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ART**

Lambert Barthelemy

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CHAPTER FOUR

“(…) THE ROAD AND ITS TURNINGS (…):
ROADSCAPES IN ROAD MOVIES AND VISUAL ART

LAMBERT BARTHÉLÉMY

(…) more than anything, it is the road and its
turnings that is the traveler (…).

Robert Creeley, *Poem for Beginners*

In this contribution, I would like to consider some heterogeneous material made up of road films chosen in a denationalized and deperiodized corpus, but also of journeys of photographers (Depardon, Franck, Plossu, Lund) which, by the sequence of images collected, are never far from cinematographic scrolling. To this I will add artistic works, gleaned from the production of the last decades and which represent the road, or make the crossing of a distance their subject as well as their tool for elaboration (Fulton, Alÿs, Stalker). I will also underline some aspects of the imaginary of displacement that unfolds in the culture of the past half-century, to indicate certain issues, dynamics and values that support it.

This large and loose gathering of art works indicates clearly that I do not situate the road movie in a specific generic, national and temporal framework – that of the United States, the counterculture of the seventies and the complicated aftermath of the Western genre to put it succinctly. I consider it a hybrid, malleable and transcontinental narrative form that engages us to reflect on the changes that have affected the perception of reality and identity in recent decades. To put it another way, the road movie does not exist alone; nor does it exist so much in a particular place and time, as at the same time between different places. Without over-simplifying or neglecting the variety of possible configurations, we will try to determine what there can be in common in the articulation of a work of creation to the road as space-in-itself. This needs to be done independently of the forms that it is likely to take, royal or vernacular, highway or serpentine, and of the projects it supports. It seems to me that we can take the destabilization of identities, the percolations of the intercultural and the pollination of meaning characteristic of late capitalist societies, for the common denominator of the works which make displacement their determining issue. They constitute an experience of remembering, evaluation and remediation. In contemporary creation, the road appears as one of the ways to explore and respond to this general crisis of sensitivity. It is a way of deconstructing identities by systematically playing the logic of being against that of having, the contingent against the necessary, the peripheral against the centrality, to provoke a moral, ontological and cultural decentering of the subject. This makes the very decentering process valid in itself, and to which no explicit term is really assigned. Six films in chronological order, *The Rain People* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1969), *Five Easy Pieces* (Bob Rafelson, 1970), *Scarecrow* (Jerry Schatzberg, 1973), *Im Laufe der Zeit* (Wim Wenders, 1976), *Messidor*¹ (Alain Tanner, 1979) and *The Brown Bunny* (Vincent Gallo, 2003) as well as other examples, will support my argument. Now I simply would like to point out a few decisive operators of this research question.

The first and most obvious of these operators is the desire to *reinvent space*, that is reflected in the systematic questioning of the very notion of *limit*. These films all focus more on the journey than the final destination, more on the trespassing than the anchoring, even when it nevertheless seems that there is one goal *a priori* (as in *Scarecrow*, *Alice in den Städten* (Wim Wenders, 1974), *Landscape in the mist*, (Theodoros Angelopoulos, 1988). The contemporary imagery of the road redefines the relationship that the subject develops with space, which is expressed mainly through the figures

¹ A European film which precedes feminine road cinema by ten years, of which Ridley Scott's *Thelma & Louise* (1991) is usually taken as the first manifestation.

of detour, transit and immersion. Independently of its forms of actualization, this redefinition substitutes a relational vision for the territorial vision which dominates the representations of modernity².

