

The Internet as an Interzone

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The Internet: a global communication system

The Internet, named after the “Internet Protocol Suite”, the standard communications protocol used by every computer (TCP/IP), is a global system of interconnected computers that allows multiple exchanges between users at many different levels. The term “Internet” is used popularly as an abridged form of “internetwork” and is the result of interconnecting informatics networks worldwide. The network of networks that form the Internet is a global net of connected computers that can be used to generate a great range of options, from allowing instant communication all over the world (e-mail) to powerfully increasing the ability to find, manage, and share information and data.

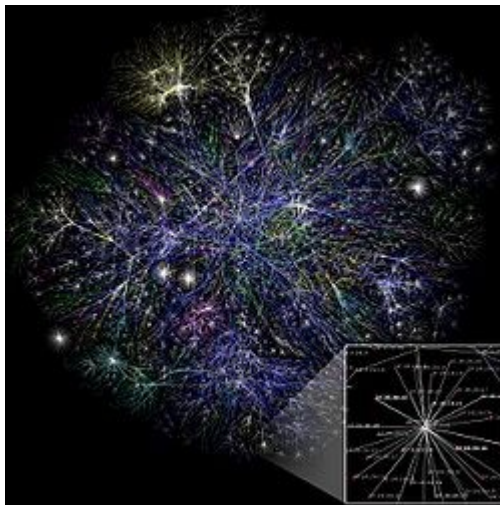


Image of a portion of a routing path from Opte Project

“The power of the Web is in its universality”, noted the creator of the World Wide Web, Sir Tim Berners-Lee. The World Wide Web (WWW) is a set of documents, images and other resources interrelated by hyperlinks and referenced by Uniform Resource Identifiers, one of which is the one popularly abridged as URL (Universal Resource Locator). Despite the fact that the Internet and the World Wide Web are not synonymous, it is relatively common that non-experts use the terms interchangeably. To understand the difference leaving aside specific technical details it may be helpful to think that the Internet

would basically be the general medium where communication is produced (a worldwide communication system) whereas the World Wide Web that appeared twenty years later is one of the communication systems used inside the Internet (that uses it as a communication infrastructure). For our purposes in this paper, it is relevant to consider that the WWW is perceived as the specific location where the Internet is made concrete, a physical place organized according to the services provided. The Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) is the main access protocol of the World Wide Web among hundreds of different ones. Some of the more popular are the File Transfer Protocol (FTP), a network protocol that allows files to be transferred between hosts, the e-mail service (SMTP), the online conversations (IRC), instant messaging (XMPP), the transmission of content and multimedia telephone communication (VoIP), television (IPTV), etc. To conclude this introductory part I would like to quote from Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Monfort, two authors of e-literature and editors of *The New Media Reader*:

The World-Wide Web was developed to be a pool of human knowledge, and human culture, which would allow collaborators in remote sites to share their ideas and all aspects of a common project. (Wardrip-Fruin & Monfort 2003:54).

It seems interesting to note that in technology – and the Internet would be a major example of it – while there is always a starting point, a moment in which somebody creates something for a specific use, there is always the social factor, the appropriation of that specific technology for uses not foreseen before. Thanks to its basic features such as widespread usability and access facilities the Internet has enabled entirely new forms of social interaction promoting interpersonal communication, economic exchange, teaching and learning environments, etc. beyond physical constraints.

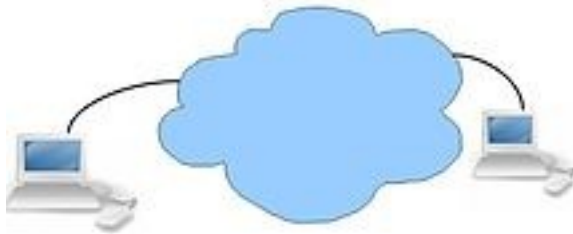
The Internet as a place

Almost every single aspect of life as we knew it before the arrival of the World Wide Web at the beginning of the nineties can now be found in – and this means: has been translated into – the Web site technology. Books, songs, games, TV, universities, radio, shops, almost everything and every place has been moved to the Internet. Therefore this “translation” produces a double image: on the one hand the idea of the Internet as a place between places; and on the other hand, since the Internet allows us immediate access to all the information, to communicate globally, a place that is, potentially, here, there, everywhere, anywhere. People like the recently deceased Steve Jobs, in turn, did a lot to exponentially increase Internet access through mobile phones, further de-locating the idea of the Internet as a physical place that can be reached by a machine, the computer, by essentially transforming a mobile phone into a computer, and so into an Internet access point.

The relationship between places and people is one of the main coordinates when understanding human relations. It is by geographical parameters that people can use and understand

- a) geographic representations, tools and technologies to acquire, process and report information from a spatial perspective,
- b) mental maps used to organize information about people, places and environments and
- c) therefore will be able to analyze the relationship between the identities and lives that are rooted in particular places.

When talking about the Internet, spatial relations become metaphoric since it is a place that is not a physical place. This is why it has often been referred to as “the cloud”, in allusion to the immateriality of this environment, but at the same time it is precisely our need for a visualization that has created the Internet as a place to somehow be located somewhere. The place ‘cloud’ creates to a certain extent a referent of physical, real space.



The Internet visualized as a cloud. Diagram that represents a network connected by the Internet.

The exercise of mapping the physical processes that shape the social patterns is complicated when focused on the WWW. Many spatial metaphors have been used for this purpose though not all of them have succeeded in terms of efficacy. Let us consider the concept of “digital natives” vs. “digital immigrants” coined by Mark Prensky in 2001 to distinguish between those generations that began to access the new cultural paradigm that the Internet represents coming from another cultural paradigm (basically the Gutenberg Galaxy, as addressed by Manuel Castells) and those native users whose skills and competences were developed based on the new paradigm. The use of the terms “native” and “immigrant” inspired by human migratory movements seemed appropriate ten years ago when there was a more or less global shift towards the digital in advanced and technological societies. Despite this, it has been increasingly criticized because of the negative connotations attached to “immigration” and the distinction has been transformed by David White into “digital visitors” and “digital residents”. Again a spatial metaphor, but now forged not upon the notion of a total displacement (and so the loss of referents, the idea of loss), but on the temporality of the use of the Internet (the idea of use). These two sets of metaphors generate a subtle difference in

how the Internet and its users are conceived of. In the first case there was a strong distinction between two places and there was the idea of permanent location in the digital world, a sort of traumatic displacement: the natives already lived there and the immigrants had arrived there without national identity cards; in the second case the metaphor deals with another situation: anyone can be in his or her homeland but can have a double citizenship passport – a very different notion within, however, a continuing discourse of belonging.

“Going digital” is then a process that may have only contact points with the Internet (normally related with work or with punctual needs related to accessing information and data); this would be the practice of the “digital visitors”. On the other hand, “living digitally”, which basically consist in checking the e-mail or social networks several times a day (or any time when possible), googling for information, reading papers, newspapers and working with different screens (from the mobile phone to the computer, using in between iPods, tablets, netbooks or e-readers), buying air tickets or booking hotels using the Internet, having an active presence at social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, etc., means making the Internet a place where the virtual becomes real. In this sense, living digitally means being connected, being “always there”, behind the screen, in every screen, keeping our activities everyday based on this double life, the one that happens in the analogical world and the duplicated one that happens in the Internet.

The Inter-net as an Inter-zone

For a technology to become a part of our lives, it must also be a part of our metaphorical substrate.

John H. Lienhard

The statement by John Lienhard describes the level of integration of a technology into our minds. Considering this in relation with the revolutionary technology that has determined a global change of paradigm, we could say that the intensive use of the net of networks that is the Internet as practiced by “digital residents” puts them in a sort of interzone, a hybrid space where both dimensions of life converge. “The technology is rewiring our brains”, says Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse and one of the world’s leading brain scientists. Having in mind the symptoms of Internet addiction that some of the residents suffer from, it is a fact that our values and culture are being shaped by our living lives being increasingly mediated by technology. Dwelling in this interzone may create some pathologies - what Derrick de Kerckhove calls “e-pathologies” - resulting from the demanding effort of a “double life” or at least an intense, enhanced one, since it is developed in more dimensions. Some of the e-pathologies as described by de Kerckhove among anxieties, depressions, phobias, obsessive-compulsive behaviors or neuroses are:

“E-lag”: guilt of not having answered tons of e-mail.

- Fear of virus attack: to live under permanent anxiety of suffering from a partial or total erasure.
- Passworditis: when we have so many login interfaces that it is hard to remember every different password because experts recommend we should not use the same one in every login session.
- Fear of giving out card numbers: the “trustability” of the Internet as an economical (and interpersonal) space is at stake here.
- Broadband anxiety: the need for high-speed connection.

At the same time, to inhabit the Internet as an interzone is also a way of fighting and breaking the idea of distance with virtual presence. The perception of the Internet as a physical space is paradoxically related through the metaphors of the present: the permanent and enhanced “here”. We rely on “external brains” (cell-phones and computers) to communicate, remember, even live out secondary lives. The bionic condition of the cybernetic organism, the *cyborg*, also offers us an interzonal reflection. The body is seen as hybrid and fluctuating between zones; Stelarc and his obsession with the obsolete body or Amber Case who says that by clicking we become a new version of *homo sapiens*. But given the situation the question is: does this pace connect or conquer us? Digital hypochondriacs of course fear that there’s nothing left to do. On the other hand, the exploration of unknown territories is again opening up the possibility of new spaces and new colonizers.

If the *Interzone* as William S. Burroughs anticipated it represents a transitional phase in between, the Internet would then be an interzone between real life and the virtual life that creates the illusion that what you see is what you get (WUSIWUG). As Georg Simmel puts it: “Spatial relations are only the condition, on the one hand, and the symbol, on the other, of human relations” (Simmel, 1950:402). According to this, the physical metaphor of the Internet as a place, a hybrid, interstitial one, an inter-zone, would help to understand the condition and the symbolic aspects of human relations. For, as Lienhard affirms, the metaphors we live by are always being rewritten by any new technology. In this case, the Internet (a medium of media) is both serving and disrupting human relations the way we knew them in ways we cannot yet even fully imagine. In any case, it is certain that the Internet is in the process of modifying creativity and producing disciplines that will have to coexist with the previous ones.

Interzones in the Internet: the case of digital literature

But the Internet is also a complex medium that has reshaped and redefined other media. Literature itself has been “affected” by this reshaping creation process. I have spoken elsewhere about the concept

of “digital literature” or “e-lit” and I would like to focus now on new devices that are also new interzones where the reading act has to be produced. To go digital is a permanent movement. There are many different shifting spaces where we translate what we knew into this new “(no)space” dominated by the power of a screen. There have been examples of rewriting the literary tradition into this new space that – when using all the capacities and the added value of the new medium – constitute an exercise of rewriting and re-reading, a deep reflection, on the production of literature in the digital era. I would just mention the cases of Alison Clifford with e.e. cummings (*The Sweet Old Etcetera*: <http://www.sweetoldetc.org/>) or Rui Torres with Florbela Spanca (*Amor-mundo* <http://telepoesis.net/amor-mundo/>) or Clarice Lispector (*Amor de Clarice* <http://telepoesis.net/amorclarice/amor.html>). But the emergence of new devices is also in the process of determining how literature, e-literature, is adjusting the need to create, communicate, learn, etc. to the different scenarios where it may exist. Forms of digital literature appear as interzones inside the general continuum of the Internet.

This is the case of *Strange Rain* by Erik Loyer, a piece conceived and created to be read on an iPad that transforms the iPad into a piece of rainy sky. I have always thought that being inspired by two very well known iPad apps (*Gravitarium* and *Draw Stars*), this “strange rain” allows us to experience calligrammes in the style of Apollinaire’s mood in “Il pleut” with different devices. By touching the screen we act as dowzers who are able to attract rain, but also as choreographers and performers of a particular tactile melody and textual rain created by our fingers.

Strange Rain “is meant first and foremost to be a *relaxing diversion*”, as we read in the instructions. To this end, there are three different playing/reading moods: “wordless”, “whispers” and “story”. Besides the artistic use of the game itself, the really interesting thing is the setting of an experiment to see if the playful interactions with rain could work to tell a story. In the middle of a tempest, we get familiar with the fragmentary thoughts of a man who is in trouble and looks for a moment of reflection under the rain in order to find the necessary strength to come in and face the situation.

Coming back to the locative metaphor, it may be useful to note that in order to read this text it is necessary to keep producing tactile actions that actually generate the text. To keep reading, one must start circling his thoughts and transferring them from one place to another. We manipulate the character by pushing him through his memories and thoughts and by returning him to the established order. The reading process is a sort of wandering between locations. To read here is to move fingers and eyes - as always has happened during the reading process - but in a circular way. Delving little by little into his interiority, his consciousness, we seem to be descending into the “dantesque” circles of the main character’s mind. At the same time, we have to keep drawing the sky in order to make him talk in this stream of consciousness that now is literally a stream and flows as one. What we do is a sort of digital “flaneurship”. As “flanneurs” and

“voyeurs”, we ourselves move in a no space (his thoughts as they appear in a screen) in a way that has to do with creating identities, establishing spatial groups with boundaries that are very similar to spatial boundaries. This reading exercise is an example of interzone, of a transit, of an in between forms of expression mixing art and literature.

Conclusions

The commitment to simplicity has existed from the very beginning of the Internet’s history. Despite this, the understanding of Internet society and its forms of production, consumption and receiving information, creativity, sociability, etc. is getting more and more complex. *Strange Rain* has been used here as an example of a translated art form – literature – to the digital dimension by using a specific interzone, new and to be colonized creatively: the iPad. It is, in the end, an experiment to see if there are going to be substantial changes when talking about literature that has moved from one zone to another one. The study of this specific interzone will be in the near future a way of investigating deeply the level of incorporated habits. If the death or survival of a technology should be predicted, the question has to be related to its functionality. There always has to be another question addressed to the core of the problem: is it a metaphor for something more than a function? Leinhard answer’s is this one:

Only after a technology has touched us in that deep visceral and emotional place will it find a way to persist from one generation to the next. Once a technology finds that place of metaphor in our psyche, its outward form will survive. The user interface will not be given up.

The Internet is already of a certain metaphoric relevance in our psyche regardless whether we decide to be digital residents or digital visitors of the Interzones.

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INTERZONES COMME HÉTÉROTOPIE ENTRE MÉMOIRE ET INNOVATION

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En exégèse à son compte rendu sur l'Exposition Universelle de 1855, Charles Baudelaire écrit :

Il est peu d'occupations aussi intéressantes, aussi attachantes, aussi pleines de surprises et de révélations pour un critique, pour un rêveur dont l'esprit est tourné à la généralisation, aussi bien qu'à l'étude des détails, et, pour mieux dire encore, à l'idée d'ordre et de hiérarchie universelle, que la comparaison des nations et de leurs produits respectifs. [...] que dirait un Winckelmann moderne [...] en face d'un produit chinois, produit étrange, bizarre, contourné dans sa forme, intense par sa couleur, et quelquefois délicat jusqu'à l'évanouissement ? Cependant c'est un échantillon de la beauté universelle; mais il faut, pour qu'il soit compris, que le critique, le spectateur opère en lui-même une transformation qui tient du mystère, et que, par un phénomène de la volonté agissant sur l'imagination, il apprenne de lui-même à participer au milieu qui a donné naissance à cette floraison insolite. Peu d'hommes ont - au complet - cette grâce divine du cosmopolitisme; mais tous peuvent l'acquérir à des degrés divers.¹

Les réflexions et le programme de Baudelaire persistent sur notre horizon culturel. À l'aube de la mondialisation, annoncée d'ailleurs par le phénomène des expositions universelles, le poète saisit en effet l'exigence de mettre en cause l'identité et le rôle de la culture occidentale afin de pouvoir se confronter à la différence – tout en l'assimilant – comme ce sera le cas avec son exemple de l'art chinois.

De nos jours, l'appareil intellectuel que le siècle des Lumières nous a transmis en héritage pose question lorsque nous jetons notre regard sur d'autres cultures. À l'époque, l'on pouvait croire que – la nature servant de point de repère – tout individu était pour cela pareil aux autres, et que les différences culturelles étaient par conséquent surmontables. Toutefois, étant donné qu'après Galilée l'homme (la Terre) n'est plus au centre de l'univers, et qu'après Darwin, il n'est même plus au centre de la Terre et que, plus près de nous encore, après la fin de l'eurocentrisme, l'Europe n'a plus d'hégémonie culturelle, le problème de la confrontation à la différence se pose à la manière d'un drame mais également sous la forme d'un défi fascinant.

Ainsi la tolérance des Lumières – impliquant l’homologation et la patience, mais ne prévoyant pas la reconnaissance de la différence en tant que tel – fait-elle aujourd’hui défaut. Il n’y a pas non plus de multiculturalisme – simple assumption de l’hétérogénéité d’un ensemble de composantes existant sur la planète, et qui résulte en une sorte d’entropie diffuse. A y bien songer, cette confrontation et ce défi se font, comme le proposait déjà Baudelaire, au nom du cosmopolitisme.

