMERAS
October 2006	Take Away Show #31 _ CALI
October 2006	Take Away Show #21 _ HERMAN DUNE
November 2006	BARZIN • LEAVING TIME
November 2006	Take Away Show #36 _ THE LOW

	LOWS
November 2006	Take Away Show #28 _ TAPES'N'TAPES
November 2006	Take Away Show #27 _ KRIA BREKKAN
November 2006	Take Away Show #25 _ GUILLEMOTS
December 2006	A SKIN A NIGHT (a film about THE NATIONAL)
December 2006	FROM ATP • 00 • (sketches) FROM A NIGHTMARE
January 2007	Take Away Show #38 _ EAGLE SEAGULL
January 2007	Take Away Show #37 _ FRANÇOIS VIROT
January 2007	Take Away Show #35 _ COLD WAR KIDS
January 2007	Take Away Show #33 _ TOBIAS FROBERG
February 2007	Take Away Show #47 _ BENNI HEMM HEMM
February 2007	Take Away Show #34 _ TAHITY BOY & THE RODEO
February 2007	Take Away Show #46 _ ALAN SPARHAWK
March 2007	Take Away Show #45 _ ANDREW BIRD
March 2007	Take Away Show #54 _ VOXTROT & SPARROW HOUSE
March 2007	Take Away Show #43 _ THE RUBY SUNS
March 2007	Take Away Show #41 _ ARCADE FIRE
March 2007	Take Away Show #48 _ JEREMY WARMSLEY
March 2007	Take Away Show #42 _ CHRIS GARNEAU
April 2007	Take Away Show #55 _ DIRTY PROJECTORS
April 2007	Take Away Show #59 _ INLETS & MARLA HANSEN
April 2007	Take Away Show #50 _ MUSIC NOW FESTIVAL (SUFJAN STEVENS CLOGS...)
April 2007	Take Away Show #49 _ DAMON & NAOMI
April 2007	Take Away Show #57 _ RIO EN MEDIO

April 2007	Take Away Show #44 _ THE SHINS
May 2007	Take Away Show #58 _ ARCHITECTURE IN HELSINKI
May 2007	Take Away Show #51 _ LONEY DEAR
May 2007	Take Away Show #52 _ OF MONTREAL & AXE RIVERBOY
May 2007	GRIZZLY BEAR _ DEEP BLUE SEA (ATP outtake)
May 2007	Take Away Show #53 _ KEREN ANN
June 2007	ESSAOUIRA A MOMENT IN GNAWA MUSIC
June 2007	Take Away Show #61 _ LIARS
June 2007	Take Away Show #56 _ PASCAL COMELADE
July 2007	Take Away Show #64 _ BEIRUT
July 2007	Take Away Show #63 _ GRAVENHURST
July 2007	Take Away Show #62 _ MENOMENA
July 2007	Take Away Show #60 _ SOIREE A EMPORTER
August 2007	Take Away Show #66 _ ELVIS PERKINS
August 2007	Take Away Show #65 _ FINAL FANTASY
September 2007	Take Away Show #71 _ DEPARTMENT OF EAGLES
September 2007	Take Away Show #89 _ REM
September 2007	Take Away Show #70 _ PARIS LOST IN TEXAS
September 2007	CHEAP MAGIC INSIDE (a project with BEIRUT)
September 2007	Take Away Show #68 _ CRAMMED DISCS
September 2007	Take Away Show #67 _ ST VINCENT
October 2007	Take Away Show #72 _ JONQUIL
October 2007	Take Away Show #69 _ MALAJUBE
October 2007	Take Away Show #75 _ MARISSA NADLER
October 2007	Take Away Show #90 _ BOWERBIRDS
October 2007	Take Away Show #88 _ PIGEON JOHN
October 2007	Take Away Show special _ IN A VAN