What spatial structures, what types of relationships with space configure the works that have itinerancy as an issue? Overall, these relationships of disposition and proximity are non-metric, non-socialized, non-instrumental. Forms of smoothing the striated, produce smoothness within the striated, to use the categories developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *Mille Plateaux*³. Wandering, transit, drifting: so many ways of naming this disposition of the subject to the expanse, to the surfaces and to the open. This has little to do with the idea of travel (and its logic of securing identity through returning home), but rather aims to transcend the regimented spatial experience that constitutes the lot of the hypermodern subject. It is less a question of denying the historical and semiological closure of space, than of rendering it intermittently, temporarily, inoperative in order to confuse, hack, or incise it. This is what the marches organized by the Stalker collective since the 1990s aim at, or those initiated by Laurent Malone: to produce another shaping of space, which comes to be superimposed, during transit, on dense agglomeration of the city and makes it possible to question its daily acceptance⁴. What I would like to call a road-work for convenience sake, does not necessarily invite its audience to escape from the techno-administered universe to remedy the overwhelming feeling of derealization. It encourages the audience on the other hand to modify its perceptual frameworks from within, to see and feel differently, and to re-consider its own ability to apprehend space. By being concerned with scale, proportion and points of view, by loosening the narrative fabrics, the work creates gaps for the contemporary subject, accustomed to low amplitudes of differentiation and to an obsessive filling of space. Its status borders on that of a pure utopian moment – not a systemic, collective and organized utopia. It is less the idea of another world, than that of a counter-exploration, or counter-factual exploration, of the world; less the idea of an elsewhere than the idea of an otherwise, of a differential practice. It is a bit like the temporary, ephemeral and moving zones of autonomy that Hakim Bey could imagine in the 90s⁵. In a road movie nothing is ever really done with space, be it urban or natural. No one ever builds it. The traveling nomads frequent it and it has an effect on them – hypnotizes them, often.

The opening of *Gerry* (2002) by Gus Van Sant perfectly illustrates the idea of the deposition of the subject to and by space: we follow a pure, serene, and luminous road there, until it leaves us, literally, right in the middle of nowhere. We are left there for the rest of the film. No more normativity, no more beacons, no more rules, no more history, no more names – not even Paris, Texas: an absolute and general crisis of representation. In reality, it seems that every road movie, every road photograph, every artistic praxis related to travel, in one way or another undermines the very functionality of the road and its normative narrative. The road is demobilized from the use for which it is designed and told – social, economic, political, military use. The road is a site where points are connected and where knots and centers are created. It is where space is re-organized in a way that facilitates its possession and representation, allowing the exercise of authority. It always serves a goal, let us say the interests of the determined. It is there to be the rational instrument of the transformation of the landscape and the means of its integration, its humanization, also the warrant of its continuity, of its order and its security. But the road-work discards these functions. It is no longer a question of it in *Two Lane Blacktop*, which treats the American road as a space entirely defunctionalized and stripped of its narrative dynamics, totally available to play, to the sumptuous consumption of energy, to the mechanic (more than messianic) impulse, with no other purpose than itself. The road is burning energy, sending back a figure of absurd consumption to the triumphing consumer society, as a slap in the face of the economic market. It is as if all politics of the road suddenly vanished from the American horizon, as if it no longer guaranteed anything, to the point where the indeterminate invades the frame and ends up consuming it. What then is the road when it no longer serves a purpose or a power? It is a pure plane of immanence. What does a road do when it stops helping to culturalize the space? In a sense, it renaturalizes it, requalifies it for itself. By this I mean that it fights against its rationalization by providing us with an environmental experience that is hard to conceptualize: that of being in space in all contingency, without any need or capacity for hierarchical organization. It is as if it suddenly turned the implicit anthropocentrism of our representations against ourselves, or that it rather switches from the status of instrument *par excellence* of anthropocentrism to that of reverting to a nature-based relationship to the world. The road mobilized by contemporary art appears as the figure of an absolute change of scenery, of an indexing of the subject on the space and not of the space on the subject. That is to be incapable of finding one's way, to abandon oneself to an indeterminate position because of an excess of possible directions, to end up being indistinguishable in

² The crisis of the western, which is usually linked to the emergence of the road movie, can be understood simply from this substitution, because the western is by definition a territorial genre. Furthermore, the idea of a "spatial turn" as an interdisciplinary phenomenon in the social sciences was first articulated in 1989 by Californian geographer Edward Soja in his essay *Postmodern Geographies* (Verso, 1989).

³ Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux*, (Paris: Éd. de Minuit, 1980).

⁴ In 1995, from October 5 to 8, for four days and three nights, the Stalkers toured Rome through the wastelands, interstitial and abandoned areas of the city. In January 1996, they followed two routes through the abandoned areas of the Milanese outskirts. In April of the same year, they tried a similar experience by leaving Paris from La Flèche d'Or, a former station of the ring road converted into a bar and a concert hall. They passed by the « peaches walls » of Montreuil to walk to Charles-de-Gaulle airport. In 2009 they produced *Primavera Romana*, a work consisting of a series of long walks, once or twice a week during the three spring months, which served to explore in stages the areas near the ring road that surrounds Rome. From Laurent Malone, we will remember two urban crossing projects, the "JFK project", carried out in collaboration with Dennis Adam, in 1997, and the *Transects* project carried out in Marseille in 2001.

⁵ Hakim Bey, *TAZ. Temporary Autonomous Zone*, (Autonomedia, 1991).

extension – as in *Entrare nell'opera* (1971), a photograph by Giovanni Anselmo –, or to recognize that representation is not commensurable with experience.⁶

Deculturalizing the road, as carried out by recent art and fiction, is concomitant with the project of re-organizing our vision, because we still do not know how to see the world. Displacement always functions as a landscape revealer, as a stimulation of visual perceptions, as a means of a more intense exploration of the visible. Whatever the specific form of the space within which the movement takes place – be it exalting or deceptive, extra- or infra-ordinary, flat and emphatic or interstitial, humble, vulnerable and indecisive – we browse through many Third Landscapes⁷. We have a similar experience for instance in the *Monuments of Passaic* by Robert Smithson⁸ or the "trespa-crossings" of the Stalker collective – they are always the object of an elementary attention which strives to reveal the quality(ies) of the marginal landscape. To allow the viewer to see them, revealing doesn't mean revealing the hidden, the secret or the forbidden, nor is it highlighting only cultural exaltation. It means the free sliding gaze over the surfaces that constitute the world and the experience of any singularity of space; it means that the eye grasps the transient, the fleeting, it locates and collects the imperceptible, the textures, the nebulosities. In short, it increases the emotional values of the territories.

Fundamentally, the road has to do with this hypnotic capture of reality. It reveals the space, educates the eye of those who walk or drive by making it available, by detaching the gaze from any imperative of utility. What do we see when we look without intention? What is there, simply close, but not perceived as long as the gaze remains compartmentalized and polarized by utilitarian logics? Thus, the disarticulation of culturalized forms of apprehending space goes hand in hand with a ritual purging of the gaze (seeing what is there for what it is), a way of ordering the real independently from any subjective project, but with a deep feeling of commitment to the phenomenal intensities of things.⁹ This way of letting space be, of disobjectifying it, of making it fluid, of letting things happen, echoes Emerson's idea of the transparent eye,¹⁰ an eye which would be a pure surface of affect and would allow the implementation of a simple but radical optical democracy. That is to say a non-perspectivist, non-hierarchical, non-ordered perception of the world, an egalitarian perception of all the elements, animate or inanimate, which constitute it, a perception which is likely to give the impression that the landscape gazes at man, at least as much as it is gazed at by man. The landscape speaks of and for itself, tells itself, ultimately, all by itself. It is perhaps not entirely by chance that the road movie uses so many pan shots: they intentionally equate the human subject and the material of the world.