Pourtant, au tout début du XX^e siècle, Paul Bourget (*Nouveaux essais de psychologie contemporaine*, 1886) était déjà en mesure de réfléchir sur la complexité conceptuelle du cosmopolitisme, en s’inspirant d’un cosmopolite d’excellence, Ivan Tourgeniev :

Ses souvenirs se promenaient d’une extrémité à l’autre de l’Europe, rappelant ici un paysage de l’île de Wight, là une rue d’une ville d’université allemande, puis un horizon d’Italie, le tout exprimé dans un langage d’une excellente tradition française, qui, à lui seul trahissait un très long et très intime séjour dans notre pays.²

En s’inspirant des vagabondages de la mémoire de Tourgeniev, Bourget conclut que le véritable cosmopolitisme ne peut qu’être une attitude élitiste et variée, car éminemment singulière, et jamais un phénomène de masse :

Le cosmopolitisme semble, par cela seul qu’il est toujours un raffinement individuel, comporter une très grande variété de nuances. Elles se ramènent cependant, et par définition même, à deux principales. Il peut arriver que l’homme soumis ainsi à l’influence des pays étrangers appartienne à une race d’une civilisation très avancée. Dans ce premier cas, il demandera aux mœurs nouvelles qu’il étudiera d’être plus simples que les mœurs nationales. C’est un rajeunissement de ses sensations qui lui est nécessaire, un retour vers une autre nature moins compliquée. [...] Mais changeons seulement les données du problème. Imaginons que le cosmopolite appartienne à une nation moins fatiguée par un long héritage de pensées que la société aux mœurs de laquelle il s’initie. Pour un tel homme, le cosmopolitisme ne sera plus uniquement un plaisir, ce sera une éducation. Il demandera aux milieux nouveaux, non plus des sensations, mais des idées.³

Encore de nos jours, le sociologue allemand Ulrich Beck (*Pouvoir et contre-pouvoir à l’ère de la mondialisation*, 2003) suggère que l’objectif à atteindre par une éducation mondialisée devrait être précisément le cosmopolitisme. La société du risque dépasse les frontières usuelles caractérisant l’État national de la première modernité et va dans la direction d’un État transnational, coopératif et cosmopolite où la réalisation de l’intérêt national se produit simultanément à plusieurs niveaux, locaux et transnationaux, et au sein d’institutions qui sont parfois très éloignées des frontières du territoire d’appartenance.

Il serait inutile, superflu, accessoire, de dire que ces considérations occupent tout naturellement une place centrale dans nos réflexions et nos interrogations concernant notre doctorat “Interzones”, à plus forte raison compte tenu de l’expérience récente du premier semestre de l’année 2009/2010 où nous tous – doctorants, professeurs, chercheurs, sans oublier les structures administratives – avons été les protagonistes d’une activité intense, extrêmement stimulante et problématique à la fois, dans un contexte indéniablement cosmopolite.

Il est nécessaire de garder à l’esprit, d’ailleurs, que la dénomination de notre doctorat renvoie à une conception spatiale et à un dialogue entre des espaces différents, vraisemblablement à leur perméabilité, ce qui ne saurait être considéré comme un point de départ acquis mais comme un objectif à atteindre.

À ce propos, il peut être bon et utile de revisiter un célèbre et court essai de Michel Foucault sur l’*Hétérotopie* (1964), justement parce qu’il pose les espaces au centre de son discours et il paraît, sous plusieurs aspects, prémonitoire :

La grande hantise qui a obsédé le XIX^e siècle a été, on le sait, l’histoire : thèmes du développement et de l’arrêt, thèmes de la crise et du cycle, thèmes de l’accumulation du passé, grande surcharge des morts, refroidissement menaçant du monde. C’est dans le second principe de thermodynamique que le XIX^e siècle a trouvé l’essentiel de ses ressources mythologiques. L’époque actuelle serait peut-être plutôt l’époque de l’espace. Nous sommes à l’époque du simultané, nous sommes à l’époque de la juxtaposition, à l’époque du proche et du lointain, du côte à côte, du dispersé. Nous sommes à un moment où le monde s’éprouve, je crois, moins comme une grande vie qui se développerait à travers le temps que comme un réseau qui relie des points et qui entrecroise son écheveau. Peut-être pourrait-on dire que certains des conflits idéologiques qui animent les polémiques d’aujourd’hui se déroulent entre les pieux descendants du temps et les habitants acharnés de l’espace.⁴

Bien avant 1968 Foucault eut la prescience des problèmes de la société mondialisée que Mai 68 allait, en partie, produire :

[...] le problème de la place ou de l’emplacement se pose pour les hommes en termes de démographie; et ce dernier problème de l’emplacement humain, ce n’est pas simplement la question de savoir s’il y aura assez de place pour l’homme dans le monde - problème qui est après tout bien important -, c’est aussi le problème de savoir quelles relations de voisinage, quel type de stockage, de circulation, de repérage, de classement des éléments humains doivent être retenus de préférence dans telle ou telle situation pour venir à telle ou telle fin. Nous sommes à une époque où l’espace se donne à nous sous la forme de relations d’emplacements.

En tout cas, je crois que l’inquiétude d’aujourd’hui concerne fondamentalement l’espace, sans doute beaucoup plus que le temps; le temps n’apparaît probablement que comme l’un des jeux de

distribution possibles entre les éléments qui se répartissent dans l'espace.⁵

Le cosmopolite, le citoyen du monde, ne peut pas se borner à se sentir “chez soi” partout, car cette attitude comporte une insoutenable homologation de l'existant, qui refuse à être compris. Le cosmopolite finit en fait par s'identifier au flâneur. Il est donc nécessaire qu'il arrive à saisir les différentes “qualités” des espaces.

[...] nous ne vivons pas dans un espace homogène et vide, mais, au contraire, dans un espace qui est tout chargé de qualités, un espace, qui est peut-être aussi hanté de fantasme; l'espace de notre perception première, celui de nos rêveries, celui de nos passions détiennent en eux-mêmes des qualités qui sont comme intrinsèques; c'est un espace léger, éthéré, transparent, ou bien c'est un espace obscur, rocailleux, encombré : c'est un espace d'en haut, c'est un espace des cimes, ou c'est au contraire un espace d'en bas, un espace de la boue, c'est un espace qui peut être courant comme l'eau vive, c'est un espace qui peut être fixé, figé comme la pierre ou comme le cristal. [...] L'espace dans lequel nous vivons, par lequel nous sommes attirés hors de nous-mêmes dans lequel, se déroule précisément l'érosion de notre vie, et notre temps et notre histoire, cet espace qui nous ronge et nous ravine est en lui-même aussi un espace hétérogène. Autrement dit, nous ne vivons pas dans une sorte de vide, à l'intérieur duquel on pourrait situer des individus et des choses. Nous ne vivons pas à l'intérieur d'un vide qui se colorerait de différents chatouillements, nous vivons à l'intérieur d'un ensemble de relations qui définissent des emplacements irréductibles les uns aux autres et absolument non superposables.⁶

Ce qui fait problème pour Foucault est une certaine typologie de lieux qui anticipent les “non lieux” de Marc Augé et qui appartiennent proprement à la modernité :

Mais ce qui m'intéresse, ce sont, parmi tous ces emplacements, certains d'entre eux qui ont la curieuse propriété d'être en rapport avec tous les autres emplacements, mais sur un mode tel qu'ils suspendent, neutralisent ou inversent l'ensemble des rapports qui se trouvent, par eux, désignés, reflétés ou réfléchis. Ces espaces, en quelque sorte, qui sont en liaison avec tous les autres, qui contredisent pourtant tous les autres emplacements, sont de deux grands types.

Il y a d'abord les utopies. Les utopies, ce sont les emplacements sans lieu réel. Ce sont les emplacements qui entretiennent avec l'espace réel de la société un rapport général d'analogie directe ou inversée. C'est la société elle-même perfectionnée ou c'est l'envers de la société, mais, de toute façon, ces utopies sont des espaces qui sont fondamentalement essentiellement irréels.

Il y a également, et ceci probablement dans toute culture, dans toute civilisation, des lieux réels, des lieux effectifs, des lieux qui ont dessinés dans l'institution même de la société, et qui sont des sortes de contre-emplacements, sortes d'utopies effectivement réalisées dans lesquelles

les emplacements réels, tous les autres emplacements réels que l'on peut trouver à l'intérieur de la culture sont à la fois représentés, contestés et inversés, des sortes de lieux qui sont hors de tous les lieux, bien que pourtant ils soient effectivement localisables. Ces lieux, parce qu'ils sont absolument autres que tous les emplacements qu'ils reflètent et dont ils parlent, je les appellerai, par opposition aux utopies, les hétérotopies.⁷

Foucault situe parmi les hétérotopies des “lieux” que nous pourrions définir – en ayant recours à l’anthropologie – comme “initiatiques”, tels que les années de pensionnat, le service militaire, le voyage de noces. Foucault les définit “hétérotopies de crise”. Moi, je ferais référence justement à des expériences momentanées, alors que Foucault y inclut aussi les maisons de retraite, les prisons, les cimetières et ... les jardins (mais là, nous rentrons dans le symbolique !), il est évident alors que la réflexion de Foucault avait comme point de repère la thématique du “surveiller et punir”.

Mais Foucault, arrivé à ce point-là, doit nécessairement se mesurer à ce qu’il avait, d’une certaine manière, laissé de côté, c’est-à-dire le Temps :

Les hétérotopies sont liées, le plus souvent, à des découpages du temps, c'est-à-dire qu'elles ouvrent sur ce qu'on pourrait appeler, par pure symétrie, des hétérochronies ; l'hétérotopie se met à fonctionner à plein lorsque les hommes se trouvent dans une sorte de rupture absolue avec leur temps traditionnel ; [...] D'une façon générale, dans une société comme la nôtre, hétérotopie et hétérochronie s'organisent et s'arrangent d'une façon relativement complexe. Il y a d'abord les hétérotopies du temps qui s'accumule à l'infini, par exemple les musées, les bibliothèques ; musées et bibliothèques sont des hétérotopies dans lesquelles le temps ne cesse de s'amonceler et de se jucher au sommet de lui-même, alors qu'au XVII^e, jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^e siècle encore, les musées et les bibliothèques étaient l'expression d'un choix individuel. En revanche, l'idée de tout accumuler, l'idée de constituer une sorte d'archive générale, la volonté d'enfermer dans un lieu tous les temps, toutes les époques, toutes les formes, tous les goûts, l'idée de constituer un lieu de tous les temps qui soit lui-même hors du temps, et inaccessible à sa morsure, le projet d'organiser ainsi une sorte d'accumulation perpétuelle et indéfinie du temps dans un lieu qui ne bougerait pas, eh bien, tout cela appartient à notre modernité. Le musée et la bibliothèque sont des hétérotopies qui sont propres à la culture occidentale du XIX^e siècle.

En face de ces hétérotopies, qui sont liées à l'accumulation du temps, il y a des hétérotopies qui sont liées, au contraire, au temps dans ce qu'il a de plus futile, de plus passager, de plus précaire, et cela sur le mode de la fête. Ce sont des hétérotopies non plus éternitaires, mais absolument chroniques. Telles sont les foires, ces merveilleux emplacements vides au bord des villes, qui se peuplent, une ou deux fois par an, de baraques, d'étalages, d'objets hétéroclites, de lutteurs, de femmes-serpent, de diseuses de bonne aventure. Tout récemment aussi, on a inventé une nouvelle hétérotopie chronique, ce sont les villages de

vacances ; ces villages polynésiens qui offrent trois petites semaines d'une nudité primitive et éternelle aux habitants des villes ; et vous voyez d'ailleurs que, par les deux formes d'hétérotopies, se rejoignent celle de la fête et celle de l'éternité du temps qui s'accumule, les paillotes de Djerba sont en un sens parentes des bibliothèques et des musées, car, en retrouvant la vie polynésienne, on abolit le temps, mais c'est tout aussi bien le temps qui se retrouve, c'est toute l'histoire de l'humanité qui remonte jusqu'à sa source comme dans une sorte de grand savoir immédiat.⁸

Le discours de Michel Foucault nous interpelle directement en tant que membres du Doctorat "Interzones", parce que d'une part il nous pose une série de problèmes similaires à ceux auxquels nous devons faire face, mais d'autre part il en fait surgir d'autres par l'effet de la défamiliarisation historique qui nous sépare des années de rédaction de cet essai.

Sans aucun doute le doctorat est, de par sa nature même, un non-lieu, une hétérotopie, où se réalise un des nombreux parcours initiatiques de la société moderne : un parcours de formation, s'inscrivant dans un horizon social qui, depuis l'époque de l'intervention de Foucault, a entre-temps profondément évolué, en particulier par sa plus grande complexité, et conséquemment par sa dimension planétaire. Le lien social, toujours plus immatériel, est privé de ses connexions à un ancrage précis, à un lieu, à un territoire : la dissolution des relations sociales traditionnelles, l'affaiblissement des rapports personnels directs, la régression des rencontres qui ne sont pas finalisées à la réalisation d'un objectif, l'informatisation des instruments de communication, l'élargissement des intérêts à l'échelle nationale, internationale, planétaire créent d'une part un isolement sans précédents, d'autre part une nouvelle socialisation qui se configure sur le modèle d'un réseau de liens.

Le problème qui se pose alors est de faire dialoguer les espaces différents qui composent l'horizon planétaire, sans pouvoir se servir d'un discours global et, au contraire, en sauvegardant au maximum les énoncés individuels. Ainsi ce qui, dans le discours de Foucault, avait été négligé à cause d'autres exigences plus impératives, revient ici au premier plan : il s'agit de la communication. La rhétorique est de nos jours l'acte de négocier la distance entre les individus à propos d'un problème, on devra désormais associer à la métaphore l'idée de mise en perspective, à la métonymie le concept de réduction, à la synecdoque celui de représentation, alors que l'on attribuera à l'ironie la fonction dialectique.

Dans ce contexte une communication qui se produit en ne faisant recours qu'au sens littéral des mots n'est qu'un cas extrême, parfois le résultat final, d'un plus ample univers de pratiques discursives qui mélangent entre eux les sens littéraux et les sens figurés. Dans ce jeu linguistique qui se développe parmi les locuteurs, il arrive quelque chose d'extrêmement important : non seulement mettent-ils au point l'objet du discours en l'observant sous des perspectives

différentes, mais ils font encore de ce dernier un point de repère privilégié en négociant la distance qui les sépare les uns des autres.

Les grandes narrations idéologiques (Lyotard) désormais évanouies, se pose le problème des énoncés qui nous obligent quand même à une sémiotique de la narration et qui finissent par réabsorber la dimension spatiale dans la temporelle. L'hétérochronie dont parle Foucault ne peut à ce propos nous porter secours, car elle serait nécessairement "homologisante", et nous savons en revanche que le savoir se fonde sur la différence. Le temps, l'histoire, à n'en pas douter, au centre du discours du XIX^e, restent incontournables, mais également parce que la "différence" requiert un arrière-pays (comme on parlerait d'un arrière-plan) par rapport auquel elle peut se définir.

L'*Angelus Novus* dont parle Benjamin avance en tournant sa tête vers le passé, inévitablement, dirons-nous, parce que pour avoir une innovation il faut pouvoir établir des comparaisons avec ce que nous jugeons consolidé : il n'y a pas de nouveaux mots sans référence à un dictionnaire, ou du moins à un patrimoine commun.

D'autre part, ces considérations sont aussi valables pour les espaces, qui sont tels car ils ont une "histoire", et donc une identité reconnue et pour cela transmissible. Augustin Berque écrit dans *Cinq propositions pour une théorie du paysage* (1994):

[...] la moindre investigation historique ou anthropologique révèle inmanquablement ce fait, inadmissible pour notre sens commun : le paysage n'existe pas comme tel à toutes les époques, ni dans tous les groupes sociaux. En Europe notamment, c'est une notion qui n'est apparue qu'à la Renaissance. Plus renversant encore : la beauté grandiose de la nature sauvage - celle par exemple que nous admirons dans les Alpes - n'a pas été reconnue avant le XVIII^e siècle. Par ailleurs, des grandes civilisations, comme l'Inde ou l'Islam, ont appréhendé et jugé leur environnement dans des termes irréductibles à la notion de paysage. En réalité, le mot paysage, les tableaux de paysage, l'exaltation esthétique et morale du paysage sont des phénomènes particuliers, dont la plupart des cultures ne donnent pas l'exemple.⁹

Étant chargé d'une spécificité qui lui est propre (l'espace) et que le passé lui fournit parce qu'il en est la mémoire, le paysage n'est pas moins intéressant que la bibliothèque, le musée, ou le cinéma parce que sa charge subversive serait moins élevée. Quand nous commençons à voir le paysage, nous commençons à le voir partout, et le monde entier nous apparaît comme une constellation de paysages. Mais s'il est inscrit dans les limites de notre culture, si au contraire il appartient à l'événement culturel que nous appelons Modernité, alors le paysage devient un seuil : par lui on peut rentrer dans la Modernité et, peut-être, on peut aussi en sortir. Mais pour en sortir, il faut, de quelque manière, le suspendre, l'anéantir et le renverser, c'est-à-dire qu'il faut appliquer au paysage un dispositif de la même sorte, une typologie adéquate et de force égale.

Plus que de lieux il faudrait à ce point parler de paysages, de paysages anthropiques, culturels, porteurs d'une spécificité, chargés d'histoire. Pour accéder aux lieux, il faut donc subvertir les paysages. Si la perspective n'est que la "forme symbolique" de l'émergence du sujet moderne, de manière symétrique, la découverte du paysage devient la forme symbolique de l'émergence du monde moderne et que le regard de ce sujet rend objective. Il est possible de dépasser le seuil qui se pose, depuis la Modernité, entre le Sujet et le Monde à partir du fait que le paysage, comme toute hétérotopie, ouvre et ferme en même temps par rapport à d'autres lieux.

Le problème de l'espace est sans aucun doute central pour une réflexion sur le concept d'Interzones, mais il ne peut pas être un raccourci permettant de sortir de l'histoire et donc des problématiques liées à la mémoire. Nous savons par ailleurs en quelle mesure la mémoire elle-même est depuis toujours, dans le cas des "arts de la mémoire", en correspondances avec des "lieux". Nous ne partageons toutefois pas de mémoire commune et c'est là un des défis que notre doctorat doit relever : nous ne l'avons pas parce qu'elle est l'histoire de "lieux" différents. La Tour de Babel d'aujourd'hui, avec son développement vertical (son hétérotopie), ne fait plus, ou pour le dire mieux, ne fait pas seulement allusion à la confusion des langues, mais à celle des mémoires et donc des identités. Il faut éviter qu'elle devienne, par substitution, une stratification de métalangages.