November 2007	Take Away Show #77 _ TARAF DE HAIDOUKS
November 2007	Take Away Show #82 _ ANIMAL COLLECTIVE
November 2007	Take Away Show #76 _ CARIBOU
November 2007	Take Away Show #74 _ VIC CHESNUTT
November 2007	Take Away Show #73 _ A HAWK AND A HACKSAW
December 2007	HISTOIRE DE FEU (a film about the arcade fire)
December 2007	Take Away Show #81 _ CASTANETS
December 2007	Take Away Show #80 _ VAMPIRE WEEKEND
December 2007	Take Away Show #79 _ ALELA DIANE
December 2007	Take Away Show #78 _ SCOUT NIBLETT
December 2007	FROM ATP • 01 • FROM SMOKE
January 2008	REM • six days and ninety nights
January 2008	Take Away Show #84 _ THE EX
January 2008	Take Away Show #83 _ SIDI TOURE
January 2008	INTERFERENCES (beta)
February 2008	Take Away Show #87 _ YEASAYER
February 2008	Take Away Show #86 _ STEPHEN MALKMUS
February 2008	Take Away Show #85 _ DE KIFT
February 2008	REM • supernatural superserious
March 2008	SXSW _ 2008 reports
March 2008	A TRUCK IN TEXAS (sxsw 2008)
April 2008	Take Away Show #94 _ PEDRO SOLER & GASPARD CLAUS
May 2008	Take Away Show #96 _ SEASICK STEVE
May 2008	FROM ATP • 04 • FROM HYBRID
May 2008	FROM ATP • 02 • FROM MIDDEN
May 2008	Take Away Show _ FLEET FOXES
May 2008	Take Away Show #93 _ BON IVER
May 2008	Take Away Show #92 _ WINTER FAMILY
May 2008	DUENDE (pilots)

May 2008	Take Away Show #91 _ NOAH AND THE WHALE
June 2008	Fiume Nights • RUSSIAN RED
June 2008	Pocket Party 02 _ PATRICK WATSON
June 2008	Take Away Show #97 _ PATRICK WATSON
June 2008	Take Away Show #95 _ MAN MAN
June 2008	BACK ON STAGES _ special Villette Sonique
July 2008	REM • until the day is done
August 2008	Adelia I want to love (a film about Mogwai)
September 2008	FROM ATP • 03 • FROM GHOSTS
October 2008	Take Away Show _ special ARTE project _ GRIZZLY BEAR
November 2008	CAMILLE ZENITH LIVE
November 2008	Take Away Show _ SIGUR ROS
November 2008	BI KIDUDE & THE CULTURE MUSICAL CLUB
November 2008	THE ZAWOSE FAMILY
November 2008	LITTLE BLUE NOTHING • a portrait of VOJTECH & IRENA HAVLOVI
November 2008	SUN/SET & RISE
December 2008	MIROIR NOIR (a film about the ARCADE FIRE)
December 2008	Take Away Show _ TOM JONES
December 2008	FROM ATP • 05 • FROM PAIN & PLEASURE
January 2009	Recess Session vol.3 _ AU REVOIR SIMONE
January 2009	Recess Session vol.2 _ CURUMIN
January 2009	Recess Session vol. 1 _ MIHO HATORI
January 2009	Recess Session vol. 0 _ A CAMP
February 2009	Fiume Nights • NIKAIDO KAZUMI
February 2009	Fiume Nights • GASPARD CLAUS
February 2009	Cocktail Story (beta) _ SAINT VINCENT
February 2009	DARK WAS THE NIGHT
March 2009	Fiume Nights • AKRON FAMILY
March 2009	Fiume Nights • EFTERKLING

March 2009	Fiume Nights • ELVIS PERKINS
March 2009	SXSW _ 2009 reports
March 2009	FUGUES _ pilote 01 _ Wilhem Latchoumia
March 2009	Fiume Nights • THE PASCALS
March 2009	Take Away Show #98 _ KAZUKI TOMOKAWA
March 2009	LA FAUTE DES FLEURS • a portrait of KAZUKI TOMOKAWA
April 2009	Fiume Nights • NOAH AND THE WHALE
April 2009	BURNING (a live film about MOGWAI)
April 2009	Fiume Nights • THE HAVELS
April 2009	Fiume Nights • TINARIWEN
April 2009	LIVE at barrelhouse _ WYCLEF JEAN
April 2009	LHASA live in Montreal
April 2009	Fiume Nights • LHASA DE SELA & PATRICK WATSON
April 2009	YEASAYER _ MEGAMIX
April 2009	Fiume Nights • HOLLY MIRANDA
May 2009	TEMPORARY COPENHAGEN _ the outtakes
May 2009	TEMPORARY COPENHAGEN _ the documents
May 2009	TEMPORARY COPENHAGEN
May 2009	TEMPORARY SLARAFFENLAND
May 2009	Fiume Nights • VALBY VOKALGRUPPE
May 2009	Take Away Show _ MAMI CHAN / SLOW CLUB
May 2009	ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES
June 2009	Fiume Nights • JESS CHAMBERS & THE FIREFLY ORCHESTRA
June 2009	Fiume Nights • WHIRIMAKO BLACK
June 2009	Take Away Show _ YO LA TENGO
July 2009	Take Away Show _ JOSH ROUSE
August 2009	Fiume Nights • MAJID BEKKAS
August 2009	Fiume Nights • VERA GOGH GASPAR CLAUS PEDRO SOLER
August 2009	BALKANIC PARK: FRANCOIS VIROT on tour

