evental space: An Exploration through Postmodern Film

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the definition of space by events through the lens of postmodern fiction, whose technique (non-linear narrative) and content (a cross-section through different places coexisting in a territory) metaphorise the contingency and fragmentation of reality. Two films by Alejandro González Iñárritu and Guillermo Arriaga are analysed: *Babel* (2006) depicts the reshaping of distant places through a series of deeds related by causality, and *Amores Perros* (2000) shows a single event intersecting distinct layers of the "same" city. Both movies portray the changing behaviour of spaces as their multiple identities, boundaries, relations, "oneness," and difference are continually re-created and subverted by a complex web of events. The *evental* character of space comes forth as this redefinition of places proves not to be cyclical, but fluid, contingent, and ungraspable.

Space is studied following the paths of inhabitants of distinct geographies. The configurations of the sites direct the trajectories of individuals, the occurrences and relations; and space reacts and is transformed by the event. The event proves to be both a shaper and an outcome of space, which stands for the mutual definition between a place and its deeds.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce document explore la définition de l'espace par l'événement dans la fiction postmoderne, dont la technique (narration non-linéaire) et le contenu (une section transversale par les différents endroits coexistant dans un territoire) font une métaphore de la contingence et fragmentation de la réalité. Deux films par Alejandro González Iñárritu et Guillermo Arriaga sont analysés : *Babel* (2006) décrit la transformation de lieux distants par une série de faits liés par causalité ; *Amores Perros* (2000) dépeint l'évènement créant l'intersection de diverses strates de la « même ville ». Ces œuvres cinématographiques illustrent le comportement instable des espaces lorsque leurs multiples identités, limites, relations, ainsi que leur unité et différence sont continuellement recréées et renversées par un complexe réseau d'événements. La nature « événementielle » de l'espace est révélée lorsque cette redéfinition des endroits n'est pas cyclique, mais fluide, contingente et incompréhensible.

L'espace est étudié en suivant le parcours des habitants des différentes géographies. La configuration des lieux dirige les trajectoires des individus, des occurrences et des relations ; l'espace réagit et est transformé par l'événement. L'événement s'avère être simultanément un générateur et un résultat de l'espace, ce qui soutien la définition mutuelle entre un endroit et ses faits.

To my Family, Friends and Professors

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INTRODUCTION

Is the city a character in our narratives or are we characters in the story of the city?[1]

Alan Marcus and Dietrich Neumann

Our cities, entities with seemingly static qualities (sheltering built form, geographical fixity, development processes), are regarded by many of us as spaces which *frame* our lives. However, urban behaviour reveals them as constantly but unpredictably changing. As dynamic spaces, they actually shape the "contained" relationships and events. This shaping, however, is mutual, and place proves not only to frame, but to be inseparable from its elements, connections and occurrences. Henri Lefebvre (1991) claims that space brings matter and relations altogether, enveloping and substituting itself for them.[2]

Michel de Certeau (1984) asserts the production of space by movement.[3] He also says that the urban "text" is written by the paths of the city's walkers, individuals whose *parcours* compose "a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces."[4] The philosopher argues that the

[1] Marcus, Alan and . "Haptic Space: Film and the Geography of Modernity" In Marcus, Alan and Neumann (Eds.). *Visualizing the City.* London and New York: Routledge, 2007, 1.

[2] Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford, OX: Blackwell, 1991, 410-1.

[3] De Certeau, Michel. "Chapter IX: Spatial Stories" In *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, 115-30.

[4] De Certeau, Michel. "Chapter VII: Walking in the City" In *The practice of everyday life*, 93.

spatial order organises people's possibilities and interdictions but that, in their traversal, walkers re-create these dictations.[5]

This research probes the definition of space by event as it follows the paths of individuals across different places. Nonetheless, the uncontrollable nature of these events is acknowledged. Whereas some of them result from human actions, others seem to take on lives of their own, shaping uncontrollably spaces and their relations. As argued in the first part of this work, the objective side of an event is that, experienced or not, and caused by, or independent from human agency, it happens. Conceivably, this leads authors like Jeff Malpas to claim the need to free conceptualisations of space from subjectivity. However, a place and its events must go through this subjectivity in any attempt to define them. This paper explores occurrences in and out of human agency, but through the eyes of the inhabitants of diverse geographies.