Bien que cela paraisse paradoxal, ce sont ceux qui, au XIX^e siècle, avaient anticipé ces problématiques, qui pourraient bien nous porter secours aujourd'hui : Charles Baudelaire, à partir de l'hétérotopie fantasmagorique des premières Expositions Universelles, avait posé la Modernité au centre du débat, et Arthur Rimbaud, outre son célèbre appel "il faut être absolument moderne", nous avait déjà invités à élargir l'horizon du regard et des savoirs.

Il n'est sans doute pas de dépositaire plus véritable de cet héritage que la revue "Documents" dans les années trente, avec son extraordinaire laboratoire d'idées et de points de vue insolites. Elle devint l'espace privilégié où s'affrontèrent tradition et académie, mais aussi où se déploya le vaste univers des objets comme constitutif du nouveau paysage.

L'objectif qu'*Interzones* devrait poursuivre, à mon avis, est celui-ci : ouvrir de nouveaux horizons au savoir, et rendre praticables de nouveaux chemins en considérant l'imaginaire comme seul patrimoine collectif, au-delà de la contingence des espaces et du temps, en le considérant également comme une hétérotopie en mesure d'être réellement transversale. *Interzones* est un programme exigeant et difficile qui nécessite, avant d'être abordé, la (prise de) conscience de ses limites : des limites concernant l'organisation, des limites culturelles et, pourquoi pas, des limites financières...

Cette exigence et cet engagement qui sont les nôtres ont été et seront pour tous, me semble-t-il, la garantie de l'acquisition de connaissances véritables et nouvelles.

- 1** Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres Complètes*, Paris, Gallimard Pléiade, 1954, pp.688-89
- 2** Paul Bourget, *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, Paris, Plon, 1917, t. II, p. 200.
- 3** *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.
- 4** Rédigé en Tunisie pour une conférence tenue le 14 mars 1967 au Cercle d'études architecturale, l'auteur n'autorisa la publication du texte qu'au printemps 1984. Michel Foucault, « Des espaces autres », *Dits et Écrits*, Paris, Gallimard, 1994, t. 4, texte n° 360, p. 1571.
- 5** *Ibid.*, 1572-73.
- 6** *Ibid.*, 1573-74.
- 7** *Ibid.*, 1572-73.
- 8** *Ibid.*, 1578-79.
- 9** Augustin Berque (sous la direction de), *Cinq propositions pour une théorie du paysage*, Seyssel, Éditions Champ Vallon, 1994, pp. 5-6.

Interzones as a Heterotopy Between Memory and Innovation

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As an exordium to the account of his experience of the 1855 “Exposition Universelle”, Charles Baudelaire writes:

There are few occupations so interesting, so engaging, so full of surprises and revelations for a critic, or for dreamer whose mind is given to generalization as well as to the study of details and, to be more exact, to the idea of a universal order and hierarchy, as the comparison of nations and their respective products. [...] what would a modern Winckelmann say [...] were he confronted by a product of China, something strange, bizarre, contorted in form, intense in color, and sometimes so fragile as to be almost evanescent? Yet it is an example of universal beauty; but in order to understand it, the critic, the spectator must effect within himself a mysterious transformation, by means of a phenomenon of the will acting on the imagination, he must learn by himself to participate in the milieu which has given birth to this strange flowering. Few men possess to the fullest degree this divine grace of cosmopolitanism; but all men may acquire it to a greater or lesser degree.¹

Baudelaire's reflections and efforts are still looming large on our present cultural horizon. At the dawn of globalisation, ushered in by the Universal Exhibitions phenomenon, the poet captures the need to question identities and the role of Western culture in order to be able to face - and assimilate - difference, as with his example of Chinese art.

In our time, the intellectual heritage passed down to us from the Enlightenment is called into question when we cast our gaze on other cultures. Once upon a time, it could plausibly be believed - with nature serving as the example - that all people basically resembled one another, and that cultural differences were therefore surmountable. But given that, since Galileo, Man (the Earth) has no longer been at the centre of the universe, and that since Darwin, he is no longer even at the centre of the Planet and that, since the death of Eurocentrism even closer to our time, Europe has lost its cultural hegemony, the problem of difference poses itself dramatically and at the same time as an intriguing challenge.

Thus Enlightenment tolerance - implying approval and patience, but not the recognition of difference as such - is today found wanting.

Nor is there any form of multiculturalism - the simple lukewarm acceptance of our planet's heterogeneity perceived as some diffused entropy - ready to take its place. In fact, these debates and these challenges, as Baudelaire intimated more than a century ago, are best understood in the context of cosmopolitanism.

More than a century ago, in his *Nouveaux essais de psychologie contemporaine* (1886), Paul Bourget was already in a position to reflect on the conceptual complexity of cosmopolitanism, availing himself of that cosmopolitan figure *par excellence*, Ivan Turgenev:

His memory wandered from one end of Europe to the other, recalling now a landscape on the Isle of Wight, now a road in a German university town, now an Italian horizon, all expressed according to the highest traditions of the French language, thereby betraying a very long and very intimate experience in our country.²

Drawing on the example of Turgenev's wandering memory, Bourget concludes that true cosmopolitanism can only ever be an élitist, idiosyncratic, and most singular attitude, and never a mass phenomenon:

Cosmopolitanism seems, by simple virtue of the fact that it always requires an individual refinement, to entail an enormous variety of nuance. These nuances can, however, and by definition, be reduced to two main varieties. It is possible that the man thus subjected to the influence of foreign countries belongs to a very advanced civilisation. In this first case, he expects that the new customs he studies will be simpler than his own national customs. He must make himself, and his sensations, somehow younger, and recover in himself a less complicated nature [...] But now let us reverse the situation. Let us imagine that the cosmopolitan belongs to a nation less burdened by a long intellectual heritage than the society in whose customs he is initiated. For such a man, cosmopolitanism will not be a mere pleasure, it will be an education. He will seek not sensations in his new surroundings, but ideas.³

Even today, German sociologist Ulrich Beck (*Pouvoir et contre-pouvoir à l'ère de la mondialisation*, 2003) suggests that the goal of a globalised education ought precisely to be cosmopolitanism. The '*société du risque*' goes beyond the frontiers typically characterising the early modern nation-state and is moving towards a Transnational State characterised by cooperation and cosmopolitanism, where national interests are simultaneously pursued at various local and transnational levels, and in institutions which may be far from a person's country of origin.

It would be pointless, indeed superfluous, to say that these considerations naturally occupy an important place in any reflection on our 'Interzones' PhD, especially in light of our experience of the first semester of the 2009-2010 academic year. All of us - students, academic staff, researchers, not to mention administrators - have been part of an intensive, stimulating and at times problematic enterprise in an undeniably cosmopolitan environment.

Moreover, we must try always to bear in mind that the name given to our PhD programme alludes not only to a spatial concept but also to the dialogue between different spaces; and to their predictable porosity; such conceptions are our objective and not our starting point.

To this end, it may be useful to revisit a well-known 1967 short essay by Michel Foucault, *Hétérotopie*, precisely because its author put space at the centre of his prescient discussion:

The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. The nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermodynamics. The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity, we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. One could perhaps say that certain ideological conflicts animating present-day polemics oppose the pious descendents of time and the determined inhabitants of space.⁴

Long before 1968, Foucault foresaw the the problems of the globalised society that May 1968 would, in part, produce:

[...] the problem of siting or placement arises for mankind in terms of demography. This problem of the human site or living space is not simply that of knowing whether there will be enough space for men in the world – a problem that is certainly quite important – but also that of knowing what relations of propinquity, what type of storage, circulation, marking, and classification of human elements should be adopted in a given situation in order to achieve a given end. Our epoch is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites.

In any case I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space.⁵

The cosmopolitan citizen of the world cannot limit himself to feeling “at home” everywhere, because this attitude implies an unjustified sanction of that which exists, and which he refuses to try and understand. On this account, the cosmopolitan ends up as a mere wanderer. Instead, therefore, he needs to learn to grasp the different “qualities” of various spaces.

[...]we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well. The space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions hold within

themselves qualities that seem intrinsic: there is a light, ethereal, transparent space, or again a dark, rough, encumbered space; a space from above, of summits, or on the contrary a space from below of mud; or again a space that can be flowing like sparkling water, or space that is fixed, congealed, like stone or crystal. [...] The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.⁶

Foucault's problem is with a certain typology of places which anticipate Marc Augé's "non-places" and which are an intrinsic feature of modernity :

But among all these sites, I am interested in certain ones that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect. These spaces, as it were, which are linked with all the others, which however contradict all the other sites, are of two main types.

First there are the utopias. Utopias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces.

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places, places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society, which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.⁷

Using anthropological tools, Foucault reserves special mention for "places" of initiation such as boarding schools, military barracks and honeymoon suites, defining them as "heterotopias of crisis". I would tend to refer here to temporary experiences whereas Foucault extends his categories to include retirement homes, prisons, cemeteries and even gardens (but there, we enter the realm of the symbolic!) - Foucault's reflections here obviously build on the themes of Discipline and Punish - I would like to limit myself here to a discussion of momentary experiences. Indeed, even Foucault, at a certain point, is forced to face what he had to a certain degree neglected, namely time:

Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time, which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry,

heterochronies. The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time [...] From a general standpoint, in a society like ours heterotopias and heterochronies are structured and distributed in a relatively complex fashion. First of all, there are heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time, for example museums and libraries; museums and libraries have become heterotopias in which time never stops building up and topping its own summit, whereas in the seventeenth century, even at the end of the century, museums and libraries were the expression of an individual choice. By contrast, the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity. The museum and the library are heterotopias that are proper to western culture of the nineteenth century.

Opposite these heterotopias that are linked to the accumulation of time, there are those linked, on the contrary, to time in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect, to time in the mode of the festival. These heterotopias are not oriented toward the eternal, they are rather absolutely temporal. Such, for example, are the fairgrounds, these marvelous empty sites on the outskirts of cities that teem once or twice a year with stands, displays, heteroclitic objects, wrestlers, snakewomen, fortune-tellers, and so forth. Quite recently, a new kind of temporal heterotopia has been invented: vacation villages, such as those Polynesian villages that offer a compact three weeks of primitive and eternal nudity to the inhabitants of the cities. You see, moreover, that through the two forms of heterotopias that come together here, the heterotopia of the festival and that of the eternity of accumulating time, the huts of Djerba are in a sense relatives of libraries and museums for the rediscovery of Polynesian life abolishes time; yet the experience is just as much the rediscovery of time, it is as if the entire history of humanity reaching back to its origin were accessible in a sort of immediate knowledge.⁸

Foucault's discussion is of prime interest to us as participants in the "Interzones" PhD programme, not only because he addresses to us a series of questions similar to those we must face, but also because its very historical distance from us allows us to ask questions we would not have raised otherwise.

Without doubt, our Ph D is, by its very nature, a non-place, a heterotopia, a kind of place where many initiation paths can co-exist in modern times; ours is a programme of doctoral studies taking place in a social context which has changed profoundly since the days of Foucault's essay, one which is more complex and which has assumed planetary dimensions. Social bonds, ever less material, are no longer tied to an anchor, a place, a territory; the dissolution of traditional social relations, the watering-down of direct interpersonal relationships, the trend away from encounters aiming at the achievement of a pre-determined goal, the digitalisation of communication tools, the rise of national, international and even

planetary lobbies all lead to an unprecedented isolation on the one hand, and to a new 'network' model of sociability on the other.

The problem, therefore, is to make it possible for the different spaces which compose the global map to talk to one another, without being able to fall back on a universal discourse and, on the contrary, while safeguarding the capacity of individual voices to be heard. Thus what was neglected by Foucault because of other more important priorities now becomes again the central challenge: communication. Rhetoric today is the act of negotiating the distance between individuals concerning a given issue; from now on, we will have to associate the idea of perspective with metaphor, the concept of reduction with metonymy, representation with synecdoche, while attributing to irony a dialectical function.

In this context any act of communication which limits itself to the literal meanings of words is an extreme case, or perhaps the final result, of a broad universe of discursive practices which mix literal and figurative meanings. Something quintessential happens when this linguistic game is played by two or more interlocutors: not only do they examine the subject in question from a variety of perspectives, but they make the variety of perspectives itself a privileged landmark in the process of negotiating the distance which separates them from one another.

With the grand ideological narratives now gone (Lyotard), the problem arises of how to deal with those utterances which nevertheless force a semiotics of narration upon us, and which end up absorbing the spatial dimension in the temporal one. The "heterochrony" of which Foucault speaks cannot be of any help to us here, because it would be necessarily "homologising", and we know that knowledge is built on difference. Time and history - themes at the centre of 19th century intellectual debates - remain essential, but equal because "difference" requires a backdrop against which to define itself.

The *Angelus Novus* discussed by Benjamin moves forward while looking back towards the past, inevitably - shall we say - because in order to have innovation one must be able to make comparisons with that which consider solid: there are no new words without reference to a dictionary, or at least to a common linguistic tradition.

On the other hand, these considerations are also valid for spaces, which are as they are because they have a history, and therefore a recognised and, hence - transmissible, identity. Augustin Berque writes in *Cinq propositions pour une théorie du paysage* (1994):

[...] the slightest historical or anthropological investigation inevitably reveals the following fact, which is not acceptable to our common sense: *the landscape as such does not exist in all epochs, nor does it exist in all social groups*. Notably in Europe, its notion appears only by the time of the Renaissance. Still more astonishing: the great beauty of savage nature - the one we admire in the Alps, for instance - has not been recognised until the eighteenth century. Furthermore, great civilisations, like India or Islam, have perceived and judged their environment in terms which are not reducible to the notion of landscape. In fact, the word "landscape", landscape paintings, and the

aesthetic and moral exaltation of landscape are particular phenomena of which the majority of cultures do not give any example.⁹

Charged with a specificity which is proper to it (space) and which the past supplies because it is the memory of it, landscape is not less interesting than libraries, museums or cinemas simply because its subversive charge might be considered less intense. When we begin to look at “landscape”, we start to see it everywhere, and the world appears to us as a constellation of landscapes. But if it is inscribed in the limits of our culture, if it belongs to the cultural event we call Modernity, landscape becomes a gateway: through it one can enter Modernity and, perhaps, also leave it. But in order to leave it, we must somehow suspend the gateway, annihilate it and turn it upside down, or in other words apply to landscape something of the same sort, something with an appropriate typology and equal force.

More than places, we ought to be talking about landscapes, anthropogenic landscapes, cultural landscapes, bearers of a specificity and charged with history. In order to gain access to places, we must therefore subvert landscapes. If perspective is merely the ‘symbolic form’ of the emergence of the modern subject, then likewise the discovery of landscape becomes the symbolic form of the emergence of the modern world and which the gaze of this subject makes objective. It is possible to cross the threshold which has existed, since Modernity, between Subject and World based on the fact that landscape, like any heterotopia, opens and closes at the same time in relation to other places.

The problem of space is without doubt central for a reflection on the concept of Interzones, but it cannot be reduced to a shortcut which allows us to get outside history and therefore outside a series of problems related to memory. We know, moreover, to what extent memory itself has always been, at least in the case of the “arts of memory”, closely interwoven with the notion of “places”. We nevertheless do not share a common memory, and this is one of the challenges our PhD programme must pick up: we do not have one because it is the history of different “places”. Today’s Tower of Babel, with its vertical development (its heterotopia), no longer alludes, or rather, no longer only alludes to linguistic confusion, but to that of memories and therefore of identities. We must make sure that this does not become, by way of substitution, a stratification of metalanguages.

Although it may seem paradoxical, those who, in the 19th century, had already anticipated these problems, could offer us assistance today: Charles Baudelaire, starting from the phantasmagorical heterotopia of the first Universal Exhibition, placed Modernity at the centre of the debate, and Arthur Rimbaud, beyond his famous call “One must be absolutely modern”, invited us to broaden our gaze and the horizons of our knowledge.

There is probably no more veritable depositary of this heritage than the “Documents” magazine of the 1930s, with its extraordinary laboratory of ideas and its unusual points of view. It became the

privileged space in which tradition and the academy locked horns, but also where the vast universe of heterogeneous objects making up this new landscape were displayed.

The objective which *Interzones* ought to pursue, in my opinion, is the following: open new horizons of knowledge, and open up new paths by considering the realm of imagination as single collective heritage, beyond the contingency of space(s) and time, and by considering it as a heterotopia capable of real transversality. *Interzones* is a demanding and difficult programme which requires, before it can even begin, an awareness of its own limits: organizational limits, cultural limits, and why not mention it, financial limits as well...

It seems to me that the demanding nature of our programme, together with our passionate commitment in it, ensure the possibility of acquiring new and veritable forms of knowledge.

1 “Il est peu d'occupations aussi intéressantes, aussi attachantes, aussi pleines de surprises et de révélations pour un critique, pour un rêveur dont l'esprit est tourné à la généralisation, aussi bien qu'à l'étude des détails, et, pour mieux dire encore, à l'idée d'ordre et de hiérarchie universelle, que la comparaison des nations et de leurs produits respectifs. [...] que dirait un Winckelmann moderne [...] en face d'un produit chinois, produit étrange, bizarre, contourné dans sa forme, intense par sa couleur, et quelquefois délicat jusqu'à l'évanouissement ? Cependant c'est un échantillon de la beauté universelle; mais il faut, pour qu'il soit compris, que le critique, le spectateur opère en lui-même une transformation qui tient du mystère, et que, par un phénomène de la volonté agissant sur l'imagination, il apprenne de lui-même à participer au milieu qui a donné naissance à cette floraison insolite. Peu d'hommes ont, - au complet, - cette grâce divine du cosmopolitisme; mais tous peuvent l'acquérir à des degrés divers.” Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres Complètes*, Paris, Gallimard Pléiade, 1954, pp. 688-89.