September 2009	TEMPORARY ATHENS
September 2009	Take Away Show #110 _ WILDBIRDS & PEACEDRUMS
September 2009	Take Away Show _ THE VERY BEST
September 2009	REM • this is not a show (a live movie)
October 2009	HEALTH • a live film (paris 2009)
October 2009	Take Away Show _ PHOENIX
October 2009	Take Away Show #99 _ THE LUYAS
October 2009	Take Away Show _ special 'VIEWS OF MONTREAL'
November 2009	Take Away Show #107 _ VALBY VOKALGRUPPE
December 2009	FROM ATP • 06 • FROM GOD
December 2009	WARP 20 • AND THEE ECHO
January 2010	petites planètes _ volume 4 _ TEMPORARY VALPARAISO
January 2010	Take Away Show #103 _ FERNANDO MILAGROS (special 'Temporary Valparaiso')
February 2010	Take Away Show #109 _ SHARON VAN ETTEN
February 2010	Take Away Show #102 _ DAVID MOORE / BING & RUTH
February 2010	Take Away Show #113 _ ONDA VAGA (special 'Temporary Buenos Aires')
February 2010	Take Away Show #100 _ SOEMA MONTENEGRO (special 'Temporary Buenos Aires')
February 2010	LA HERMANA ERRANTE • a portrait of Juana Molina
February 2010	Take Away Show #118 _ POLACO SUNSHINE
February 2010	Take Away Show #104 _ TOMI LEBRERO (special 'Temporary Buenos Aires')
February 2010	Take Away Show #108 _ ZZK RECORDS (special 'Temporary Buenos Aires')
February 2010	LA INFANCIA (a film about COSO)
February 2010	Take Away Show #106 _ PABLO MALAURIE (special 'Temporary Buenos Aires')

	Aires')
March 2010	BOOMTOWN BABYLON _ PHNOM PENH
April 2010	Take Away Show #105 _ MUMFORD & SONS
April 2010	Take Away Show #101 _ ALINA ORLOVA
April 2010	LES FRANCOISES
April 2010	Take Away Show #111 _ KONG NAY
May 2010	Fiume Nights • PONY BRAVO
May 2010	petites planètes _ volume 5 _ PERET
May 2010	Take Away Show _ KIKO VENENO
May 2010	Take Away Show #116 _ ENRIQUE MORENTE
May 2010	Take Away Show #119 _ HYPERPOTAMUS
May 2010	STANDSTILL • ENTRE MIS SUEÑOS
June 2010	petites planètes _ volume 6 _ ZAR
June 2010	CALLING • a portrait of Saeed Rifai Ali Khaled
June 2010	petites planètes _ outtake _ KARAM MOURAD
June 2010	SAWAH
July 2010	BRUNO S WITH DEVOTION
July 2010	Take Away Show #112 _ ARLT
August 2010	Take Away Show #114 _ MALAIKAT DAN SINGA
August 2010	AN ISLAND _ a film with EFTERKLING
August 2010	Take Away Show #117 _ ADAM REPUCHA
September 2010	Take Away Show _ RETRO STEFSON
September 2010	petites planètes _ volume 18 _ GYDA & KRISTIN ANNA VALTYSÐOTTIR
September 2010	petites planètes _ volume 11 _ ERNA OMARSDOTTIR
September 2010	Take Away Show _ BARUJARN
September 2010	petites planètes _ outtake _ ÁRÓRA & ÚRVERK
September 2010	Take Away Show _ PASCAL PINON