Sanford Kwinter (2001) uses the term *evental*[6] to address what is active and prone to novelty[7] (active time, active space). The theorist sees the "real" as an engine, characterised more by a process of *becoming* than of *being*.[8] Rather than a cyclic and predictable change, this *becoming* is regarded as chaotic and ungraspable. Kerstin Schmidt (2005) argues the deconstruction of time as a continuum and as a linear progressive movement in postmodern drama.[9] The third chapter of this research claims that this cutting-up of time and space was attained since modern literature, but what is important is Schmidt's account of postmodern aesthetics, where the fragmentation of

[5] "[T]he walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else." De Certeau, Michel. "Chapter VII: Walking in the City" In *The practice of everyday life*, 98.

[6] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, 69.

[7] Ibid., 5.

[8] Ibid., 4-11.

[9] Schmidt, Kerstin. "Theatrical Space and Mediatized Culture: John Jesurun's *Pieces in Spaces*" In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 428.

reality is portrayed through video-clip techniques of acceleration, simultaneity and collage.[10]

Schmidt exemplifies the battle of perception of our multiple spaces and realities through the analysis of pieces by playwright John Jesurun. In his work the "three-dimensional spatial experience of the theatre competes with the video image, the two-dimensional 'dead' representation on screen."[11] Jesurun's "pieces in spaces" develop in a scenario which divides the spectators. "Five monitors are placed above the wall on each side; they show the action on the respective 'other' side of the stage. Each part of the audience thus sees the unmediated action on their respective side of the stage as well as the mediated action 'of the other side' on the screens above the wall."[12] The tension resulting from the different environments parallels the untenable flux of reality. The resources of drama offer rich material for studies on space and time.

This research explores evental space through examples of postmodern cinema. Both the representational techniques and narrative content of postmodernity prove useful for this analysis of the behaviour of places. David Harvey (1990) states that the *postmodern novel* provides "a metaphorical transect across the fragmenting social landscape,"[13] which is crucial for our assertion that the sites examined in the films differ not only physically, but existentially. *Amores Perros* (2000) and *Babel* (2006) are movies in which director Alejandro González Iñárritu and writer Guillermo Arriaga explore the tension between universal conditions and particularities of humanity through a complex relation of events shaping different places. The layout of the movies metaphorises the multiplicity, fluidity and ungraspable changes of space and time through a non-linear presentation of the narratives. Various seemingly unrelated geographies intersect through events.

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[10] Idem.

[11] Ibid., 421-2.

[12] Idem.

[13] Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1990, 113-4.

The first two chapters give an account of some of the debates on the conceptualisation of space. Chapter 1 offers an overview of the qualities ascribed to time and space, as well as the standpoint of diverse theorists on dualities: abstract/physical space, real/imagined space, boundedness/unboundedness, space/place, space/time. A site goes beyond physicality as numerous philosophers regard it as *a constituent* and *constituted out of* the relations among its elements. The concepts of time and space lead the discussion to *evental* space. The second chapter describes the contingent nature of events and the way in which these continually shape a place and transform its multiple identities. It argues the need for our conceptualisations of space to be as *evental* and open-ended as space itself.

Chapter 3 is a short study of space in fiction where the use of cinema for this exploration of *evental* space is justified. This section describes literary resources of modernism to spatialise narrative, and touches upon the embodiment of fictional space by viewers and readers. After a quick travel across examples of *evental* places in literature and cinema, this part of the document concludes with a series of arguments on the usefulness of film for space theory. This paper builds upon the juxtaposition of places by movies, but it stresses the importance of the fact that the cinematic path is an architectonic one.

The fourth chapter examines the distinct spaces of *Babel*. The movie depicts distant sites whose inhabitants become connected by a chain of events. A series of deeds related by causality brings together different geographies and individuals, reshaping the boundaries of places, their internal relationships and (dis)similarities. The complexities of the event and its outcomes traverse frontiers of space and time.

Chapter 5 analyses *Amores Perros*. The movie depicts Mexico as a layered city which offers inhabitants from different social classes few grounds for encounter. The event proves to be the phenomenon that connects the *multiple cities*. The various identities of the metropolis are pulled together by an archetypal urban event: a car accident. The dissimilar geographies of the same territory, in spite of having distinct rhythms, are given *surfaces* of convergence by incidents which reshape them.