2 “Ses souvenirs se promenaient d'une extrémité à l'autre de l'Europe, rappelant ici un paysage de l'île de Wight, là une rue d'une ville d'université allemande, puis un horizon d'Italie, le tout exprimé dans un langage d'une excellente tradition française, qui, à lui seul trahissait un très long et très intime séjour dans notre pays.” Paul Bourget, *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, Paris, Plon, 1917, t. II, p. 200.

3 “Le cosmopolitisme semble, par cela seul qu'il est toujours un raffinement individuel, comporter une très grande variété de nuances. Elles se ramènent cependant, et par définition même, à deux principales. Il peut arriver que l'homme soumis ainsi à l'influence des pays étrangers appartienne à une race d'une civilisation très avancée. Dans ce premier cas, il demandera aux mœurs nouvelles qu'il étudiera d'être plus simples que les mœurs nationales. C'est un rajeunissement de ses sensations qui lui est nécessaire, un retour vers une autre nature moins compliquée. [...] Mais changeons seulement les données du problème. Imaginons que le cosmopolite appartienne à une nation moins fatiguée par un long héritage de pensées que la société aux mœurs de laquelle il s'initie. Pour un tel homme, le cosmopolitisme ne sera plus uniquement un plaisir, ce sera une éducation. Il demandera aux milieux nouveaux, non plus des sensations, mais des idées.” *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

4 “La grande hantise qui a obsédé le XIX^e siècle a été, on le sait, l'histoire : thèmes du développement et de l'arrêt, thèmes de la crise et du cycle, thèmes de l'accumulation du passé, grande surcharge des morts, refroidissement menaçant du monde. C'est dans le second principe de thermodynamique que le XIX^e siècle a trouvé l'essentiel de ses ressources mythologiques. L'époque actuelle serait peut-être plutôt l'époque de l'espace. Nous sommes à l'époque du simultané, nous sommes à l'époque de la juxtaposition, à l'époque du proche et du lointain, du côte à côte, du

dispersé. Nous sommes à un moment où le monde s'éprouve, je crois, moins comme une grande vie qui se développerait à travers le temps que comme un réseau qui relie des points et qui entrecroise son écheveau. Peut-être pourrait-on dire que certains des conflits idéologiques qui animent les polémiques d'aujourd'hui se déroulent entre les pieux descendants du temps et les habitants acharnés de l'espace." Rédigé en Tunisie pour une conférence tenue le 14 mars 1967 au Cercle d'études architecturale, l'auteur n'autorisa la publication du texte qu'au printemps 1984. Michel Foucault, « Des espaces autres », *Dits et Écrits*, Paris, Gallimard, 1994, t. 4, texte n° 360, p. 1571.

5 "[...] le problème de la place ou de l'emplacement se pose pour les hommes en termes de démographie; et ce dernier problème de l'emplacement humain, ce n'est pas simplement la question de savoir s'il y aura assez de place pour l'homme dans le monde - problème qui est après tout bien important -, c'est aussi le problème de savoir quelles relations de voisinage, quel type de stockage, de circulation, de repérage, de classement des éléments humains doivent être retenus de préférence dans telle ou telle situation pour venir à telle ou telle fin. Nous sommes à une époque où l'espace se donne à nous sous la forme de relations d'emplacements.

En tout cas, je crois que l'inquiétude d'aujourd'hui concerne fondamentalement l'espace, sans doute beaucoup plus que le temps; le temps n'apparaît probablement que comme l'un des jeux de distribution possibles entre les éléments qui se répartissent dans l'espace." *Ibid.*, 1572-73.

6 "[...] nous ne vivons pas dans un espace homogène et vide, mais, au contraire, dans un espace qui est tout chargé de qualités, un espace, qui est peut-être aussi hanté de fantasme; l'espace de notre perception première, celui de nos rêveries, celui de nos passions détiennent en eux-mêmes des qualités qui sont comme intrinsèques; c'est un espace léger, éthéré, transparent, ou bien c'est un espace obscur, rocailleux, encombré : c'est un espace d'en haut, c'est un espace des cimes, ou c'est au contraire un espace d'en bas, un espace de la boue, c'est un espace qui peut être courant comme l'eau vive, c'est un espace qui peut être fixé, figé comme la pierre ou comme le cristal. [...] L'espace dans lequel nous vivons, par lequel nous sommes attirés hors de nous-mêmes dans lequel, se déroule précisément l'érosion de notre vie, e notre temps et e notre histoire, cet espace qui nous ronge et nous ravine est en lui-même aussi un espace hétérogène. Autrement dit, nous ne vivons pas dans une sorte de vide, à l'intérieur duquel on pourrait situer des individus et des choses. Nous ne vivons pas à l'intérieur d'un vide qui se colorerait de différents chatolements, nous vivons à l'intérieur d'un ensemble de relations qui définissent des emplacements irréductibles les uns aux autres et absolument non superposables." *Ibid.*, 1573-74.

7 "Mais ce qui m'intéresse, ce sont, parmi tous ces emplacements, certains d'entre eux qui ont la curieuse propriété d'être en rapport avec tous les autres emplacements, mais sur un mode tel qu'ils suspendent, neutralisent ou inversent l'ensemble des rapports qui se trouvent, par eux, désignés, reflétés ou réfléchis. Ces espaces, en quelque sorte, qui sont en liaison avec tous les autres, qui contredisent pourtant tous les autres emplacements, sont de deux grands types.

Il y a d'abord les utopies. Les utopies, ce sont les emplacements sans lieu réel. Ce sont les emplacements qui entretiennent avec l'espace réel de la société un rapport général d'analogie directe ou inversée. C'est la société elle-même perfectionnée ou c'est l'envers de la société, mais, de toute façon, ces utopies sont des espaces qui sont fondamentalement essentiellement irréels.

Il y a également, et ceci probablement dans toute culture, dans toute civilisation, des lieux réels, des lieux effectifs, des lieux qui ont dessinés dans l'institution même de la société, et qui sont des sortes de contre-emplacements, sortes d'utopies effectivement réalisées dans lesquelles les emplacements réels, tous les autres emplacements réels que l'on peut trouver à l'intérieur de la culture sont à la fois représentés, contestés et inversés, des sortes de lieux qui sont hors de tous les lieux, bien que pourtant ils soient effectivement localisables. Ces lieux, parce qu'ils sont absolument autres que tous les emplacements qu'ils reflètent et dont ils parlent, je les appellerai, par opposition aux utopies, les hétérotopies." *Ibid.*, 1572-73.

8 "Les hétérotopies sont liées, le plus souvent, à des découpages du temps, c'est-à-dire qu'elles ouvrent sur ce qu'on pourrait appeler, par pure symétrie, des hétérochronies ; l'hétérotopie se met à fonctionner à plein lorsque les hommes se trouvent dans une sorte de rupture absolue avec leur temps traditionnel ; [...] D'une

façon générale, dans une société comme la nôtre, hétérotopie et hétérochronie s'organisent et s'arrangent d'une façon relativement complexe. Il y a d'abord les hétérotopies du temps qui s'accumule à l'infini, par exemple les musées, les bibliothèques ; musées et bibliothèques sont des hétérotopies dans lesquelles le temps ne cesse de s'amonceler et de se jucher au sommet de lui-même, alors qu'au XVII^e, jusqu'à la fin du XVII^e siècle encore, les musées et les bibliothèques étaient l'expression d'un choix individuel. En revanche, l'idée de tout accumuler, l'idée de constituer une sorte d'archive générale, la volonté d'enfermer dans un lieu tous les temps, toutes les époques, toutes les formes, tous les goûts, l'idée de constituer un lieu de tous les temps qui soit lui-même hors du temps, et inaccessible à sa morsure, le projet d'organiser ainsi une sorte d'accumulation perpétuelle et indéfinie du temps dans un lieu qui ne bougerait pas, eh bien, tout cela appartient à notre modernité. Le musée et la bibliothèque sont des hétérotopies qui sont propres à la culture occidentale du XIX^e siècle.

En face de ces hétérotopies, qui sont liées à l'accumulation du temps, il y a des hétérotopies qui sont liées, au contraire, au temps dans ce qu'il a de plus futile, de plus passager, de plus précaire, et cela sur le mode de la fête. Ce sont des hétérotopies non plus éternitaires, mais absolument chroniques. Telles sont les foires, ces merveilleux emplacements vides au bord des villes, qui se peuplent, une ou deux fois par an, de baraques, d'étalages, d'objets hétéroclites, de lutteurs, de femmes-serpent, de diseuses de bonne aventure. Tout récemment aussi, on a inventé une nouvelle hétérotopie chronique, ce sont les villages de vacances ; ces villages polynésiens qui offrent trois petites semaines d'une nudité primitive et éternelle aux habitants des villes ; et vous voyez d'ailleurs que, par les deux formes d'hétérotopies, se rejoignent celle de la fête et celle de l'éternité du temps qui s'accumule, les paillotes de Djerba sont en un sens parentes des bibliothèques et des musées, car, en retrouvant la vie polynésienne, on abolit le temps, mais c'est tout aussi bien le temps qui se retrouve, c'est toute l'histoire de l'humanité qui remonte jusqu'à sa source comme dans une sorte de grand savoir immédiat." *Ibid.*, 1578-79.

9 "[...] la moindre investigation historique ou anthropologique révèle immanquablement ce fait, inadmissible pour notre sens commun : le paysage n'existe pas comme tel à toutes les époques, ni dans tous les groupes sociaux. En Europe notamment, c'est une notion qui n'est apparue qu'à la Renaissance. Plus renversant encore : la beauté grandiose de la nature sauvage - celle par exemple que nous admirons dans les Alpes - n'a pas été reconnue avant le XVIII^e siècle. Par ailleurs, des grandes civilisations, comme l'Inde ou l'Islam, ont appréhendé et jugé leur environnement dans des termes irréductibles à la notion de paysage. En réalité, le mot paysage, les tableaux de paysage, l'exaltation esthétique et morale du paysage sont des phénomènes particuliers, dont la plupart des cultures ne donnent pas l'exemple." Augustin Berque (sous la direction de), *Cinq propositions pour une théorie du paysage*, Seyssel, Éditions Champ Vallon, 1994, pp. 5-6.

The “Interzone” as a Place of the Mind

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Towards the Interzone

Whenever I find myself discussing the “Cultural Studies in Literary Interzones” programme, it usually does not take long for someone to ask what that is, an “interzone”. This paper was presented in the context of a workshop, “Charting the Interzone”, dedicated to precisely this question. The advantage of a term like that of the “interzone” is that it still has the ability to be formed, coined, created, modelled, thought about, that for it is in itself a term in motion, itself with its own interzone one might say.

The interzone is clearly a space, a place on the map maybe, but also a space of interaction, and this is how most of us would immediately recognize the term: a liminal place, a border territory, a region in dispute or under negotiation, a field of interaction, but always a “zone”, a whole field, not a line between two entities, but something “in-between” them. It is in such fields of signification that the term can claim to have some lexical stability and in this usage, it shows some affinity to similar concepts as they have been developed and theorized in postcolonial studies: the “in-between”, the “contact zone”, the “hybrid”, the “Third Space”, etc. However, if such parallel or analogue constructions come most readily to mind, it is because they already exist as concepts, heavily theorized, often researched, and hardly new. The value of the “interzone” as a concept lies, for me at least, in the fact that while it may suggest all of the above, those are not its limit; its openness allows us to expand in many directions, some of them spatial, some social, some purely places in the mind, the notion of when anything is “in contact” with anything else or of what might constitute a “zone” of interactions. It is this intuition, that an interzone might also be a special mental state, a place in the mind (and by extension in literature) that I wish to follow here.

What makes me confident in pursuing this line of thought is the term’s own genesis. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, that sure and tried resource on words, is not very helpful here. It merely lists, from 1960 and 1961 respectively, entries from the realm of sports where teams are said to have won (or lost) in “inter-zone” matches.¹ This scarcity of lexical entries and the reduction to adjectival use is not surprising if we consider that the word itself is in fact something of an impossibility as it pulls in two directions at the same time, at least as a noun: a “zone”

is, according to the OED, anything *bounded* in a particular way: a climatic zone, for example, at least from 1500 onwards, a “definite region of the earth, or of any place or space, distinguished from adjacent regions by some special quality or condition” (OED, “zone”, 2.b.), even a place where the law somehow works differently: in town planning a “district or an area of land subject to particular restrictions concerning use and development” (2.c.) or, historically, “any one of those areas of Germany and Austria occupied by British, American, French, or Russian forces after the war of 1939-45 until 1955.” So, a “zone” is definitely a place, and a clearly delimited one at that. It is also often a place, and this will be especially important here, where the law somehow works differently compared to areas of “normality” outside the zone. This may be through the imposition of special laws, for example in real estate “zoning”, or through the suspension of certain laws (and the imposition of others, only valid in the zone), for example in occupied territories.

In artistic use, one of the most famous “zones” may be the one Andrei Tarkovsky imagines in his 1978/79 film *Stalker*: here, the “zone” is a forbidden region in which ordinary laws of physics and of nature may be assumed to be suspended, but which is in turn governed by incalculable laws of its own; a place which shape shifts continually and which may only be traversed at great peril with the help of an expert guide, a “Stalker”, who in turn will have recourse to a strict regime of home-spun gestures of ritual appeasement and magic as he cautiously crosses the zone. In the end, of course, the zone, a place where supposedly wishes come true, is not really a place on the map at all, but a place of the mind in which the travellers end up having their most deeply felt beliefs and opinions tested and ultimately corroded beyond repair. The true “zone” where things work differently may after all not be in the zone at all, but “at home” where the Stalker’s daughter develops extraordinary magical abilities and from where his wife addresses the camera as the film comes to its end. If we take this to be a good model of a “zone” in art, a region where known laws are suspended and other opaque ones may be in effect, what is then an “interzone”? It is not by chance that the OED uses this word only as an adjective, because in this form it retains the ability to refer to something that happens between *two* entities: an “inter-zone final”. As a noun, the case becomes difficult, for here the “inter” would clearly have to refer to the “zone” itself. The prefix *inter* comes from the Latin preposition “inter” meaning ‘between, among, amid, in between, in the midst’ (OED) and hence suggesting something that happens between entities, or conversely is a part of a larger entity (*inter alia*, for example). This in-betweenness comes across not only in such common fare as the intercity, the interlibrary loan, or the interactive programme, but also in the many more charming and unusual compounds listed by the OED: Keats’ “interbreathe”, Southey’s “intercircle”, Sidney’s “intercurl”, a use of “intersmile” from 1622, Cleveland’s “intersqueeze”, or the *Gentleman’s Magazine’s* “interwhistle”. In all of these, we must assume that something happening between entities or events, is maybe “interleaved” between them, or

“interacted” between them. And none of this could apply to a “zone” if we think of it as a space (on the map or of the mind) that is defined by its boundedness and its separateness from all other spaces. How can a “zone” itself be “inter”?

The most prominent use of the use of *interzone* as a noun comes from William Burroughs. The material that would later flow into his famous *Naked Lunch* (1959) was originally structured around and held together under the term “Interzone” (in fact, the substitution of *Naked Lunch* for *Interzone* was Jack Kerouac’s idea and one may well wonder whether *Interzone* would not have been the better title).² The “Interzone” that is *Naked Lunch* is not something you find on the map; it is, rather, a state of mind and perception which is induced by drug use and the withdrawal from drugs and which plays itself out in the social structures produced by this (physiological, mental, and social) “interzone”. As such, it is clearly “bounded” in the sense that it is a special condition producing its own privileged insights and sufferings as well as its own conceptual, perceptual and sexually as well as socially interactive logic. But it also seems to be conceived as a place “in-between”, a place where the rules and laws of the non-interzone are somehow not in effect or are themselves torqued by the interzone. In 1989, 30 years after *Naked Lunch* and still within Burroughs’ lifetime, James Grauerholz, Burroughs’ assistant and ultimately estate executor, edited a volume of material mostly from the “Interzone” project that had occupied Burroughs in the 1950s and that had not been directly integrated into *Naked Lunch*.³ In “Lee’s Journals”, we find the “Interzone” mentioned frequently and quite casually: “I will simply transcribe Lee’s impressions of Interzone”, “the whole story was just Interzone bullshit”, “When I first came to Interzone” (*Interzone* 82, 76, and 74). The “Interzone” here it seems it to be a place which where goes wherever “Lee” goes: sometimes it is Mexico, sometimes Tangier, sometimes some unidentifiable place which is nonetheless “Interzone”. It is a place both threateningly free from law, laissez-faire, and subject to incalculable mechanisms of control:

There is a nightmare feeling in Interzone with its glut of nylon shirts, cameras, watches, sex and opiates sold across the counter. Something profoundly menacing in complete laissez-faire. And the new police chief up there on the Hill, accumulating dossiers - I suspect him of unspeakable fetishistic practices with his files. [...] The whole Zone is a trap, and someday it will close. [...] there will be no escape, no place to go (*Interzone*, 75).

It is a place which where produces new forms, emergent qualities, and not altogether unlike Tarkovsky’s “Zone”, it generates not only the nightmarish, but also the visionary: “This novel is about transitions, larval forms, emergent telepathic faculty, attempts to control and stifle new forms” (*Interzone* 69).