September 2010	Take Away Show _ SIN FANG
September 2010	petites planètes _ volume 9 _ HELGI JONSSON
September 2010	petites planètes _ volume 8 _ STAR CREEK
October 2010	Take Away Show #115 _ FEMI KUTI
October 2010	petites planètes _ volume 2 _ ÓLÖF ARNALDS
October 2010	THE LUYAS _ Everything Is Outta Sight
November 2010	petites planètes _ volume 3 _ JOSÉ DOMINGOS
November 2010	Take Away Show _ THIAGO PETHIT
December 2010	petites planètes _ outtake _ WILSON DAS NEVES
December 2010	petites planètes _ outtake _ M.TAKARA
December 2010	petites planètes _ volume 7 _ MARICEL YSASA
December 2010	Take Away Show _ LULINA
December 2010	A DAMA DO SAMBA: Dona Inah in the nights of São Paulo
December 2010	Take Away Show _ HOLGER
December 2010	AMANDA NEGRA SIM
December 2010	petites planètes _ volume 1 _ TOM ZÉ
January 2011	petites planètes _ volume 10 _ NEY MATOGROSSO
January 2011	petites planètes _ volume 15 _ ELZA SOARES
January 2011	petites planètes _ LUIZ MELODIA
January 2011	petites planètes _ outtake _ JORGE MAUTNER
January 2011	O PATO: a very short portrait of JARDS MACALÉ
January 2011	Take Away Show _ LETUCE
January 2011	petites planètes _ volume 12 _ THALMA & LAÉRCIO DE FREITAS
February 2011	petites planètes _ volume 19 _ UMBANDA
February 2011	petites planètes _ outtake _ DONA ONETE
February 2011	GABY AMARANTOS LIVE IN JURUNAS

February 2011	petites planetes _ SEBASTIÃO TAPAJOS
February 2011	petites planètes _ volume 16 _ NANÁ VASCONCELOS
February 2011	petites planètes _ outtake _ ALESSANDRA LEÃO & XAMBA
February 2011	petites planètes _ outtake _ CARLINHOS BROWN
February 2011	MESTRE! MESTRE! UM ULTIMO!
March 2011	ESPERANDO EL TSUNAMI • outtake • CHIRIMIA DEL RIO NAPI
March 2011	ESPERANDO EL TSUNAMI • outtake • ATERCIOPELADOS
March 2011	ESPERANDO EL TSUNAMI
March 2011	Take Away Show _ BOMBA ESTEREO
April 2011	ESPERANDO EL TSUNAMI • outtake • ESTRELLAS DEL CARIBE
April 2011	ESPERANDO EL TSUNAMI • outtake • SON PALENQUE
April 2011	ESPERANDO EL TSUNAMI • outtake • PAMPEI
April 2011	ESPERANDO EL TSUNAMI • outtake • PAITO
April 2011	ESPERANDO EL TSUNAMI • outtake • JORGE HENRIQUEZ
May 2011	CEJAZ NEGRAZ Δ•Δ•Δ CIUDAD BOLIVAR
May 2011	ESPERANDO EL TSUNAMI • outtake • SEXTETO TABALA
May 2011	ESPERANDO EL TSUNAMI • outtake • MAJIN DIAZ
June 2011	petites planètes _ volume 17 _ PIERRE BAROUH
June 2011	petites planètes _ outtake _ ANTOINE LOYER
July 2011	MEDEA (a soundwalk collective project)
August 2011	ISTANBUL GÜ'RÜLTÜ VE SEVGI
August 2011	petites planètes _ outtake _ AHMET ASLAN
August 2011	Take Away Show _ SENI GORMEM IMKANSIZ
August 2011	petites planètes _ outtake _ SABAHAT