Babel and *Amores Perros* show that space cyclically changes its condition from being one to multiple sites. Both movies illustrate that event is both a cause and a consequence of the constant becoming of place. The final chapter argues the mutual definition between event and space and the need to recognise the role of the architecture of places in the shaping of events. Bernard Tschumi says: " . . . an event is any one of all possible occurrences, one of which must happen under architectural conditions."[14]

"Architecture is as much as the events that take place in spaces as about the spaces themselves,"[15] Tschumi reminds us. Event shapes place and place shapes event. This inseparable condition comes forth at our attempts to grasp them simultaneously (the occurrence as an articulation of space and time). Kevin Lynch proposes a public temporal and spatial model of the city which gives account of events and changes (timings of deeds, loads on the communication systems, shifts in population or the housing stock, spatial location of people, activities and facilities, etc.).[16] However, we just start to understand a fragment of our space when it has already changed, and our efforts to conceptualise it seem hopeless. Perhaps what is needed is not a totalising "text" that makes us feel in control, but multiple, dislocated and changing narratives which emulate our unstable reality.[17]

[14] Tschumi, Bernard. *Event-Cities 2*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000, 13.

[15] Idem.

[16] Lynch, Kevin. *What Time is this Place?* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972, 71.

[17] Jill Stoner says: "The incessant movement that drives contemporary culture suggests a dominance of verbs over nouns." Stoner, Jill. "Rain in the City" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City.* London and New York: Routledge, 2007, 218.

CHAPTER ONE. SPACE AND PLACE

The first chapter provides an overview of some of the debates about space and place as abstract and material entities, as well as about the *oneness* of space and time. The discussion of these authors will be presented thematically – rather than chronologically – through the exploration of time and space (physical/ideal existence, boundaries, multiplicity) and assumptions about dualities (oneness/differentiation between space and place or time and space, and being/becoming).

1.1 MATHEMATICAL, ABSTRACT, PHYSICAL SPACE

The debate, nonetheless, must be introduced with the departure from the Cartesian (modern) perspective that regarded place and space as solely differentiated by location and size, and shape, respectively. Isaac Newton's viewpoint, according to philosopher Jeff Malpas (1999)[18], differed little from René Descartes' as place, "a part of space which a body takes up" was, by definition, also derivative from space.[19]

This modern "spatialised understanding of place"[20] referred to its physical extension alone, and is argued by Malpas to feature contemporary philosophical discussion. The author points out the subsequent intention of rehabilitating place as a concept beyond mere location in philosophers like Martin Heidegger – in whose later thinking the idea of place and locality was a central concept. Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty studied closely the individual's engagement with the world – "human *being-in-the-world* and spatiality, locality and embodiment" – and they influenced more recent thinkers (Karsten Harries and Christian Norberg-Schulz).[21]

[18] Malpas, J. M. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999: 28-9.

[19] Malpas, J. M. (after Isaac Newton) Idem.

[20] Ibid., 28.

[21] Ibid., 8.

An ongoing discussion on the duality of space and place will be touched upon in the following section, because many of the concepts which have arisen from it have proven important to the present study. However, it is pertinent to point out that, even if this debate merits deep analysis, it departs from the main objective of this research, which overlooks the difference between place and space.

Malpas (1999) argues that many thinkers' works on place (Edward Relph, Yi-FuTuan) are limited by an understanding concerned only with "*human response* to surroundings", which he regards as narrowly focused on psychology.[22] However, the method for an account of place that he proposes in his book *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography,* will be queried in the following pages of this work in terms of the feasibility of a 'universal' conceptualisation of place.

Geographer Edward Relph (1976), in *Place and placelessness*, asserts that "the various forms of space lie within a continuum that has direct experience at one extreme and abstract thought at the other extreme."[23] His intention of detaching his study from this debate is convincingly argued. Yet, the fact that he presents space in a classification (pragmatic, perceptual, existential, sacred, geographical, architectural, cognitive and abstract space) underlines the divide that has hampered discourse to reach – or at least get close to – a conceptualisation of place.

The standpoints of numerous philosophers along this continuum are diverse: Some of them totter along it; some of them embrace one of its endpoints, admittedly rejecting the other one; and others try to bring its ends together.[24] Malpas (1999), criticising the narrowness of many approaches of place, aims at an understanding free from subjectivity and spatiotemporality. He states his intention of exhibiting "the structure as a whole."[25] The experiencing subject is, nonetheless, argued by many authors to play a crucial role in the conceptualisation of place (Heidegger, Massey, Merleau-Ponty,

[22] Ibid., 30.