In calling his fictional worlds the “(Inter)zone”, Burroughs on the one hand imposes boundaries on it: the (Inter)zone is a special place with rules all its own and it moves where Lee/Burroughs moves: Mexico, Tangier, elsewhere. At the same time, this “zone” is always

“inter” in the sense that it is characterized by a certain dynamism: both internally (“about transitions”, “emergent”, “larval”) and in terms of its interaction with what must be assumed to be “outside” it: being in a state of exception, or in a state of detachment from other states, or in a condition “in-between”. It may be a place on the map like the city of Tangier which during the time when Burroughs was there in the 1950s was on the one hand an “international city” under international administration as Spain and France fought for control over Morocco, but on the other hand was already on its way to being something else, as in 1956, the city was finally handed over to the control of a sovereign Moroccan state, thus ceasing its “international” (and “interzonal”?) status.⁴ Again, this place is for Burroughs characterized by a suspension of law: “The special attraction of Tangier can be put in one word: exemption” (*Interzone* 59). On the other hand, an Interzone may be simply the life cycles of the drug addict for whom all laws have been suspended in favour of one single imperative, “junk”, which sets him apart from all non-addicts and in a way places him in a state of suspension within the wider community in which he must follow the logic of his own imperatives. Or, as we shall see, it may be an exceptional mode of perception induced by hallucinogenics, an “Interzone” now entirely of the mind which nevertheless follows the rules of being both a bounded condition, a “zone”, and something that is in transition.

Two Interzones

So, what kind of place in the mind is an “interzone”? I suggest that we follow the trail laid out for us by William Burroughs, certainly the most prominent “inventor” of the interzone. In keeping with what he developed, experientially and imaginatively rather than theoretically, I will take a condition that is “interzonal” to mean: a bounded condition in which for whatever reasons *and for better or worse* the law, or a law, or simply an imperative has been temporarily or permanently suspended. The law suspended may be anything: the laws, among others, of language, of categorization, of differentiation, of gender, of personhood, of reason, or even of perception itself. *Naked Lunch* may well constitute an interzone in its entirety, because it is a text situated in the interstices of any number of laws that have been suspended, for better or worse.

But an interzonal state of mind need not necessarily be global enough to encompass a whole literary work, and neither is it an invention of the Beat sensibility. In the following quotation we encounter Mrs Ramsay, the dutiful wife from Virginia Woolf’s novel *To the Lighthouse* (1927), in a moment of reverie brought on by an interzonal interaction with the beams of light coming rhythmically from the lighthouse:

No, she thought [...] children never forget. For this reason, it was so important what one said, and what one did, and it was a relief when they went to bed. For now, she need not think about anybody. She

could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of - to think; well, not even to think. To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others. [...] This core of darkness could go anywhere, for no one saw it. They could not stop it, she thought, exulting. There was freedom, there was peace, there was, most welcome of all, a summoning together, a resting on a platform of stability. [...] Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir [...] and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke, for watching them in this mood always at this hour one could not help attaching oneself to one thing especially of the things one saw; and this thing, the long steady stroke, was her stroke. Often she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing looked at - that light, for example. [...] She looked up over her knitting and met the third stroke and it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes, searching as she alone could search into her mind and heart, purifying out of existence that lie, any lie. [...] watching it with fascination, hypnotised, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, she had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness, and it silvered the rough waves a little more brightly, as daylight faded, and the blue went out of the sea and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which curved and swelled and broke upon the beach and the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough!⁵

This is a good example of one of Woolf's famous "moments of being". But as such, it is also an interzonal moment, a moment clearly delimited, bounded in time and space, and a moment in which certain imperatives (of family, of duty, of gender, of selfhood) have been suspended, while in their place a number of fusions occur: between the watcher and the watched, the living and the inanimate, energy (of light, of waves), mind and matter (the "floor of the mind", an "ecstasy" which "burst in her eyes"), between "self" (if a "wedge-shaped core of darkness" can be called that) and "self" ("like her own eyes meeting her own eyes"). At the same time, while the moment is itself bounded, it is conducive to a massive expansion of consciousness and perception, where the "core of darkness" that is now the self (and isn't a self) can "go anywhere" and where waves and light can be directly translated into feelings and ecstatic abandon. The moment is interzonal in the manner which I have defined here, because it is both bounded and predicated on the suspension of a string of imperatives. At the same time, one can also see that it is interzonal in the sense that through the suspension of these imperatives, it is productive of differently structured and new kinds of interactions: between an object and a subject (the "I" and the Lighthouse); between the self and itself; between the self and those laws that have temporarily been rendered inactive.

This interzone is consciously generated by Mrs Ramsay through a meditative technique which uses the lighthouse as its focal point and

it fulfils a very specific function in her life: it is a mental space of relaxation, of freedom in a life that is otherwise shown as being entirely determined by social functioning and the adherence to norms. It is Mrs. Ramsay's duty (and her wish) to be the perfect wife and mother (even if the novel itself may be critical of her endeavours) and as such her sense of self is, in fact, determined almost entirely by others and her connection to them and their needs. As a consequence, the interzone she conjures up here will end where it has to: with her husband watching her and being struck by her apartness, beauty and what he takes to be her sadness (we know better of course: "waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough!"). She, in turn, will step out of the interzonal moment to assume the burden once more of those imperatives that had been temporarily suspended by giving her husband a chance to feel what he desires to feel:

She was aloof from him now in her beauty, in her sadness. He would let her be, and he passed her without a word, though it hurt him that she looked so distant, and he could not reach her, he could do nothing to help her. And again he would have passed her without a word had she not, at that very moment, given him of her own free will what she knew he would never ask, and called to him and taken the green shawl off the picture frame, and gone to him. For he wished, she knew, to protect her. (100)

In Woolf's novel, the interzone generated by Mrs Ramsay is functional. It is on the one hand occasioned by the limitations which her life and her person are normally confined by and as such it is an escape, a refuge, a sanctuary which allows Mrs Ramsay to find some release, but which also paradoxically ensures that she can come back and function as before. For the novel, however, it is also a way to explore the insights and experiential components of the interzonal moment in order to present us with a view of personhood that is not individual, certainly not an "identity" (an "identity" is what Mrs Ramsay has once she goes back to being Mr Ramsay's wife), and that takes as its core darkness, sensation, perceptual fusion and enlargement. For Mrs Ramsay, this interzone is a refuge; for the reader a meditation on the self as a "core of darkness", a meditation which subsequently resonates through the novel as a whole and interacts with the struggles, conflicts, desires and failures we are made privy to throughout the rest of the text.

The following very differently (but also hauntingly similarly) structured interzone generated by William Burroughs in *The Yage Letters* (second enlarged edition 1975) pursues entirely other purposes. The central 3-page "letter"⁶ from William Burroughs to Allen Ginsberg in which he explains (if one may call it that) what the drug Yage which he had been hunting for in South America "is" may be one of Burroughs' most magnificently imagined interzones:

Yage is space time travel. The room seems to shake and vibrate with motion. The blood and substance of many races, Negro, Polynesian,

Mountain Mongol, Desert Nomad, Polyglot Near East, Indian - new races as yet unconceived and unborn, combinations not yet realized passes through your body. Migrations, incredible journey through deserts and jungles and mountains (stasis and death in closed mountain valleys where plants sprout out of your cock and vast crustaceans hatch inside and break the shell of the body), across the Pacific in an outrigger canoe to Easter Island. The Composite City where all human potentials are spread out in a vast silent market. [...]

Hipsters with smooth copper colored faces lounge in doorways twisting shrunk heads on gold chains, their faces blank with an insect's unseeing calm. Behind them, through the open door, tables and booths, and bars and rooms and kitchens and baths, copulating couples on rows of brass beds, criss cross of a thousand hammocks, junkies tying up, opium smokers, hashish smokers, people eating, talking, bathing, shitting back into a haze of smoke and steam. [...]

All houses in the City are joined. Houses of sod with high mountain Mongols blinking in smoky doorways, houses of bamboo and teak wood, houses of adobe, stone, and red brick, South Pacific and Maori houses, houses in trees and houses on river boats, wood houses 100 feet long sheltering entire tribes [...].

Expeditions leave for unknown places with unknown purpose. Strangers arrive on rafts of old packing crates tied together with rotten rope, they stagger in out of the jungle their eyes swollen shut by insect bites [...] through the dusty, windy outskirts of the City where people shit in rows along adobe walls and vultures fight over fish heads, they drop down into the parks in patched parachutes. They are escorted by a drunken cop to register in a vast public lavatory. The data taken down is put on pegs and used as toilet paper.

The cooking smells of all countries hang over the City, a haze of opium, hashish, and the resinous red smoke of cooking Yage, smell of the jungle and salt water and the rotting river and dried excrement and sweat and genitals. [...] The City is visited by epidemics of violence and the untended dead are eaten by vultures in the street. Funerals and cemeteries are not permitted. Albinos blink in the sun, boys sit in trees languidly masturbating, people eaten by unknown diseases spit at passersby and bite them and throw pus and scabs [...] hoping to infect somebody. [...]

A place where the unknown past and the emergent future meet in a vibrating soundless hum. Larval entities waiting for a live one.

William Lee.⁷

This letter, added only to the second edition of *The Yage Letters* in 1975,⁸ is not a “description” of an experience of Yage consumption or a rendering of a particular visionary moment when under the influence of Yage. In the 1975 edition, it comes at the end of the “In Search of Yage” section as Burroughs’ summation of everything that Yage “is” (and it stands in the book as a remarkably corrosive answer to Ginsberg’s search for personal enlightenment and self-knowledge through Yage). It produces a profound reorientation of the volume: up to then Burroughs’ “letters” consisted of a sometimes amused, sometimes exasperated, but always caustic and wryly detached travelogue, mixing the relation of personal experiences and observations while travelling with some (very few) descriptions of the

physiological side-effects of the drug. For the most part, up to then, *The Yage Letters* is an account of how the drug could not be found rather than an account of what was found once the traveller had managed to get a hold of it. After the letter on what “Yage is”, Burroughs moves on to new techniques (cut ups) as well as a newly serious and profoundly nihilistic appeal: “And always remember. ‘Nothing Is True. Everything is permitted!’” (page 70).

But what does this sum of everything that “Yage is” amount to? Clearly we are dealing with a massive suspension of the laws of ordinary perception. While the “many races” and the “new races as yet unconceived and unborn” are first seen to be passing through the body, and can hence be seen as metaphors which still remain on the side of the “as if”, the “this feels like”, later the multiple and simultaneous presence of populations from all over the world becomes part of the reality that “Yage is”. Added to this ethnic simultaneity, there is the simultaneous presence of the world’s rejected and dejected: refugees, the homeless, the down-and-out, as well as those forces set up to police them. These forces of state control, however, are themselves fully submerged in the de-hierarchized world of everything that “Yage is”. The very basic divisions of the pure and impure, the clean and the unclean, the “raw” and the “cooked”, themselves foundational divisions for the development of human societies and psyches, are suspended, as are very basic elements of civilization like toilet training, burial of the dead, or the cultural imperatives of shame.⁹ Also suspended are the divisions not only between human and animal, but specifically between the human and the non-mammalian species: people do not only appear insect-like, but find their bodies taken over, invaded by manifestations from insect or crustacean species. If anything reigns in this world, it is the virus, itself the – literally – living proof that divisions cannot be maintained, between bodies, or between bodies and their outsides. While this is a world in which the laws of separation have been suspended – those of division, of differentiation, of categorization, of hierarchization – it is at the same time not an entropic or static world, but one “vibrating” in a “soundless hum” as if those suspended laws of differentiation had been replaced by another law: that of continual transformation and emergence. It is a world where “larval entities” (those of the “unknown past” and the “emergent future”, but surely also all those creatures whose becoming the letter has witnessed) are waiting, rather ominously, “for a live one”. In its entirety the letter creates a space, literally on the page, that is fully metaphorical – no one has ever been to this “Composite City” – and fully material, fully there: replete with bodies, smells, sounds, body fluids, decay, and teeming with insectoid and viral life.

Probably what is most disturbing about the passage is that its affective tonality remains strangely unclear: is this vision of the world a nightmare or a release? A gleeful fantasy of the collapse of categories, or a fearful meditation on it? Good, bad, or indifferent? One may assume that Burroughs, no friend of “cops” or immigration authorities, would have been at least amused by the idea that one’s

immigration papers could become instant toilet paper. At the same time, even he might have found it hard to feel very warmly towards people biting unsuspecting passersby “hoping to infect them”, but then who knows? And that is precisely the point: the letter itself seems to adopt a curiously detached perspective: there is no “I” in this text (how could there be?), and no clear focalization on any one emotionally active human mind. If anything, the passage seems to veer towards taking the side of the “larval entities”, for “waiting for a live one” – analogous for example to phrases like “I’ve caught a live one”, “she’s a live one”, etc. – casts “us” (whatever remains of a category like “us”) in the role of prey, and if there is a joke in any of this, then the joke is on “us”. It seems that along with the laws of differentiation – and of course this is only as it must be – also the very possibility of subjectivation, of the “human” itself has been suspended.

I think it has become clear that the whole letter works as an interzone of the mind, in fact that what Yage “is” is nothing less than such an interzone: it suspends one of the founding principles of human cognition and perception and subsequently of civilization and in the process it produces a new version of what we might take to be “real”. That is why this is not a vision, however enlightening, of what Yage did to a subject on any one or more occasions. Rather, maybe it is best to think of it as a translation, an attempt to render in language, in snippets of narrative, impressions, vistas, a complicated experience, an insight which may itself lie outside of language, in the “soundless hum” of uncategorizable forms. In its entirety, it is a complete conceptual realignment of the cosmos itself and the place of the human in it, an alternative model of nothing less than life itself, glimpsed differently, interzonally, for a moment. In Burroughs’ text, that is what Yage does/did/ “is”, and the reader is faced with the task of assessing the truth-value of this rendering of a complete insight. That is where the function of this passage is very different from that in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*. In that novel, Mrs Ramsay’s reveries are contained: we are certainly invited to muse about whether Mrs Ramsay may not be onto something if she experiences her self as essentially and irrevocably “dark”, but her experience stands as one among many in the novel (including her own outside the “interzonal moment”). What Burroughs is asking us to do is much more global: to consider (and re-consider) all evidence we have in and beyond the book in the light of this interzonal experiment. Is it maybe really true that all “races”, all habitations, all cultures, all houses, all organisms, and all functions within these organisms actually exist simultaneously on one undifferentiated and undifferentiable plane, that this is the unsayable and maybe unthinkable “real” which our mechanisms of seeing, thinking and speaking do not allow us to see? And if so, where would this get us/leave us? Maybe Yage is an interzone in which one can intuit something of what one has trained oneself (and has been trained) not to see?

An Interzonal criticism?

So far, I have been concerned with interzone as a place of the mind in literary works. And indeed we must assume that literature is the site par excellence for the experimental genesis of such interzones: literature is precisely one of those privileged spaces of the imagination where any imperative may be suspended at will and at the same time, it is a clearly bounded field of experimentation that is delimited by the first and last pages of the text. Very interesting examples of such interzonal literary texts which work by a calculated suspension of a specific law are those that suspend the seeming givenness of sex/gender. Brigid Brophy's *In Transit* (what title could be more interzonal?) from 1969, for example, suspends entirely and on every conceivable level the naturalness of gender (and sex) by having the narrator forget her/his sex under the influence, among others, of an exposure to the gender-bending effects of Baroque opera. Another example would be Ursula Le Guin's stunning *The Left Hand of Darkness*, also from 1969, which uses the interzonal potential of science fiction to imagine a world in which sexual differentiation does not exist as a basis for social inscription. More recently, Jeanette Winterson has unsettled gender certainty with the help of a very simple suspension: that of the transparency of the narrator whose sex in *Written on the Body* (1992) remains undisclosed.

It would certainly be possible to find new alignments of the works of any literary canon (and of the beyond of those canons) based on the foregrounding of a particular interzonal operation (those suspending gender, for example, or as we saw earlier those suspending other lines of differentiation and demarcation). But the question is also whether the interzone – at least the interzones of the mind – can or should be studied with those techniques of inquiry and argumentation that scholarship has favoured for a very long time, techniques that strike me as particularly non-interzonal: categorization, objectivity, low affect (on the part of the scholar), separation of the scholar's voice from that of the “object”, etc. That is: one may wonder if it will not be necessary to seek out or generate more “interzonal” forms of criticism as well. The problem with this will be: how to achieve this without entirely abandoning those standards we need to adhere to in order to remain both intelligible and viable within an academic practice that is for the most part non-interzonal.

I do not have an answer to this challenge; nor would I wish to offer any recommendation beyond the obvious one: that we might pay attention to the usefulness of other, possibly more interzonal forms of criticism. For the interzone as a space – of the mind, on the map, in social interaction – in which one or more imperatives are temporarily suspended, there is at the moment no one “theory”, though one could think of very fruitful connections, close relatives, attachments. Postcolonial criticism, at least in some of its interests, would be an obvious candidate, as would be certain theorems developed by Deleuze and Guattari which strike me as ideas for the interzonal moment: deterritorialization, lines of escape, machines, assemblages.

Certain forms of non-identity-oriented queer theory would also be helpful and it is therefore with the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick that I want to end these deliberations.