If the contemporary imagery of the road is primarily based on this attempt at a utopian requalification of spatial sense and of the gaze, it also involves unconventional experiences of temporality, close to what Raymond Depardon has labeled the downbeats¹¹ – and which can also be described as forms of suspension. They are a time in between, an empty form of present, a mere translation. The road movie also explicitly deals with the temporal off-screen of classic cinema. It tends to deviate from the strong beat logic and cares about what lies in between event nodes. This suspended temporality of the road takes on several figures: loop, rhizome, stratified, interpolation are some of the heterochronic hypotheses tested by drifters, road runners or walking artists. These hypotheses contrast with the temporal convention that governs our world, places it under a permanent emergency regime and deprives it of any capacity for symbolization.¹² With the road, we leave the omnipotence of the chrony and we move towards Aion, towards a non-pulsed time, but which allows for this very reason a better integration of the conscious and the unconscious. We find the manifest gesture of this rupture, its *cliché*, in *Easy Rider* when Wyatt throws away his watch just before hitting the road. This means straightaway that the time on the road no longer has anything to do with the collective count, the quantity, the Promethean, the nodes of action, the eventful incandescence, the epic accelerations, that it is no longer subject to any "control procedure",¹³ but presents itself *a contrario* as pure expense. Expenditure as a temporal figure is very different from the ideology of "free time" which serves as a cover for the maximum saturation of work, since it is a question of occupying the liberated time, of filling it, to continue after all to consume it. From this point of view, time on the road is not free. This is not the time for tourism. It is unoccupied, unproductive, vacant. It is floating.

⁶ See Hamish Fulton, *An object cannot compete with an experience* (2001).

⁷ Gilles Clément, *Manifeste du Tiers paysage*, (Sujet/Objet éditions, 2007), 12 : « Si l'on cesse de regarder le paysage comme l'objet d'une industrie on découvre subitement (...) une quantité d'espaces indécis, dépourvus de fonction sur lesquels il est difficile de porter un nom. Cet ensemble (...) se situe aux marges. En lisière de bois, le long des routes et des rivières, dans les recoins oubliés de la culture, là où les machines ne passent pas. (...) Entre ces fragments de paysage aucune similitude de forme. Un seul point commun : tous constituent un territoire de refuge à la diversité. (...) Cela justifie de les rassembler sous un terme unique. Je propose Tiers paysage (...). » These landscapes are also present in *Wanda* (Barbara Loden, 1970), *Radio On* (Chris Petit, 1979), *Stranger than Paradise* (Jim Jarmusch, 1984) and *Landscape in the Mist*.

⁸ A parody of a scenic excursion, *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey* (narrative and photographs) appeared in *Artforum* in December 1967.

⁹ This is what Marc Rosmini perceives when he writes: "The road movie would therefore be a paradoxical genre which, at the same time, would disenchant and re-engage the world", in *Road Movies. 227 fragments sur un genre introuvable*, (Marseille: Images En Manoeuvres Editions, 2012).

¹⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature", in *Essais*, (Paris: Michel Houdiard, 1997), 16 ff.

¹¹ Raymond Depardon, « Temps faibles », *Errance*, (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 40.

¹² For a detailed construction of this concept and for the analysis of the forms and pathologies of temporality that accompany it, I refer to the work of Nicole Aubert, and in particular to her book *Le Culte de l'urgence. La société malade du temps*, (Paris: Flammarion, 2003). See also the analysis of Jean-François Lyotard in « Le temps, aujourd'hui », in *L'Inhumain. Causeries sur le temps*, (Paris: Galilée, « débats », 1988).

¹³ Jean-François Lyotard, *L'Inhumain, op. cit.*, p 85.