[23] Relph, E. C. *Place and Placelessness.* Research in Planning and Design, 1. London: Pion, 1976: 8.

[24] I argue that Lefebvre and Soja *traverse* this continuum.

[25] Malpas, J. M. Ibid., 39.

Tuan). Relph (1976) says that "the meaning of space, and particularly lived-space, comes from the existential and perceptual places of immediate experience."[26] He then quotes Aldo van Eyck (1969): "a village is not just one bunch of places; it is many bunches at the same time, because it is a different bunch for each inhabitant."[27]

Malpas draws largely on Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu,*[28] which provides "a literary exploration of the concepts of place, self, space and time that incorporates, though in a very different and sometimes almost kaleidoscopic form, a number of themes that are central to the understanding of place."[29] This work has been the motif of thorough analyses, argued by authors as Malpas, Poulet and Frank not only to be an experience of recovery of time, but of space. Malpas says that in the exploration of a man's life, one can "see the elaboration of a concept of place that enables the unifying of that life, and of the world in which it is lived, while also preserving a sense of its multiplicity and complexity."[30] Some of the studies made on *À la recherche du temps perdu* will be touched upon in this work as this oeuvre provides a rich source of analysis of place that justifies its (frequent) existence without physicality – though some Proustian spaces are physical – and, most importantly, the oneness of time and space.

Subjectivity has been stated to play a crucial role in the conceptualisation of place according to some authors. Relph's (1976) classification of spaces has already been mentioned. He also presents Christian Norberg-Schulz's (1971) structuring of existential space, largely based on Kevin Lynch's analysis.[31] This horizontal structure shows an array of spaces that goes up or down a level depending on containment – therefore, physical dimension: geography, landscape, the urban, the street, the home

[26] Relph, E. C. Ibid., 26.

[27] Aldo Van Eyck (1969), cited by Relph, E. C. Ibid., 20.

[28] Proust, Marcel. *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Paris: Gallimard, 1954.

[29] Malpas, J. M. Ibid., 158.

[30] Idem.

[31] Relph, E. C. loc. cit.

and the object.[32] It is, according to Relph, based on experience and its reach.[33] This scheme is rather problematic because it relates the level of abstraction of a place directly to its dimension. This proves untrue in frequent cases of individuals who, for example, are familiar with *broader* spheres of the physical but ignorant of specific aspects of their immediate surroundings: a taxi driver who can give detailed account of the city's thoroughfares but who cannot find the cereal in his own kitchen. Norberg-Schulz's approach also disregards the fact that spaces – especially, but not only since postmodernity – intersect, and we can experience places which are distant. Doreen Massey (1994) asserts that what constitute places are their intersections, that the spatial "can be seen as constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales."[34]

Malpas analyses Georges Poulet's interpretation of Proustian space and provides a description that resembles that of Norberg Schulz's: "As was evident in Poulet's discussion, the grasp of space, and so of place, is tied to activity. In this respect, any concrete sense of place is most closely tied to concrete capacities to act, as well as to be acted upon. . . . And one result of this is that the less a place is encompassed by our capacity to act or react, the more abstract must be our grasp of that place[:] . . . the move from, for instance, room to apartment, to building, to neighbourhood, to city, to state or province, to country . . . "[35]

One could argue that these lines of thought derive from the notion of place as a container. Contrasting viewpoints are expressed by thinkers of place and space on this subject. Philosopher Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) states that space is experienced as the location of objects or places, their distances and links.[36] To him, part of the differentiation

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[32] Relph, E. C. (after Norberg-Schulz) loc. cit.

[33] "This structure reflects both a change in scale from the largest to the smallest extent and an increasing humanisation of space. Such a structure is not, of course, explicit in all our experiences, and the levels need not always be of exactly the form presented here." Relph, E. C. *Place and Placelessness,* 20.

[34] Massey, Doreen. *Space, place, and gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, 4.

[35] Malpas, J. M. Ibid., 171.

[36] Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977, 12.

between place and space is the nature of the latter containing the former. Relph (1976) shares this perspective,[37] and he claims that "places are the contexts or backgrounds for intentionally defined objects or groups of objects or events, or they can be objects in their own right."[38] Whereas the last part of the quote seems to admit some individuation of place, this is acknowledged by him only as deriving from features intrinsic to that place, not by a mutual dependence with the objects *within* it.