What would a more “interzonal” form of criticism (that nevertheless remains intelligible as academic writing) look like? If I follow the same train of thought that has brought me here, it would have to be a criticism that is prepared to suspend certain laws of criticism itself in the interests of gaining a new insight, a new perspective; and it would have to be a form of criticism that thinks of the many lines and vectors of interactivity that surround a work of art (or indeed any human utterance) as being simultaneously present and relevant. That is, a form of critical writing that seeks to be as dense as it can be in terms of its rendering of a work while remaining true to the work’s own idiom. This would entail, inevitably, a privileging of close reading, of “thick description” over a any premature theorization of the work to be described. At this point, I want to hand this over to a passage from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Touching Feeling* which I take to be exemplary in what an interzonal form of criticism could look like. In this passage, Sedgwick explores the photograph that is the title photo of the whole book: it is a black and white photograph showing the artist Judith Scott embracing one of her own sculptures, a conical bundle of tightly intertwined textiles and ropes.

Judith Scott, Textile Artist

The photograph on the frontispiece of *Touching Feeling* was the catalyst that impelled me to assemble the book in its present form. It is one of many taken by the Californian photographer Leon A. Borensztein of Judith Scott (b. 1943) with her work.

The sculpture in this picture is fairly characteristic of Scott’s work in its construction: a core assembled from large, heterogeneous materials has been hidden under many wrapped or darned layers of multicolored yarn, cord, ribbon, rope, and other fiber, producing a durable three-dimensional shape, usually oriented along a single axis of length, whose curves and planes are biomorphically resonant and whose scale bears comparison to Scott’s own body.

[...] the subject of this photograph also includes her relation to her completed work, and presumptively also the viewer’s relation to the sight of that dyad. For me, to experience a subject-object distance from this image is no more plausible than to envision such a relation between Scott and her work. She and her creation here present themselves to one another with equally expansive welcome. Through their closeness, the sense of sight is seen to dissolve in favour of that of touch. Not only the artist’s hands and bare forearms, but her face are busy with the transaction of texture. [...] There is no single way to understand the “besideness” of these two forms, even though one of them was made by the other. The affect that saturates the photo is mysterious, or at least multiple, in quality: besides the obvious tenderness with which Scott embraces the sculpture, her relaxed musculature and bowed head suggest sadness, for example, as perhaps does the abandon with which she allows her features to be squashed against it. [...] the loose-jointed breadth of her embrace can also be read as a sign of her Down syndrome. Yet [...] this soberly toned black and white photograph is at the same time ablaze with triumph, satisfaction, and relief.

Inevitably, both before and since her recent recognition within the frame-work of “outsider” art, Scott has been repeatedly diagnosed in terms of lack. [...] Even after she emerged as an artist with the support of California’s Creative Growth Art Center, her most encouraging and excited teacher, the fiber artist Sylvia Seventy, inexplicably decided that she was color blind [...] and unable to decide for herself when a piece was finished. And John MacGregor, the psychoanalytic critic of Art Brut who has been her strongest proponent, is nonetheless compulsive in applying to her the language of emphatic negation: “There is not the slightest possibility that Judith envisions the eventual outcome, the final form, of her work” [...] MacGregor also seems to consider that all of Scott’s artistic activity – maybe all her activity, in fact – must be categorized as “unconscious”, perhaps because she does not use language.

I don’t suppose it’s necessarily innocuous when a fully fluent, well-rewarded language-user [...] fastens with such a strong sense of identification on a photograph, an oeuvre, and a narrative like these of Judith Scott’s. Yet oddly, I think my identification with Scott is less as the subject of some kind of privation than as the holder of an obscure treasure, or as a person receptively held by it. [...] the obvious fullness of her aesthetic consciousness, her stubbornly confident access to autotelic production, her artist’s ability to continue asking new, troubling questions of her materials [...] these privileges seem to radiate at some angle that is orthogonal to the axis of disability.¹⁰

Let us begin with what the text suspends: it is nothing less than the automatisms of a form of criticism that at the same time privileges the critic over the artist and the artist over his or her work. A “biographical” form of criticism that Sedgwick turns to with considerable delay: where any number of descriptions would start with the artist’s biography, followed by a generalization of his or her work to date, to only then proceed to the work in question, Sedgwick starts with Scott’s work itself in its material characteristics. At this point, we know nothing about Judith Scott beyond her name, date of birth, and possibly nationality. It is only late and in a context that relates not to her art, but to the “loose-jointed breadth of her embrace” that we learn that the artist is an artist with Down Syndrome, the one fact about her that seems to have been of absolutely tantamount importance in other criticism on Scott’s work which Sedgwick encountered. So, where an ordinary interpretive entry on this artist’s work would comment first on that one most important fact in her life and then read her art in the light of it (and always with the assumption that the critic him or herself is not a critic with Down Syndrome), Sedgwick suspends this automatism and with it the imperatives that go with it: that the critic maintain both superiority and distance, that the artist’s “consciousness” be assessed and investigated before anything else, that the description of the work remain contained within general assumptions one has been tempted to make about the “mind of the artist”.

As we have also seen with the other examples, a suspension of a rule never produces merely an absence: it always clears space for something else to happen, for something that can articulate itself

precisely through this suspension. In Burroughs' case, this is a new vision of the connectedness of all organic matter, in Woolf's case, the mystery of the self and its relation to the world. In Sedgwick's case, we have a thick description of the art work (the work itself and its interrelation to the artist and her body in the photograph) which is focused on the affective field generated by this assembly, this "dyad" and its interaction with a viewer, *this* viewer. What Sedgwick sees in the photo is a complex web of affective impulses: an affective annihilation of the subject-object divide between the artist and her work who seem to "present themselves *to one another* with equally expansive welcome"; a privileging of touch and texture over sight and structure; a non-hierarchical "besideness" of these two "forms"; a heady affective signal transporting tenderness, sadness, expansiveness, welcome, triumph, satisfaction, relief, and later the "fullness" of "aesthetic consciousness", and a "stubbornly confident access to autotelic production". None of this is to say that Scott's Down Syndrome and the life experiences she accumulated because of it are irrelevant for her art: on the contrary, one may surmise that her art and its affective charge are – how could they not be? – also a result of her specific personality and life history. But this is not seen here as a privation, but rather as a foundational given, one which allows this specific artist to produce this specific art.

In the process, and here one can see why Sedgwick can claim that this photograph was the catalyst for the final form of her book, Scott's work allows Sedgwick to hint at some important tools which she will use in the essays that follow in her own pursuit of a project of developing "promising tools and techniques for nondualistic thought and pedagogy" (1), what she calls the "art of *loosing*" (3). Central among these (and, I think, very resonant in the context of our earlier interzonal examples and readings) is a theorization of "besideness", a concept that performs its own suspension of certain laws:

[...] the most salient preposition in *Touching Feeling* is probably *beside*. Invoking a Deleuzian interest in planar relations, the irreducibly spatial positionality of *beside* also seems to offer some useful resistance to the ease with which *beneath* and *beyond* turn from spatial description into implicit narratives of, respectively, origin and telos.

Beside is an interesting preposition also because there's nothing very dualistic about it; a number of elements may lie alongside one another, though not an infinity of them. *Beside* permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking: noncontradiction or the law of the excluded middle, cause versus effect, subject versus object. Its interest does not, however, depend on a fantasy of metonymically egalitarian or even pacific relations, as any child knows who's shared a bed with siblings. *Beside* comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivalling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other relations. (8)¹¹

Anil Bhatti, the conference's key note speaker, pleaded for a consideration of the relative merits and dangers of weak and strong concepts in our dealings with literature and art. Sedgwick would

certainly have to be situated among those whose intuition favours weak concepts, like that of “besideness”, as they seem best suited for a gradational, “analogic”, non-binary, shaded, tonal view of literature and art. Sedgwickian concepts such as “besideness”, “texture”, or - explicitly “weak”! - the “nonce” are designed to offer an alternative interpretive “tool kit” in combating the tyranny of the either/or. In her reading of Scott’s work, we can see such a transaction in progress, the project of unfastening this artist from the habitualized application of strong categories: fashionable tags like “outsider art” (as opposed to “art” tout court) or indeed Down Syndrome, for what could be a stronger category than a medical diagnosis.

If an “interzonal moment” consists of the suspension of an imperative, in Sedgwick’s case of the automatism of a certain kind of criticism itself, this never means that the moment ends up in a void. On the contrary – and I take this to be the value of investigating the interzonal moment, even of trying to inhabit it – in its suspension of the law, of a law, the interzone allows us for a while to see, hear, feel, think differently, scarily, ecstatically, tenderly, astoundedly, hopelessly, terrifyingly maybe, but it is always the moment in a text when *things happen*, a moment out of which creativity is born.

1 OED “interzone”, adj. “They have always been dusted off in the inter-zone matches” (1960, *Times*); “They gained a 5-1 winning lead over Denmark in the inter-zone final” (1961, *Times*)

2 James Grauerholz, “Introduction”, *Interzone* (1989; London: Penguin, 2009): xiii.

3 William Burroughs, *Interzone*, ed. James Grauerholz (1989; London: Penguin, 2009)

4 See for example his more journalistic piece (nevertheless unmistakably Burroughsian) “International Zone”, which casts Tangier as an internationalized Interzone. (*Interzone* 47-59).

5 Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927; New York: Harcourt, 1955): 95-100.

6 The status of the “letters” that make up *The Yage Letters* is not without problems as clearly the book is not simply a publication of an existing exchange of letters but rather a crafted work that establishes a structure in which the “letters” are made to fit an overall pattern of debate on the issue of Yage, South American culture, the two protagonists’ different searches for different things, ultimately of “Burroughs” and “Ginsberg” as literary creations.

7 William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg, *The Yage Letters: Redux*, ed. Oliver Harris (1963 and 1975; London: Penguin, 2006): 50-51.

8 For the complicated publication history of this “letter”, which was first published separately as a part of the Naked Lunch project to then become “the spectacular climax to “In Search of Yage”, see Oliver Harris’ introduction to *The Yage Letters*, p. xxxix.

9 On civilization’s (and the individual psyche’s) reliance on the maintenance of precisely these divisions, see for example the work of Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation* (1939), Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Le Cru et le cuit* (1964), Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966); or Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982).

10 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, and Performativity* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2003): 22-4.

11 I would like to thank Rainer Schelkle for having shared his ideas on “besideness” with me. I was especially inspired by his unpublished paper “The Texture of the Real: Deleuze, Sedgwick, and the Molecular Realism of A. L. Kennedy”. Paper given at the 3rd International Deleuze Studies Conference, Amsterdam, 12-14 July 2010.

“Interzones”-Spaces of a Fuzzy Cultural Logic

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[...] le problème n'est pas celui de la liberté, mais celui d'une issue.

(Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari, Kafka. *Pour une littérature mineure*, Paris 1975).

I. Interzones Are Different

My reflections on what interzones could and should be are divided into two parts: One part contains more abstract reflections and the other focuses on two concrete examples.

“Interzones” can be thought in different theoretical dimensions: as a special space, as a category, as a “concept” or as a “model”. The notion “Interzones” was designed to syncretize several of these systems of conceptualization or rather layers of meaning.

There are many feasible philosophical approaches, many linguistic ones, many historical ones and also those approaches we understand as deriving from “cultural sciences” or “cultural theory”.

I am going to outline only one of these possibilities.

The idea of “Interzones” represents a certain amount of provocation, or to be more precise, a “challenge”. The starting point of this approach was perhaps the idea of challenging the concepts of identity (above all the famous “cultural identity”, which is turning more and more into the most famous spectre of cultural studies) and of course the one of “difference” or even “différance”. This challenge is not new. The question of how the originally linguistic concept of “difference/différance” fits in with systems and questions of cultural theory is probably one of the most discussed phenomena of high and late modern theoretical discourse. In a way, all important philosophers of the late 20th century, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Hans Blumenberg, Bruno Latour, Gilles Deleuze and Niklas Luhmann, knew that this is the very area where the trickiest problems are to be solved.

Hans Blumenberg is very clear about that when already in the late 50s he talks about the need to provide modern thought with a theory of “Non-Conceptuality”, a “Theorie der Unbegrifflichkeit”, i.e. a genuine theory of what cannot be expressed in terms or notions. This project brings a whole lot of subsequent problems in its wake which are not all solved in Blumenberg’s works. Still, he has outlined in some important writings what he understood to be the very

beginning of such a new theoretical basic theory. It is the idea of a “theory of metaphors”, or more exactly the theory of what kind of knowledge metaphors can express, contain, recall, store and represent; and why this kind of knowledge is in no way contained, stored, expressed or represented in any other linguistic form.

In contrast to a mathematical formula, which is designed to reduce diversity to one model of solution, metaphors are a dense multiplicity of several models and are designed to unfold, develop and deploy complexity. Metaphors are like a supermodel incorporating several models or producing an overlap of sometimes ambiguous and diffuse relations of several systems.

The domain of the blurred, the fuzzy, the diffuse and the overlapping needs a theory of uncertainty. Still, we should not forget: The realm of uncertainty is not the realm of mere chance. Rather, it is the realm of an uneasy, uncanny and often irritating overdetermination through an increased complexity which produces contradictions and tensions. It is an area where relations are more complex than in other areas of phenomena.

According to Niklas Luhmann, one should ask about what happens between different systems, not in the system itself. The Luhmannian system as a system is determined by the reduction of inner complexity and clear-cut borders to all other systems. For Luhmann, the difference between systems is not a border but an abstract line of difference; it has no space or body but only marks an antithesis of what is on the other side.

These theoretical patterns are very close to the theory of difference proposed in Deconstruction Theory. In this theory, there is also a limitation which has no dimension. It is obvious that such an idea is very hard to translate into a cultural or historical field of questions. The combination of philosophical abstraction and historical theory manifestly causes a major problem.

Concepts of identity and alterity, the “moi et de l’autre”, are based on a thinking in dual – and above all – abstract patterns. Besides the methodical problem, there is also an ideological one: All these difference models show an obviously agonal and often even implicitly aggressive foundation. We know this from Foucault’s work about power distribution within discourses. In this way, the methodological problem hides a moral or ethical one and the interzones project could be an offer to revise both of them at the same time.

I suppose that the translation of the concept of linguistically inspired difference theory into cultural theory in the late 20th century has created the necessity to find a cultural theory of what happens between –call it what you like– discourses (Foucault), systems (Luhmann), milieus (Bourdieu), cultures (Homi Bhabha), spaces (Arjun Appadurai).

II. Interzones Are Spec/atial

Interzones are designed to help us think about what is going on “in between”, both in a more metaphorical sense of space and in a con-

crete sense. As such, interzones are based on a spatial theory of the “in between”. Interzones could for example be realized as an interzone in time – one can talk about what happens between different epochs (at the dawn of epochs) – or as a more sociological concept, thus telling us what happens between different people, etc. But it can also very well be part of a theory of space itself. The theory of space has been one of the most productive fields in the last decennia. Interzones want to provide a special contribution to an actual theory of cultural space.

Thinking about space is also not new. We are even talking about a “spatial” or geographical, or topographical turn in the 80s. There is a whole set of authors and texts now conventionally cited in this context and nowadays we even have what we can call a canon of a spatial theoretical discourse. These are not only contemporary authors like Edward Soya, Arjun Appadurai, Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault but also more classical social and political theoreticians like Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, Carl Schmitt and Lucien Febvre. Thinking about space draws attention to space as a historical condition or a condition for historical development and searches for a critical notion of what we call the social construction of space.

In 1967, Michel Foucault was asked by a group of architects to speak about space. The best known of his statements is that “our” time is the time of space. The 19th century was the epoch of “time” and history; and now we live in the epoch of “space” and territory.¹ This is a very early statement by Foucault, more or less during the time when he was writing books like “Madness and Civilization” or “Surveiller et punir”. At that time, the idea of archaeology is very present in his works. We can suppose that Foucault has the very ambitious idea of writing a kind of successor theory for the traditional 19th century “philosophy of history” by himself inventing the super theory of Modernity in the form of a philosophy of space.

The fundamental change we witness in the 1970s, a change which prepares the fall of the communist empires and the total renewal of the modern world order, marks not only the end of certain orthodox Marxist and leftist radical tendencies, but also the very end as dominant philosophy of what we can call the idealistic philosophy of history – be it Hegel’s or, indeed, Marx’s. In the aftermath of these displacements, there is not only a lack of political order in the sense of an ordering of politics into “left” and “right”, but also an enormous need of a new philosophical “order” in the face of this loss of historical teleology. The much invoked “End of History” is a popular expression precisely for the implosion of the historical discourse not only in philosophy but also in all popularized forms of what we call “progress”, “biography”, “future”, “Bildung”, “development”, evolution, etc.

Foucault was one of the very first writers to perhaps more feel than conceptualize this new way of thinking as a thinking on space. In nearly all of his works, he tries to realize different concepts of this idea: the prison, the clinic, the room of the painter, the boat of the madmen, the leprosarium, the city and last but not least the body, which was his latest and maybe best concept of space.

So, I think that the so called spatial turn is not just one of many turns but the fundamental turn in modern cultural science. It could – at the same time – finally replace or correct two of the key implicit concepts of idealistic philosophy: first “personal identity” and then “Culture”, the latter understood as a concept of homogeneity, the former of plurality. Interzones could be part of this spatial and cultural turn in an epistemological, conceptual and a very concrete way.

The construction and configuration of human geographies has to be respected in the development of history and social theory. Construction of space means on the one hand material constructions like building houses or streets and cities. Construction of space is also a symbolic act, the representation of space in language, on maps, by pictures and by signs. Space is a relational notion: the relation between human beings, between things, between things and humans, but also the relation between symbolic and material constructions. There is never only one fundamental relation, only one structure we can find. There is a multitude of possible relations in which things and human beings can share and create space.