	AKKIRAZ
August 2011	petites planètes _ outtake _ CEM YILDIZ
August 2011	petites planètes _ AYSEUR KOLIVAR
August 2011	petites planètes _ volume 13 _ ISMAIL ALTUN SARAY
August 2011	SELDA BAĞCAN • PENINSULA PORTRAIT
August 2011	Take Away Show _ BABA ZULA
September 2011	petites planètes _ volume 14 _ LÉONORE BOULANGER
September 2011	MEZZO MORRA • the sounds of Sardinia
September 2011	petites planètes _ outtake _ ANDREA PISU
September 2011	petites planètes _ outtake _ ANTONIO PUTZU
September 2011	petites planètes _ PAOLO ANGELI
October 2011	MERAPI GAYA • Arrington de Dionysos in Java
October 2011	JAKARTA JAKARTA!
October 2011	Take Away Show _ WHITE SHOES & THE COUPLES COMPANY
November 2011	MAPPALILI • the Bissu ritual from Sulawesi
November 2011	ALUK TO RAJA • funeral ritual in Tana Toraja
November 2011	petites planètes _ SERANG DAKKO
December 2011	I MADE SUBANDI • A BALINESE STORY
December 2011	KUNG HONG KONG
December 2011	GREG SAUNIER wandering in HK
December 2011	petites planètes _ volume 20 _ ONE MAN NATION
January 2012	petites planètes _ LUCAS ABELA
January 2012	Take Away Show _ THE TREES & THE WILD
January 2012	TARAWANGSA • the sacred music of Sunda
January 2012	KARINDING ATTACK • live on Gunung Karimbi
January 2012	NGARAJAH • shamanism and trance in West Java

January 2012	JOGJA HIP HOP FOUNDATION • live on Gunung Merapi
January 2012	CALLING THE NEW GODS • SENYAWA live in Java
January 2012	JATHILAN • popular trance ritual from Java
February 2012	Take Away Show _ NOVA HEART
March 2012	ORQUESTRA VOADORA • AO VIVO EM MONTMARTRE
March 2012	LA GLAGOLITSA
March 2012	THE SOIL AND SOUL OF CROATIA • old sounds from Kvarner Bay and Istria
March 2012	petites planètes _ FANDO & LIS
March 2012	KATE TORRALBA • LIVE IN MANILA
March 2012	MABUHAY SINGERS • the last legends of Kundiman
March 2012	MEGAAS MORO SONG
March 2012	Tribal Sounds of the Philippines • MANSAKA
March 2012	Tribal Sounds of the Philippines • T'BOLI
March 2012	Tribal Sounds of the Philippines • IFUGAO
March 2012	Tribal Sounds of the Philippines • KALINGA
March 2012	THE DREAMCARVER
April 2012	NOW ETHIOPIA • GABRA MUDEN • Zar ritual in Gondar
April 2012	NOW ETHIOPIA • TEWAHEDO FASIKA • easter ritual in Gondar
May 2012	NOW ETHIOPIA • GAMO GAMO • tribal voices from the south
May 2012	NOW ETHIOPIA • A MORNING OVER DORZÉ • polyphonic singings from Southern Ethiopia
May 2012	NOW ETHIOPIA • HARARI! ESHI ESHI • traditional women songs from Harar
May 2012	NOW ETHIOPIA • ILLUMINATIONS • sufi rituals in Harar
June 2012	NOW ETHIOPIA • YESETAN MENFES • exorcism ritual in Addis Ababa
June 2012	NOW ETHIOPIA • TILAHUN • portrait of a Lalibela

June 2012	NOW ETHIOPIA • THE HARP OF KING DAVID • a portrait of ALEMU AGA
June 2012	NOW ETHIOPIA • CIRCUS DEBRE BERHAN
June 2012	NOW ETHIOPIA • METAL MACHINE MERKATO • Jacob Kirkegaard in Addis Ababa
July 2012	((((Музопис))) CARPATE
August 2012	CIRCASSIA
August 2012	TRACES DE CRIMÉE
August 2012	((((Музопис))) OSTAP KINDRACHUK
August 2012	((((Музопис))) ODESSA LA YIDDISH
August 2012	((((Музопис))) LUKERIA ANDREEVNA
August 2012	((((Музопис))) DREVO
August 2012	Take Away Show _ DAKHA BRAKHA
September 2012	VOYAGE EN DAGESTAN
September 2012	NUR-ZHOVKHAR • songs from Chechnya
September 2012	THE GREAT JIHAD • sufism in Chechnya
September 2012	FYDALTY NAMYS
September 2012	BULAT GAZDANOV ORCHESTRA
September 2012	KONA
October 2012	ISTOKI
October 2012	LES ENSEMBLES DE LA NOSTALGIE
October 2012	LES FEMMES DE LA TERRE NOIRE
October 2012	BELOGORSKY MONASTERY
October 2012	BAATR MANDJIEV (Dzhangar songs from Kalmykia)
October 2012	DMITRY SHARAYEV • live in ELISTA
October 2012	ERDM ENSEMBLE
October 2012	YANGDRUB • a buddhist ritual in Kalmykia
November 2012	ARTHUR LARRUE • Fantômes l'après-midi
November 2012	THE RETUSES: live in Moscow
November 2012	RADA • live in Moscow
November 2012	ELENA SHLOMINA • live in Suzdal