As we move forward in space, a complex, thick and strange temporality unfolds, forming a layer of the unactual taking on the appearance of a dream or a hallucination. Jean-Baptiste Thoret has described the specific time experience in road movies as a step back, coupling moving forward in space and regression in time¹⁴. As the journey confronts physical, even geological time, it also reconnects with psychic, mostly traumatic traces of the past. But road films speak probably more of spatio-temporal contamination, insofar as they expose a double becoming, the becoming-time of space, but also the becoming-space of time. It is an irradiated time, a time that has mutated, has branched out, whose indefinite process presents itself as a movement of dilation of the present. This makes it unactualized and within which the emotional strata combine, the affective flows combine, less to bring the subject back to itself, than to make it derive from itself. Anne Hurault-Paube rightly remarks¹⁵ that not much really happens in a road film, that time is almost stagnant there, that it is as if suspended in inaction, even when a strong actantial tension supports the narrative *a priori*, as it does in *Bonnie & Clyde*. This is also generally the case in chase films, even when speed seems to prescribe the whole narrative, as in *Vanishing Point* (1971). At the end of the race, there is an ultimate suspension. Acceleration leads to satori: this is the paradox of the vanishing point, of the point of dissipation, that was already formulated in Kerouac's writings. What is in fact essential from the opening in Sarafian's film, is less speed than a certain power of spectrality. That which the two contradictory endings tell – the one suggested by the (deleted) scene with Charlotte Rampling, in the role of a hitchhiker who is none other than death and the other that still occupies the three flashbacks punctuating the story. What happens in road films is that the amorphous duration generated by the journey opens up the way to an unrestrained flow of images, to their concatenation or their conflict, that it allows the return of confused, indecisive, diminished, often irreconcilable presences – of ghosts. These ghosts are of various natures: historical, affective, social, genealogical. They can call each other and mingle. We can identify the Ghost of America or of Germany, the Ghost of the father (*Landscape in the Mist*) or of the mother (as in Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*, 1957), the Ghost of the abandoned husband (*The Rain People*) or of a tragically lost love (*The Brown Bunny*) and finally the Ghost of the self (*Five Easy Pieces*) and the Ghost of Cinema (*Im Laufe der Zeit*). This is the paradox of the road: if the departure always has to do with a radical drop-out hope, a rupture, a release, the movement rather leads to engaging in dialogue with obsessions and dislocated feelings. The return of the ghosts also has the function of anchoring an ethical issue of the movement: to speak, to see again or to repair.

The Brown Bunny and *Im Laufe der Zeit* can serve as examples to illustrate this floating, out-of-date temporality that is set up on the road. However, the scale is not the same since Wenders' film is built around the discussion between personal and collective memory, while Gallo's gravitates around a purely intimate collapse of the main character, Bud Clay, caused by the accidental death (by overdose) of his former lover. Nevertheless in both films, the road settles into an amorphous duration, within which the universes, both exterior and interior, the perceived and the mental, the asserted and the dreamed, quickly come to co-exist, and even merge in a form of imaginary space which saturates the consciousness of the character. Being on the road, *a fortiori* when the space is repetitive, uniform, minimal and abstract (desert), is to enter a time layer that functions like a transitional area: the relationship between presence and absence, lack and desire is constantly negotiated there¹⁶, subjective and objective, imaginary and real, here and elsewhere, self and other. This is a negotiation whose fiction does not necessarily intend to bring it to an end, preferring rather to expose the process, but which at least outlines the possibility, for the subject stuck in his neurosis, to neutralize the pain and to partly return to reality. This is what happens in Wenders' film at the end, when the two men separate, when the common journey is interrupted, when "everything has to be changed". However what is meant by this – should we understand that nothing can stay the same? Considering that the self is inevitably altered by the other, is all identity imbricated? From another perspective, it is just the same premise of the film *Easy Rider*: if America cannot be found by Wyatt and Billy, then because it cannot be found as it is, this is because America has no united national body, no liberal and centered body, no pure, common and shared identity. The American identity that they seek exists only in the plural, only in the play on its fragmentations, infinitely divided, restless, contradictory and conflicting. Instead they find borders and difference, less community than community-limit.

Contemporary nomadic artists have dealt with the question of temporality in a way that stimulates reflection. Whether they choose to walk in a natural environment or to drift in an urban context, they generally privilege processual figures of temporality (slowness; mutation; cycle), which function as utopian propositions and/or figures of reparation. Whatever the nature of the approach, it is always a question of arousing the emergence and collective awareness (spectator) of other forms, but also of other possible uses of temporality than those to which our contemporary situation forces us. They explore what we could overall call the temporal undersides of modernity, seek to unpack social time, to deconstruct it, to get it out of its regimentation by the imperatives of production. Many works produced over the last decades take the notion of evolution as a dynamic principle: working on scales of duration makes it possible to connect the divergent rhythms of human action and nature (for example the walking artists of the Seventies for which walking is the work – Fulton, Long, Tremlett, de Vries). Alternatively, they seek to catalyze transformations within the urban space, to generate dynamics of socio-geographical and relational evolution (archiving the temporal potential of abandoned urban territories, their power of perpetual change (Smithson, *Stalker*), to intervene concretely in the mutation of a social space, to create shared temporality), to travel in the past and the future of the city, through its forgotten memories and its unconscious becoming. Furthermore they may reconnect through the artistic proposal with natural anthropological time, or open up