Whereas time is connected to mobility, to development, to progress and to change, to history and to possibilities, space has been thought of as being associated with immobility, stagnation, stability, changelessness. We learn to associate space and change for the first time when theorists begin to think that the crossing of borders might be change. Migration and the crossing of borders becomes the basic model on which to create a dynamic way of thinking space. “But the hottest spots for semioticizing processes are the boundaries of the semiosphere. The notion of boundary is an ambivalent one: It both separates and unites [...]. The boundary is bilingual and polylingual”², says Yuri Lotman, who is the one to associate space, event and change. Cultural evolution is hereby tied directly to the existence of heterogeneity and no longer to the idea(l) of a mostly “internal”, homogenous site of cultural production.

Polyglottism is multiethnic, multireligious, a phenomenon of overlapping boundary areas. It does not display the homogeneity of the very centre of a cultural area. It is the zone, the sphere of more or less alien and familiar spheres of similarities.³

Boundaries are not lines drawn in an empty space. They are boundaries in the sense of spaces, “boundary regions”, “no man’s lands” or interzones.

Examining the notion of “no man’s land” is a project I would like to take on next year.

As an example, I would like to outline why I consider this to be an interesting part of an interzones research program.

III. Examples: Simmel and Kafka

a) Georg Simmel

Georg Simmel (born in 1858 in Berlin, died in 1918 in Strasbourg) is one of the first and together with Max Weber the most important

German sociologist. He is best known for his writings about the modern calculating mind, for his sociology of money and his writings about modern city life. City life, he states, is best for people who know how to manage distance; he talks about coolness, *Blasiertheit* and reserve. With these ideas, he is not far from what Helmuth Plessner says about modern societies.

In his early writings, he proposes an unusual and interesting notion of “no man’s land”. In contrast to a notion of “no man’s land” as a deserted and lost space between two nations, two countries, two cultures and two borders, it is for him not merely a territory with no king, no laws, no police and no civil rights. Neither is it merely the postmodernist transit for refugees, the non-lieu by Marc Augé, which marks loneliness, anonymity, lost identity, lost rights, lost passports, migration, nomadism, relativity and a fundamentally apolitical, asocial status of modern human beings. Simmel proposes another interpretation of what the function of “no man’s land” could be:

He conceptualizes a multiplicity of possible spaces “in between”: empty spaces (above all in big cities) but also boundary deserts (“leere Räume”, “Grenzwüsten”) and neutral spaces (“neutrale Räume”) that modern men create around themselves.⁴

One of these possible spheres is referred to as a “Sphäre von gegen andere geübten Reserven [...]”, a sphere in which we maintain reserve towards others.⁵ These “Reserven”, preserved for the modern human being, can be found at the very heart of our cities (*Ruderallflächen*) and our everyday life: Cafés, bus stops, parks, train stations, passages, laundromats. They may be situated in particular places but may also be the result of a certain kind of behaviour, a kind of coolness which makes you untouchable wherever you are, an invisible no man’s land you carry with you as your personal preserve.

No man’s land is where you can live without being observed.⁶ In no man’s land you are not well-known, for a certain amount of time you are nobody. This is the reason why in no man’s land you can negotiate and bargain especially well: “Unter den vielen Fällen, in denen die Maxime: tu’ mir nichts, ich tu dir auch nichts – das Benehmen bestimmt, gibt es keinen reineren und anschaulicheren als den des wüsten Gebiets, das eine Gruppe um sich legt; hier hat sich das Prinzip völlig in die Raumform hineinverkörpert.”⁷

It is an anti-hermeneutic concept. It is not predicated on a notion of your first not knowing somebody, then understanding him and then talking to him. Negotiating a certain problem or bargaining a certain deal without understanding the person you are talking to is the concept of no man’s land. The problem of how alien that PERSON is to you might be a minor one in this moment. The interzone is a place where a certain momentary lack of identity turns into the chance to

communicate in a pragmatic form and to identify partial similarities instead of reflecting on total understanding or total misunderstanding. There is no “tyranny of intimacy”.⁸

How this tyranny works not only for personal relations but also for group performances is a big issue in social theories of the 20s but also in literary reflections by numerous authors, ranging from Musil to Kafka, Brecht, Broch and Thomas Mann.

The exact process of what happens in the course of nation building in the name of family is described in a fantastic text by Franz Kafka: “Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer”. The whole ideological process of creating the notion of “you and me” by searching and producing alterity is represented by the defining metaphor of building the Great Wall of China.

b) Kafka

“Die chinesische Mauer ist an ihrer nördlichsten Stelle beendet worden”.⁹ However, believing that the wall is finished proves an illusion. The first sentence should be a piece of information but it is more like a helpless attempt to convince the reader and the speaker himself. As a performative speech act, it does not work. On the contrary, situated in an exposed part of the country, those parts of the completed building which had to be left to themselves as the building progressed could be demolished again at any time and without any difficulty by the nomadic inhabitants of the region who, as a result of their vastly superior mobility, were in any case much better informed on the progress and condition of the wall than its builders:

Diese in öder Gegend verlassen stehenden Mauerteile können immer wieder leicht von den Nomaden zerstört werden, zumal diese damals, geängstigt durch den Mauerbau, mit unbegreiflicher Schnelligkeit wie Heuschrecken ihre Wohnsitze wechselten und deshalb vielleicht einen besseren Überblick über die Baufortschritte hatten als selbst wir, die Erbauer.¹⁰

It is interesting enough that the wall is built in the middle of nowhere, that there are no enemies and that the nomads are attracted by the wall rather than being expelled by it.

The fragmentary wall is not only useless for protection but the construction itself is in constant danger, as the narrator puts it. The wall itself is in danger. It marks the land as a boundary region and creates trouble. The empty space becomes a territory by the building of walls, the drawing of maps and the fact that the builders end up talking about – and not with – the nomads.

Barren as it was before, this region is, without walls, “uninhabited”, not “built up”, though by no means devoid of inhabitants.¹¹ It is barren land in the sense that it is “non-cultivated land”. In this environment – and, one must conclude: in all other

environments for which this one provides the model – it is the act, the speech act of differentiating, of mine and yours, us and them, Chinese and Nomads which provokes war. Language, engineering, agriculture and war all exhibit the same structure.

The other side of the wall, “our”, is also interesting: Inside the wall, a family comes into being. It is not a nation, a group or a society that is born there but a bond of blood kinship, a natural community of brothers and sisters. This seems to be natural: The community of people who live in what is perceived as a large family is nothing less than the effect of an ideological act of imperialism.

Radical consequence in Kafka’s work: The ideological centre of the imperial act is empty. You do not even know the emperor; maybe he is dead, old, non-existent. Kafka, long before Derrida, invents the empty centre, the dead father, the lack of the king, the floating signifier and the nonexistence of the master signifier. Kafka’s little story is not full of interesting metaphors but is itself a metaphor.

The building of the wall is a massive metaphor which does not only signify the act of cultivation or the act of mapping or the act of signifying or the act of aggression and cultivation. The building and not finishing of the Great Wall of China is the metaphor which stands for all the above-mentioned concepts at the same time as well as for the complex interconnection of all these different acts. Simultaneously, the metaphor does not tell, but rather suggests that we think about what happened before the building of the wall, what happens in empty spaces and how to communicate with nomads. As the metaphor is more than a simple comparison, it is always an untold story. In Kafka’s story, you are on the one hand told about the wall but at the same time you can image what would have happened without the wall: Meetings with nomads in no man’s land.

Due to its metaphorical character, Kafka’s narration is a commentary on the topic of differentiation. It tells us that thinking and talking is not possible without creating difference. But it tells us at the same time that this is not enough. So, be happy if your wall is never finished.

“[...]le problème n’est pas celui de la liberté, mais celui d’une issue.”¹²

- 1** Cf. Michel Foucault, "Des espaces autres". In: Dits et écrits 1954-1988. Bibliothèque des sciences humaines. Paris 1994, p.752.
- 2** Yuri Lotman, Universe of the Mind. A Semiotic Theory of Culture. London 1990, p. 136.
- 3** Cf. Anil Bhatti: "Culture, Diversity and Similarity. A Reflection on Heterogeneity and Homogeneity". In: Social Scientist, Bd. 37, Nr. 7-8 (Juli/August 2009), p.33-48.
- 4** Georg Simmel: "Über räumliche Projectionen sozialer Formen". In: Ders.: Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1901-1908, Bd. 1, (Georg Simmel Gesamtausgabe, Bd. 7), hg. v. Rüdiger Kramme, Angela Rammstedt und Otthein Rammstedt, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 1995, p. 201-220.
- 5** Georg Simmel: Über räumliche Projectionen sozialer Formen, p. 217.
- 6** Survival strategies for the both dispersive and dispersed Modern period, as observed by amongst others Georg Simmel or Helmuth Plessner, are acts of immunization against impressions, withdrawals into the interior or "Verhaltenslehren der Kälte" (behavior lessons taught by coldness) (Helmuth Lethen: Verhaltenslehren der Kälte. Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen, Frankfurt a. M. 1994). Cf. also : Dorothee Kimmich: "Moralistik und Neue Sachlichkeit. Ein Kommentar zu Helmuth Plessners ‚Grenzen der Gemeinschaft‘". In: Plessners "Grenzen der Gemeinschaft". Eine Debatte, hg. v. Wolfgang Eßbach u. Joachim Fischer, Frankfurt a. M. 2002, p. 160-182.
- 7** Georg Simmel: Über räumliche Projectionen sozialer Formen, p. 215.
- 8** Richard Sennet: Verfall und Ende des öffentlichen Lebens. Die Tyrannei der Intimität, Frankfurt a. M. 1986.
- 9** Franz Kafka, Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente I, hg. von Malcolm Pasley, (= Franz Kafka, Kritische Gesamtausgabe hg. von Jürgen Born u. a.) Frankfurt 1993, p. 337-357, p. 337.
- 10** Ibid. p.338f.
- 11** Cf. Michel Foucher, Fronts et Frontières, un tour du monde géopolitique, Paris 1988. In this volume, Foucher asks whether borders are spaces or whether they only mark spaces.
- 12** Gilles Deleuze/ Félix Guattari, Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure, Paris 1975.

Le littoral, en tant qu'interzone

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Ang. *littorally* = *littoral* + *literally*

L. *litus, litoris* ; *littera* ; *litura* (« rature, ordure »)

1° βῆ δ'ἀκέων παρα θίνα πολυφλοίοβοιο θαλασσης

(*Iliade*, 1.34)

2° Je parsème mon texte d'un peu de grec, en partie parce que cette langue sonne tant comme l'océan [...]. Nous ne possédons pas en anglais de mot pour dire le bruit πολυφλοίοβοιο que font, à l'oreille, plusieurs vagues se lançant, ou doucement ou violemment, contre le rivage, et le spectacle, un ἀνάριθμον γέλασμα [Eschyle, *Prométhée enchaîné*, 90] qu'offre à l'œil l'océan dans une humeur plus tranquille.

(Henry David Thoreau, *Cap Cod*, trad. P.-Y. Pétillon, Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 2000, p. 96).

3° And the wave runs in the beach-groove:

“Eleanor, **ελέναυς** and **ελέπτολις** !”

And poor old Homer blind, blind, as a bat,

Ear, ear for the sea-surge, murmur of old men's voices:

“Let her go back to the ships,

Back among Grecian faces, lest evil come on our own,

Evil and further evil, and a curse cursed on our children [...].

(Ezra Pound, “Canto II”, 1922):

Et la vague glisse dans la gorge de la plage :

“Eléonore, **ελέναυς** et **ελέπτολις** !”

Pauvre vieil Homère aveugle, aveugle, comme une taupe,

Oyant, oyant la houle, murmure de vieillards :

“Qu'elle retourne aux navires,

Parmi les faces grecques, de peur que du mal ne vienne sur nous,

Un mal toujours plus grand, et une malédiction jetée sur nos enfants [...].

4° La « littérature » ayant tendance à se cantonner dans l'enfermé et le ressassé, ce que je propose, c'est un peu de **littoralité**, où l'écrit rejoint l'oral (parole, bruits du monde), où l'esprit erre le long des rivages de la planète, où l'être se transforme en système ouvert, où l'identité devient champ d'énergie.

(Kenneth White, *Les Archives du littoral*, Paris : Mercure de France, 2011, p. 9).

5° Countlessness of livestories have netherfallen by this **plage**, flick as flowflakes, **litters** from aloft, like a waast wizard all of whirlworlds.

(James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, Londres : Faber, 1975 [1939], p. 17): Une somme incalculable de récits de vie/ d'histoires vivantes sont tombés par cette plage, des chiquenaudes aussi drues que des fbcons de neige fluctuants, des lettres/ ordures venues du ciel, telle une vaste tempête de neige/ tel un énorme sorcier destructeur, tout en mondes tourbillonnants.

A. Le littoral et le littéral chez Jacques Lacan

Dans sa *Leçon sur Lituraterre*, Lacan s'autorise de James Joyce pour faire résonner *litter* dans *letter* et *litura* dans *littera*. “La civilisation, dit-il, c'est

l'égout", déclaration qui peut s'entendre au sens propre – on pense au génie romain – ou au sens figuré, pour autant que la littérature, par exemple, "ne [serait] qu'accommodation des restes, [...] collocation dans l'écrit de ce qui d'abord, primitivement, serait chant, mythe parlé, procession dramatique".¹ Une telle conception, d'origine platonicienne, ignore cependant l'évolution des régimes d'identification et de pensée des arts. Nous connaissons, depuis la fin du 18^{ème} siècle, un changement de configuration et une promotion de l'écrit. Certes, la lettre demeure un instrument propre à l'inscription du discours, mais l'écriture littéraire n'est plus considérée comme un décalque de la parole. Autrement dit, il ne faut pas confondre la lettre avec le signifiant.

Lacan nous renvoie à *La Lettre volée* d'Edgar Allan Poe. La lettre qui circule entre la Reine, le ministre, Dupin et le chef de la sûreté parisienne emporte, selon l'expression de Lacan, le signifiant dans son enveloppe. À aucun moment n'est-il question du contenu de la lettre. La nouvelle se borne à décrire l'effet produit par la lettre sur celui, ou celle, qui la détient. L'effet de la lettre n'est justement pas sa signification. La lettre insiste – d'où le titre d'un des *Écrits* de Lacan, *L'Instance de la lettre* – en tant que "raison" de l'inconscient. Il s'agit pour le psychanalyste de désigner "dans la lettre ce qui, à devoir insister, n'est pas là de plein droit, si fort de raison que ça s'avance".² Et c'est là qu'il a recours à l'idée de littoral :

Moi, je vais vous dire, **la lettre n'est-elle pas le littéral à fonder dans le littoral ?** Car ça, c'est autre chose qu'une frontière. D'ailleurs, vous avez pu remarquer que ça ne se confond jamais. Le littoral, c'est ce qui pose un domaine, tout entier comme faisant [à] un autre, si vous voulez, frontière, mais justement de ceci qu'ils n'ont absolument rien en commun, même pas une relation réciproque. **La lettre n'est-elle pas proprement littorale ?** Le bord du trou dans le savoir que la psychanalyse désigne justement quand elle l'aborde, de la lettre, voilà-t-il pas ce qu'elle dessine ? Le drôle, c'est de constater comment la psychanalyse s'oblige, en quelque sorte de son mouvement même, à reconnaître le sens de ce que pourtant la lettre dit à la lettre, c'est le cas de le dire, quand toutes ses interprétations se résument à la jouissance. Entre la jouissance et le savoir, **la lettre ferait le littoral.**³

Que nous dit Lacan ici ? Alors qu'une frontière sépare deux territoires homogènes, le littoral sépare deux domaines qui n'ont absolument rien en commun, la lithosphère et l'hydrosphère. La lettre s'avère "littorale" pour autant qu'elle désigne le *bord* du trou dans le savoir, là où se musse un "savoir en échec" – ce qui n'a rien à voir, je le signale en passant, avec un quelconque échec du savoir. Et en vertu de quoi la lettre est-elle particulièrement apte à désigner le littoral, le bord, la limite ? En vertu du fait qu'elle ne signifie rien.

Cela se comprend dans le cadre de la "linguisterie" psychanalytique. Lacan a l'habitude de rapprocher le *Wahrnehmungzeichen* de Freud du signe de Saussure, ce qui lui permet d'envisager nos perceptions comme des signifiants. Or, un signifiant

“tient lieu” d’autre chose. Selon l’orthodoxie saussurienne, il renvoie à un signifié, l’autre face du signe, lequel renvoie le plus souvent à une réalité non linguistique. Mais Lacan substitue au triangle saussurien signifiant-signifié-référent le triangle kantien phénomène-concept-noumène. Du coup, le référent du signe – tout signe – se voit relégué hors du sensible et de l’intelligible. Il n’appartient plus aux dimensions du symbolique et de l’imaginaire : il rejoint la chose en soi dans un réel indicible et irréprésentable : le réel comme le contraire du possible. C’est ainsi que “le mot tue la chose”, selon l’expression de Hegel. Notre entrée dans le langage nous dérobe le monde. Nous voilà condamnés à enchaîner des signifiants suivant le jeu métaphorique du “mot pris pour un autre”, et à enchaîner des objets suivant le jeu métonymique du désir. Le discours universitaire n’y échappe pas, car il se définit comme “du savoir mis en usage à partir du semblant”, à partir de ce semblant par excellence qu’est le signifiant. Alors, demande Lacan, “est-il possible du littoral de constituer tel discours qui se caractérise [...] de ne pas s’émettre du semblant?”.⁴ Peut-on trouver des exemples, à se fier au titre du séminaire, *D’un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant* ?