January 2013	LA CUECA ANTES DE DIOS
February 2013	Sons do Brasil 2013 ♦ METÁ METÁ
February 2013	Sons do Brasil 2013 ♦ CRIOLO
February 2013	Sons do Brasil 2013 ♦ DONA CILA DO COCO
February 2013	Sons do Brasil 2013 ♦ BNEGÃO
February 2013	Sons do Brasil 2013 ♦ TERESA CRISTINA
February 2013	Sons do Brasil 2013 ♦ ROBERTO MENESCAL
February 2013	Sons do Brasil 2013 ♦ BATE BOLA
February 2013	Sons do Brasil 2013 ♦ YAMANDU COSTA
February 2013	EL EXTRAVAGANTE HUMANISTA • FLORCITA MOTUDA
March 2013	SEÑOR UN CANDOMBE !
March 2013	SEÑORA UNA MURGA !
March 2013	GANARLE A LA MUERTE (ZELMAR GARIN & EDUARDO HERRERA)
March 2013	Sons do Brasil 2013 ♦ UAKTI
March 2013	Sons do Brasil 2013 ♦ ICONILI
March 2013	Sons do Brasil 2013 ♦ TIÃODUÁ
April 2013	Sonidos del Perú ♦ EDITH RAMOS GUERRA
April 2013	Sonidos del Perú ♦ PUERTO PRADO
April 2013	Sonidos del Perú ♦ BELÉN
April 2013	Sons do Brasil 2013 ♦ RAIZES CABOCLAS
April 2013	Sons do Brasil 2013 ♦ O RITMO DO RIO
May 2013	Sonidos del Perú ♦ JORGE CHOQUEWILLKA Y SU FAMILIA
May 2013	Sonidos del Perú ♦ CORPUS CHRISTI
May 2013	QOYLLURITI
May 2013	Sonidos del Perú ♦ MISA QUECHUANA
May 2013	Sonidos del Perú ♦ ABILIO SOTO YUPANQUI
May 2013	Sonidos del Perú ♦ LAS SALCABAMBINITAS
May 2013	Sonidos del Perú ♦ ORQUESTA TIPICA

May 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ PROCESIÓN
May 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ ESTUDIANTINA DE HUANCAYO
May 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ LA PANTEÑITA Y SUS TIJERAS
May 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ LA CATEDRAL DEL CRIOLLISMO
May 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ JUSTINA
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ MANUELCHA PRADO
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ PAUCHI SASAKI
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ CENTRO CULTURAL MUSICAL EL TIGRE
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ LOS BALLUMBROSIOS
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ FERNANDO QUEIROLO
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ JARDÍN
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ RASU ÑITI
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ ZAÑA ZAÑA
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ ORLANDO VERA
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ LOS DIABLICOS
June 2013	PASTORCITAS
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ LA TINYA Y LA FLAUTA
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ CUMBIA ALL STARS
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ CENTRO CULTURAL BREÑA
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ CONSUELO JERI
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ LOS HERMANOS AZPILCUETA
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ TAQUILE
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ AMOS LUCANA VALDERRAMA
June 2013	Sonidos del Perú ◊ CELESTINO ACURIO MEDINA
July 2013	B É N É D I C T I O N S
August 2013	MUSIQUES DE GÉORGIE • SVANÉTIE
September 2013	MUSIQUES DE GÉORGIE • KAKHÉTIE