¹⁴ Bernard Benoliel & Jean-Baptiste Thoret, *Road Movie, USA*, (Paris: Hoëbeke, 2011).

¹⁵ Anne Hurault-Paube, « Le road movie : genre du voyage ou de l'Amérique immobile ? », in René Gardies (ed.), *Cinéma et voyage*, (Paris: L'Harmattan « Champs Visuels », 2007), 113-124.

¹⁶ See the cinematographic works of the American director, Vincent Gallo.

the way in which individuals are part of current time, to suggest to them another way of using time, less anxiety-provoking, less deadly – everything that points out circulation as a practice of resymbolization.

The last point I would like to address concerns the forms of subjectivity production that the road actualizes and the discourses of rupture that provide them with a conceptual background. The filmic, plastic or literary figuration of displacement systematically passes through a staging, more or less dramatized, more or less radicalized, of the exit, the breakaway or the escape. This is characterized by tearing away from symbolic orders and from social normativity, the crisis of belonging, pushing out of the institutional framework of art (land art) or cinema (New Wave, New Hollywood), *etc.* In short, it is defined as a shift, a decentering as a common denominator. The point of entry is always the transgression of frames and establishes the situation of the subject (or of the medium) in capitalist and patriarchal society (Natalie in *The Rain People*), of what gives (imposes?) a place, a role, a history, a genealogy, an identity, a domesticity, a routine. This defines it in a functional and permanent way, by a set of coordinates. Departure, uprooting, deviation: suddenly the protagonist is gone, has run away, has made secession. Or it can also happen that it is absent through an economic or legal process (losing job, retirement, *etc.*) which deprives them of a position, forces them to glean, for example, rather than participate in the commercial circuit of goods (Agnès Varda, *Sans toit ni loi*). Notwithstanding, the subject/protagonist becomes in any case a figure of refusal and opposition: a Bartleby in motion; sand in the wheels; a ghost in the machine; an experimental subject. We can speak of a utopian subject, seeking to invent itself in and by the very uprooting and the operation of production of difference that this entails.¹⁷ This subject does not come back either.

From this inaugural gesture of de-anchoring, the film, the novel, the plastic proposal undertake on the one hand to document its constitution in a form (or a style) of life (decentering, fluctuation, disorientation), to explore the alternative values it suggests. On the other hand, it proposes to examine the future of this opposition, to test its relevance or fragility, to assess its critical effectiveness with regard to the one-dimensionality of the contemporary world. It will thus be able to focus on its positive valence (liberation, desire, inventiveness...) – which is rather the position held by plastic productions and by certain films with a more factual dynamic, those of Patrick Keiller or Robert Kramer for instance; or to draw attention to its negative valence (loss, dislocation, dangers inherent in the process and which compromise the trajectory) – a position more resolutely held by fiction cinema. Or even articulate the two axes, in a perspective of profane catabasis (*Easy Rider, Into the Wild*: liberation gives way to alienation), or of anabasis (*Im Laufe der Zeit, Dead Man*: alienation gives way to liberation).