Lacan nous lance sur deux pistes : la littérature, ou du moins cette variété de littérature qu’il appelle *litureterre* et dont *Finnegans Wake* représente à ses yeux l’expérimentation la plus aboutie ; et les formules algorithmiques de la science moderne. La lettre efface, le signifiant s’efface : ce n’est pas la même chose. Si “c’est de l’effacement du trait que se désigne le sujet” – ce sujet qui n’est autre qu’un signifiant pour un deuxième signifiant –, la *litureterre* se définit comme la “rature d’aucune trace qui soit d’avant”. Il s’agit de produire la rature seule, la *litura* pure, en “[faisant] terre du littoral”.⁵ On voit pourquoi la plage ou la page peuvent être propice à illustrer cette dialectique de l’inscription et de l’effacement : la fluidité de la mer et la motilité du sable ne laissant subsister aucune trace, l’inscription et l’effacement ne font qu’un. Dans le même ordre d’idées, Lacan fait allusion à la rupture des nuages et aux averses. En tant que pur semblant, le signifiant ressemble à une nuée. La lettre, elle, effectue la rupture du semblant : en faisant rature, elle “dissout ce qui faisait forme, phénomène, météore”.⁶ C’est en ce sens qu’elle rejoint l’opération de la science sur les formes perceptibles. On le sait, les fondateurs de la physique moderne ont choisi sciemment de se fermer les yeux sur la richesse du sensible, la diversité des phénomènes, afin de déduire les lois simples qui en gouvernent l’apparition. Pour ce faire ils se sont adonnés à une mathématique littéralisée, algébrique, dont la chaîne des raisons anticipe, et parfois contredit, ce qui se laisse observer de façon empirique. C’est en vue de vérifier expérimentalement des formules écrites qu’on a construit des télescopes satellitaires et des accélérateurs de particules. C’est donc la lettre qui sert de référent aux phénomènes, et non pas l’inverse.

B. L'intersection & l'interstice

Grosso modo, il y a deux façons d'entendre le mot *interzone*. Suivant qu'on accentue *inter* ou *zone*, l'interzone désignera ou bien une région (spatio-temporelle, culturelle, linguistique, psychique, etc.) appartenant à plusieurs zones, ou bien une zone spécifique entre deux ou plusieurs régions. Dans le premier cas, il y a intersection, empiètement de deux ensembles, l'interzone étant celle de leur coïncidence partielle. Dans le deuxième cas, l'interzone n'appartient ni à l'un ni à l'autre de ces ensembles, mais qualifie l'espace interstitiel qui les sépare. Ainsi l'*intersection* s'oppose à l'*interstice* pour former deux types d'interzone : l'interzone de conjonction, ou de métissage ; et l'interzone de disjonction, ou d'Apartheid.

La première interzone constitue une zone de voisinage, d'indiscernabilité ; elle est *borderland* ou zone frontière. Au moyen d'une co-extension partielle, elle assure une certaine continuité entre deux (ou plusieurs) domaines qualitativement différents, et s'exprime grammaticalement par la formule "et... et...". L'interstice, en revanche, opère une solution de continuité, une coupure, *a gap*, et donne lieu à la formule "ni... ni...". En topologie, cette coupure serait qualifiée d'"irrationnelle". Une coupure "rationnelle" fait partie de l'un des deux ensembles qu'elle sépare, étant la fin de l'un ou le début de l'autre ; mais dans le cas de la coupure "irrationnelle", l'interaction de deux ensembles engendre une frontière qui n'appartient à aucun des deux, le deuxième n'ayant pas plus de début que le premier n'a de fin. Le faux-raccord au cinéma fournit un bon exemple, ou bien l'utilisation très spéciale que fait Ezra Pound du mot *and* dans son épopée *The Cantos*. Cette conjonction de coordination, qui est d'ailleurs le premier mot du poème, se comporte ici comme un outil de *disjonction*, servant à effectuer des sauts entre des blocs de textes radicalement différents. Techniquement, *and* n'appartient à aucun bloc ; il œuvre néanmoins à leur mise en relation, faisant résonner ensemble des hétérogènes (de co-existence et de succession), sans qu'ils cessent d'être hétérogènes. C'est cette variété "irrationnelle" de la coupure qui caractérise les interzones du deuxième type.

Mais revenons aux interzones de conjonction. Les exemples sont légion. Pour un Français, l'adjectif *interzone* renvoie à ce qui était commun à la zone occupée et à la zone libre pendant la 2^e guerre mondiale ; pour un Allemand, *interzonen* désigne ce qui appartenait aux deux blocs, est et ouest, lors de la partition du pays. L'Interzone de William Burroughs se situe au point de rencontre de populations diverses, et brasse dans un vaste *melting pot* rites corporels, modes vestimentaires, habitudes culinaires et styles architecturaux. À vrai dire, l'Interzone de *Naked Lunch* est un cas très complexe : zone d'intersection, certes, mais également zone interstice, zone interlope, zone autonome par rapport aux pays environnants.

Comme exemple du deuxième type d'interzone, l'interzone interstitielle, citons le *no man's land* qui séparait les deux lignes de front pendant la 1^{ère} guerre mondiale. Lieu mortifère qui n'appartenait à "no man", zone de la négation de l'humain, topographie du mal

absolu, il réduisait tout être à néant dans une violence indescriptible qui broyait et annulait les différences. Mais l'interzone interstitielle n'est pas toujours aussi négative. Déjà, le *no man's land* a pu, à l'occasion, se transformer en terrain de sport, comme lors du match de foot entre troupes françaises et allemandes pendant la trêve de Noël. Et si l'on quitte l'histoire pour la nature, on en trouve des exemples très positifs. Le milieu de maint oiseau de proie se divise nettement en trois zones : une zone centrale de nidification, une zone extérieure de chasse, et puis un anneau ou ceinture intermédiaire, une interzone où le prédateur ne chasse jamais. Il a, par ailleurs, de très bonnes raisons pour ne pas le faire, mais ce qui nous intéresse ici, c'est le fait que d'autres espèces d'oiseaux, celles précisément qui constituent la pâture habituelle du rapace, viennent s'alimenter, faire leur nid et couvrir leurs œufs dans cette interzone, et cela en toute sécurité. On peut même parler de sécurité redoublée, car non seulement le rapace ne troublera pas les passereaux aussi longtemps qu'ils demeurent dans l'interzone, mais son voisinage éloignera également d'autres prédateurs.

C. L'entre-deux-milieux

Venons-en à des exemples moins évidemment topographiques. Prenons cette salle. Elle renferme non pas un mais plusieurs milieux, lesquels s'interpénètrent, tout en restant distincts. Car cette salle n'a pas du tout les mêmes aspects, ni la même signification, suivant qu'on est architecte, étudiant, agent chargé du nettoyage des locaux, ou mouche. Voici quatre milieux tout à fait hétérogènes qui néanmoins partagent le même espace. Par conséquent, l'idée de l'entre-deux, de l'entre-deux-milieux, de l'entre-deux-zones, sera moins une question de topographie que de passage, et l'idée de passage moins une question de translation que de transformation, de saut sur place. Ce n'est pas un hasard si David Cronenberg a choisi de porter à l'écran *Naked Lunch* et de tourner un remake de *The Fly*. Si la métamorphose corporelle joue un rôle très important dans ces films, c'est seulement en tant qu'elle découle d'un changement de milieu. Elle a beau rendre visible ce passage, la transformation physique n'en est que la conséquence la plus évidente. Cronenberg montre surtout comment les caractères perceptifs et actifs se transforment d'un milieu à un autre et, avec eux, les objets porteurs de signification. Une mouche ne s'intéresse pas aux mêmes choses qu'un homme, et elle ne les emploie ni les perçoit de la même manière.

Restons un instant sur cette idée d'entre-deux-milieux. Qu'est-ce qui se situe dans l'interstice sinon le chaos, le "milieu de tous les milieux"? Gare à celles et à ceux qui s'apprêtent à s'aventurer dans l'interzone : ils vont devoir affronter le chaos. Le chaos, c'est d'abord l'effondrement de la *forme*, la perte des configurations stables qui structurent notre expérience. Dans la pensée occidentale, la forme désigne surtout les contours de l'objet ou de l'être, ses limites, ses termes et ses fins. La forme-idée *délimite*, *détermine* et *définit*, et ce faisant,

elle extrait l'entité ou l'ensemble ainsi formé du monde informe qui l'entoure. Aussi, la traversée du chaos entraîne-t-elle une perte des repères, une dissolution des formes, une désorganisation et un décodage généralisés, mais ce n'est pas pour autant qu'on ne peut rien en dire. D'après Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, "C'est dans cet entre-deux que le chaos devient rythme, non pas nécessairement, mais a une chance de le devenir. [...] Il y a rythme dès qu'il y a passage transcodé d'un milieu à un autre, communication de milieux, coordination d'espace-temps hétérogènes".⁷ La forme opère dans un espace-temps homogène, mais le rythme "se pose entre deux milieux, ou entre deux entre-milieux, comme entre deux eaux, entre deux heures, entre chien et loup, *twilight* ou *zweilicht* [...]".⁸ Cette inégalité constituante du rythme est à distinguer de la mesure ou de la cadence, même irrégulières. Certes, un milieu existe par la répétition périodique de ses composantes, mais cette répétition même produit une différence par laquelle le milieu passe dans un autre milieu. "C'est la différence qui est rythmique, et non pas la répétition qui, pourtant, la produit ; [...] cette répétition productive [n'a] rien à voir avec une mesure reproductrice".⁹ Ainsi, dans l'entre-deux-milieu, le dépérissement de la forme se voit compensé par l'émergence du rythme.

Voilà à quoi il faut nous attacher dans notre exploration des interzones, non pas aux formes stables (il n'y en a pas), mais aux formes éphémères et aléatoires nées du mouvement. Comme le dit Paul Valéry, il s'agit de deviner "les nappes qu'un oiseau dans son vol engendre, la courbe sur laquelle glisse une pierre lancée, les surfaces qui définissent nos gestes, et les déchirures extraordinaires, les arabesques fluides, les chambres informes, créées dans un réseau pénétrant tout, par la rayure grinçante du tremblement des insectes, le roulis des arbres, les roues, le sourire humain, la marée". Même psychique, même socio-culturelle, l'interzone aura toujours quelque chose d'atmosphérique, de désertique ou d'aquatique, car ces grandes étendues plastiques sont plus propices au recueil des impressions fugaces que les solides entités métastables de la lithosphère : "Parfois, les traces de ce [qu'on] a imaginé se laissent voir sur les sables, sur les eaux ; parfois [notre] rétine elle-même peut comparer, dans le temps, à quelque objet la forme de son déplacement".¹⁰ Toute interzone est une mer de sable.

Dans le film d'Andrei Tarkovski, *Stalker*, la Zone interdite ressemble, à première vue, à un simple paysage en friche. Mais tous ceux qui veulent y pénétrer doivent s'attribuer les services d'un Stalker, en raison de l'étrange mutabilité du terrain. D'une visite à l'autre, le paysage n'a jamais la même disposition. Le "Stalker" lance devant lui une sonde rudimentaire, deux boulons noués à un lacet, afin de s'assurer de la solidité du chemin. Soumise à l'amplification aléatoire des fluctuations qui la traversent, la Zone évolue de manière chaotique ; elle s'avère aussi turbulente qu'un ciel d'orage, une tempête en mer, ou la surface de la planète Solaris, magma tourbillonnant en ébullition continue, capable de se cristalliser subitement en prêtant forme aux souvenirs inconscients de ceux qui la contemplent.

D. Le littoral & le littéral

Jusqu'ici, j'ai mis l'accent sur la "forme du contenu" des nombreuses interzones, mais pour conclure j'aimerais accentuer les "formes d'expression". Quel sens peut-il y avoir à parler d'interzones "littéraires"? Le *littoral* ne serait qu'un exemple géographique de plus, s'il ne se prêtait pas à un jeu de mots, certes arbitraire, mais qu'on peut essayer, à la suite de Thoreau et de Lacan, de motiver conceptuellement. Zone fluctuante, incessamment remodelée par les vents et les marées, "espace lisse" où viennent s'échouer les objets et les êtres les plus hétéroclites, le littoral exemplifie les deux types d'interzones, interstice et intersection. La mer et la terre représentent deux éléments, deux dynamiques, deux physiques disparates; et pourtant les atomes de sable du littoral, corpuscules durs qui s'écoulent par myriades, participent des deux domaines. À en croire Thoreau, cette hétérogénéité foncière caractérise également les êtres qui fréquentent la plage: "Avant que la terre ne monte de l'océan, et ne devienne terre sèche, régnait le chaos. Et, sur l'estran, entre la marque de la marée haute et la marque de la marée basse, là où la terre est déjà en partie dévêtue et sort encore en partie de la mer, règne aujourd'hui une sorte de chaos, où seules des créatures hors de la norme peuvent habiter".¹¹ On le voit sur les plages de nos jours. Nous y allons pour nous *exposer*, nous exposer aux forces du cosmos, au soleil, aux vagues et au vent, aux autres aussi, et ce faisant, nous nous y égalisons comme sur un vaste terrain de jeu. Non sans danger, toutefois. Chaque saison balnéaire apporte son lot de noyés, et ceux qui craignent les courants ou l'hydrocution couvent leurs mélanomes sur des serviettes de plage. Car, à lire Thoreau, "l'estran est une morgue, un charnier. Des charognes infâmes y pourrissent, 'le ventre plein d'exhalaisons', comme des fleurs qui s'épanouissent".¹²

Si le caractère interzonal du littoral ne fait aucun doute, qu'en est-il du *littéral*? Précisons d'abord que j'entends par *littéral* la dimension matérielle du langage, aussi bien au point de vue sonore que visuel: "atomes de phonie", pictogrammes, phonogrammes, idéogrammes, lettres, ces "matières" d'expression opèrent de façon proprement interzonale pour peu qu'elles servent à articuler des propositions et des corps, des effets de sens et des états de choses. Prendre les mots au pied de la lettre, *littéralement*, c'est se tenir au plus près de la surface médiane qui fait communiquer, *littoralement*, ces deux séries hétérogènes. À l'époque de Shakespeare, le mot *humour* n'avait pas encore le sens de "comique verbal" qu'il a aujourd'hui, mais il cessait déjà de désigner les *humeurs* matérielles irriguant la chair des corps. Sur les planches du théâtre élisabéthain, *humour* devient un mot vide pour un objet = x, un mot ésotérique pour un objet inconnu, dont les déplacements tracent la frontière entre les plans langagier et corporel: d'un côté, les humeurs peccantes du corps, de l'autre l'humour pétillant du sens. Car l'humour, tant qu'il ne s'éloigne pas trop du foyer humoral, reste une des ressources majeures de l'interzone. Voir William Burroughs. Ou Antonin Artaud.

E. Textiles & feutres

Les matières d'expression constituent des sémiotiques, mais pour un écrivain comme Burroughs, ou comme Ezra Pound, "les composantes *sémiotiques* ne sont pas séparables de composantes *matérielles* [...]".¹³ Or, il est notoire que le matériau verbal élaboré par ces écrivains surprend par l'hétérogénéité de ses éléments. La question qui se pose est alors la suivante : comment font-ils pour faire tenir ensemble ces éléments hétérogènes sans les neutraliser dans un système de stratification codé ? Autrement dit, comment font-ils pour éviter d'en faire des *textes*, des *texta*, des textiles, des produits tissés à la fois dans le sens horizontal, en enchaînant des "causalités linéaires", et dans le sens vertical, en établissant des "hiérarchies d'ordre" ?

Je propose qu'on en finisse avec la métaphore de la textualité et du tissage, du moins lors de nos errances à travers les interzones littérales. La laine s'apprête non seulement aux opérations de tissage, mais également au travail de *feutrage* : en foulant et en agglutinant les poils, l'artisan les transforme en feutre. Or, une étoffe feutrée, agglutinée comme les sables du littoral, présente une texture très différente de celle d'un tissu. Une œuvre comme *The Cantos* n'est pas un texte stratifié, mais un "ensemble de consistance" dont les éléments tiennent ensemble grâce à l'agglomération pièce à pièce de matériaux préalablement travaillés. C'est une méthode qui peut nous laisser perplexe, habitués comme nous sommes à penser le langage et le récit en termes de combinaisons stratifiées du moléculaire et du molaire. Depuis le niveau hypo-phonématique des traits distinctifs jusqu'au niveau catégorématique des propositions, en passant par ceux des phonèmes, des morphèmes et des lexèmes, avec leurs relations d'intégration et de distribution, nous avons fait du langage une vaste structure hiérarchisée. Et Roland Barthes n'a fait qu'édifier quelques étages de plus, en inventant, dans son "Analyse structurale des récits", un niveau fonctionnel, avec ses noyaux et ses catalyses, et un niveau indiciel dans lequel s'intègrent les séquences narratives minimales. Mais stratifier la langue, grammaticaliser le récit, "textualiser" le poème ont un prix : l'homogénéisation et l'immobilisation de l'ensemble dans des cadres formels. Une approche interzonale devrait se faire dé-stratifiante, dé-neutralisante, rythmique. Soyons des Pénélopes nocturnes : défaisons les tapisseries, abandonnons la trame et la chaîne, le *warp* et le *woof*, et mettons-nous au feutrage.

Perpignan, janvier 2011.

- 1** *D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant. Le Séminaire XVIII*, Paris : Seuil, Champ Freudien, 2006, p. 114.
- 2** *ibidem*, p. 116.
- 3** *ibidem*, p. 117.
- 4** *ibidem*, p. 124.
- 5** *ibidem* p. 121.
- 6** *ibidem* p. 122.
- 7** *Mille Plateaux*, Paris : Minuit, 1980, p. 385.
- 8** *idem*.
- 9** *ibidem*, p. 386.
- 10** Valéry, *Introduction à la méthode de Léonard de Vinci*, Paris : Gallimard, 1957, p. 30.
- 11** H.D. Thoreau, *Cap Cod*, trad. P-Y. Pétilion, Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 2000, p. 100.
- 12** *ibidem*, 33.
- 13** *Mille Plateaux*, p. 413.