September 2013	AZERBAIJAN L'ÉCOLE DU VENT
September 2013	ARMÉNIE PAR LA GRÂCE DE DIEU
September 2013	ABKHAZIE CARTOGRAPHIE DE L'ABSURDE
September 2013	MUSIQUES DE GÉORGIE • POLIKARPE
September 2013	MUSIQUES DE GÉORGIE • TOUCHÉTIE
October 2013	VIET≈NAM ≈ NORTHERN TRIBES
October 2013	VIET≈NAM ≈ FUNERAL IN HANOÏ
October 2013	VIET≈NAM ≈ LEN DONG
October 2013	VIET≈NAM ≈ CAO DAI
October 2013	VIET≈NAM ≈ MEKONG DELTA MUSIC
October 2013	TBILISI PETIT THÉÂTRE
November 2013	MUSIQUES DU LAOS ◎◎◎ TAD LO
November 2013	THÉÂTRE D'OMBRES DE CHAMPASSAK
November 2013	VIET≈NAM ≈ HANOISE
December 2013	FROM ATP (complete series)
January 2014	THE LITTLE HAÏTI SESSIONS
February 2014	EFTERKLANG ◆◆◆ THE LAST CONCERT
April 2014	JUSQU'AU BOUT DE LA ROUTE (ANDRÉ VELTER & GASPAR CLAUS)
April 2014	KAAREN VOLKMANN
May 2014	CLUBE DA ENCRUZA ★ PALACETE TERESA
May 2014	METÁ METÁ ★ CASA DE FRANCISCA
May 2014	KANGË E DEFA ◎ Female Rhapsody in Kosova
June 2014	TIGANÁ SANTANA ITAPUÃ
June 2014	LA MAISON D'AMOUR
July 2014	TED GLOBAL
July 2014	OBÁ OBÁ OBÁ
July 2014	VIDA SECA Δ live in Goiânia
August 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ JOÃO DE DEUS
August 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ TEMPLO DA TRANSPARÊNCIA SUBLIME

August 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ BITA DO BARÃO
August 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ PEDRO DE OXUM
September 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ JUREMA SAGRADA
September 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ SRI PREM BABA
October 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ POVO YAWANAWÁ
October 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ ILHA DE MARAJÓ
October 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ CÍRIO DE NAZARÉ
October 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ BASÍLICA DA PENHA
November 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ TERREIRO ILÊ AXÊ ATARÁ MAGBA
November 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ CENTRO DE UMBANDA CABOCLO SETE FLECHAS
November 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ ANTONIO PEDRO
November 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ A BARQUINHA
November 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ FLOR DO LÓTUS ILUMINADO
November 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ UNIÃO DO VEGETAL
December 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ FLOR DA MONTANHA
December 2014	HÍBRIDOS ★ FOLIA DE REIS SANTA MARTA
January 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ POVO HUNI KUIN
January 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ CONGADOS DE OURO PRETO
January 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ FESTAS DE NOVA ALMEIDA
January 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ FRATERNIDADE KAYMAN
February 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ TEMPLO DO VALE DO SOL E DA LUA
February 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ AFOXÉ ALAFIN OYÓ
February 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ MARACATU RURAL
February 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ MARACATU NAÇÃO
February 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ TERREIRO XAMBÁ
February 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ IGREJA NOSSA SENHORA DO ROSÁRIO DOS PRETOS
February 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ FESTA DE IEMANJÁ
March 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ IGREJA DA LIBERTAÇÃO

March 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ SEMANA SANTA
April 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ CONSCIENCOLOGIA
April 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ CENTRO METAMORFOSE
April 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ ALMAS E ANGOLA
April 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ RELIGIÃO DA HUMANIDADE
April 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ TEIA DA LUA
May 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ MESTRE VALENTIM
May 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ VALE DO AMANHECER
June 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ BUMBA-MEU-BOI
July 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ TERREIRO ILÊ AXÉ ICIMIMÓ AGANJU DIDÊ
July 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ ALDEIA MULTIÉTNICA
July 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ TAMBOR DE MINA
July 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ CASA FANTI-ASHANTI
August 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ POVO XAVANTE
August 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ BOM JESUS DA LAPA
September 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ SANTUÁRIO MÍSTICO DO RONCADOR
September 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ POVO MEHINAKO
October 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ PADRE CÍCERO
October 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ CASA DO CAMINHO
December 2015	HÍBRIDOS ★ ANO NOVO COPACABANA
April 2016	HÍBRIDOS ★ MONTE DOS EVANGÉLICOS
May 2017	LABYRINTHS
December 2017	HÍBRIDOS ★ The Spirits of Brazil