The staging of alternative, experimental, deterritorialized subjectivities (outlaw, solitary drifter, nomadic artist), distinct from those of emigration, the diaspora or exile (the three other spatial tropes commonly used to describe the uprooted condition of postmodern subjectivity)¹⁸, constitutes the project that legitimizes bringing together the various artistic spaces. As I have summarily attempted to show, it should be noted, and this will be my provisional conclusion, that this legitimacy is reinforced by the observation that the questioning of alternative subjectivities is done from ontological rather than hermeneutic logics, and from relational scenarios rather than essentialist postulates. I mean that if identity (its flaws, its ruptures, its dissonances, *etc.*) is indeed the problematic driving force of most road-works, it is less the meaning that determines displacement, than the experimentation of protocols of existence rid of the question of origin. It is less a question of (re)finding oneself, than of replacing. This explains in particular the more or less systematic substitution of horizontal community figures for traditional connections of the vertical type. Because displacement dissolves the established forms of community (substance, identity or genealogy: couple, family, work, country...), while bringing out, as in utopian counter-shots, various practices of impure community, where the common is no longer defined by a substantial and homogeneous identity, but by a differential activity, this activity is narrative. This constitutes neither accumulation, nor progression, nor synthesis but an assembling of local stories, of anecdotes. Narrative competence opens up the possibility of a community of relationship, which is “present in the pure event of its manifestation”¹⁹, which is about encounter and reciprocity, and whose content can never be anticipated, since it turns out to be determined by the interplay of temporary subjective implications.²⁰ It is a modular community, with no assigned representational background, a community of declension and not of identification, or of essence, necessarily led to come apart, but also, and just as necessarily, to recompose itself, to reform itself in any place and at any time. From this point of view, it is a form of eternal community, superior to identity communities in that it does not derive its legitimacy from any form of violence, nor from any ideological shaping of reality, but from a peaceful gesture of consent to listen and to speak to the other. In another glossary, this is called an *alliance*. What finer figure of this than the character of GTO in the so-called mute *Two Lane Blacktop* (1971)! I believe this is one of the powerful elements to take into account in road movies, if one speculates on their apparent pessimism at the end. I would suggest that the important thing there is less the quest, which inevitably turns out to be deceptive, than the pluralization of the self through experience, which precedes the final (and brutal) interruption of the narrative, its unfinished business, more than its end. Now this pluralization, this potentiation, which is not the discovery of an authentic self, but the result of its participation in the contingency of the world, escapes

¹⁷ It is possible to see in this position of marginality the cause of the critical interest that the road film arouses: it offers a rather direct metaphor for the “displaced” condition of the intellectual in the contemporary world.

¹⁸ The diaspora is always collective, and it does not necessarily imply the desire to return. Exile can be lonely, painful, and involves a desire to return.

¹⁹ François Noudelmann, *Pour en finir avec la généalogie*, (Léo Scheer, 2004), 166.

²⁰ This kind of community is found in “docufictive” approaches à la Kramer (*Route One, USA*) or Varda (*La Glâneuse et les glâneurs*). Kramer, in particular, in the splendid *Route One*, is totally on it: finding the American people ravaged by the Reagan years, or at least reactivating their memory, goes through this staging of listening.

any apparent reassertion of the law: end of *Zabriskie Point* (1970). It constitutes a witch line²¹ and even after the end, preserves the voice of the irreconcilable at the heart of contemporary culture.

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Films

- Five Easy Pieces*, directed by Bob Rafelson, (1970, 98 min)
Gerry, directed by Gus Van Sant, (2002, 103 min)
Im Laufe der Zeit, directed by Wim Wenders, (1976, 176 min)
Landscape in the Mist, directed by Theo Angelopoulos, (1988, 127 min)
Messidor, directed by Alain Tanner, (1979, 123 min)
Radio On, directed by Chris Petit, (1979, 104 min)
Sans toit ni loi, directed by Agnès Varda, (1985, 106 min)
Scarecrow, directed by Jerry Schatzberg, (1973, 112 min)
Stranger than Paradise, directed by Jim Jarmusch, (1984, 89 min)
The Brown Bunny, directed by Vincent Gallo, (2003, 119 min)
The Rain People, directed by Francis Ford Coppola, (1969, 101 min)
Wanda, directed by Barbara Loden, (1970, 105 min)

²¹ Translation of Deleuze's « ligne de sorcière ».