In Malpas' (1999) account, Proustian space is bounded, contained and containing ("places can be understood as embedded or nested within other places while embedding other places and things in turn"[39]), as the house and pavilion, park and garden, square and street, as well as the main character himself possess their own limits.[40] Although he bases much of his arguments on the fact that Proustian space is 'real' space, this description only belongs to some of the places of *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Of other spaces from this novel he does claim the existence of a "nesting", but he points out that "places are juxtaposed and intersect with one another"[41], which allows many of them not to have defined boundaries.

Several thinkers oppose the idea of space as a container. Theorist Sanford Kwinter (2001) talks about the emergence in physics of "theory of the field, effectively superseding the classical notion of space as a substratum against which things occur, and consequently giving rise to a physics of the *event*"[42]. Hanjo Berressem's (2005) "projective geometry" understands the nature of space as traversed by forces, rather than containing objects, no longer "opposed to things[,] . . . like an empty vessel into

[37] "In general it seems that space provides the context for places but derives its meaning from particular places." Relph, E. C. Ibid., 8.

[38] Ibid., 42.

[39] Malpas, J. M. Ibid., 170.

[40] Ibid., 171.

[41] Ibid., 33.

[42] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, n.p.

which they are placed and which endows them with far-geometrical relationships."[43] To him, emerging forces among the elements define places.

On the other end lies the idea of *time* as a container, which is also problematic. Spatial or temporal containment opposes the nature of space as constituted out of relations that go beyond boundaries of places and times. Massey (after Unwin and Schlick, 1994) asserts the need to escape from "a notion of society as a kind of 3-D . . . slice which moves through time."[44] Elizabeth Grosz (2001) gives memory a possibility of constructing place as powerful as that given to Proustian space by Malpas and Poulet. What she clarifies about this process, though, is the nature of this re-locating of oneself as unbound to a specific space or time. She states that placing oneself in the past means relocating: "to occupy the whole of time and the whole of space, even admitting that duration and location are always specific, always defined by movement and action. It is to refuse to conceptualize space as a medium, as a container, a passive receptacle whose form is given by its content, and instead to see it as a moment of becoming."[45]

Michel Foucault (1986) rejects the idea of living inside a void where individuals and things are placed. Like Massey, he states that, instead, "we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites."[46] The nature that Henri Lefebvre (1991) ascribes to space provides insight: "Space does not eliminate the other materials or resources that play a part in the socio-political arena. . . . Rather, it brings them all together and then in a sense substitutes itself for each factor separately by enveloping it. The outcome is a vast movement in terms of which space can no longer be looked upon as an 'essence', as an object distinct from the point of view of (or as compared with) 'subjects', as answering to a logic of its own."[47] Lefebvre's vision of space is crucial to the

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[43] Berressem, Hanjo (After Weyl). "Multiplicity: Foldings in Architectural and Literary Landscapes*"* In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 93-101.

[44] Massey, Doreen, *Space, place, and gender*, 4.

[45] Grosz, Elizabeth. *Architecture from the outside: Essays on virtual and real space*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2001, 119.

[46] Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces", *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 1986): 22-27.

[47] Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford, OX: Blackwell, 1991, 410-1.

understanding of it simultaneously as a *constituent*, and *constituted out* of its elements. Even his use of the term *enveloping* does not refer to the creation of boundaries, but to the inscription of space on its elements. It does not tie them. It *articulates* them if we may use Massey's verb[48].

Relph (1976) bounds places differently. As aforementioned, his structure classifies space in terms of the way it is apprehended by the subject (pragmatic, perceptual, existential, sacred, geographical, architectural and planning, cognitive and abstract space).[49] This layering has an important limitation as Relph states: "The space of city planning, however, is not based on experience of space, but is concerned primarily with function in two-dimensional map space."[50] His structure certainly entails a dislocation of the means that we have at hand to grasp a place.

Georges Poulet (1977), in his book *Proustian space*, draws also on the places of *À la recherche du temps perdu* to study processes of conceptualisation of space. His account undoubtedly affirms his standpoint upon the indivisible nature of space and time, and the unboundedness of place[51]. Among the kinds of places that he finds in Proust's novel is *negative space*, which proves its existence upon the linking (or parting) of places, objects and subjects without containing. "The spaces . . . occupied by the being desired and the being who desires[;] . . . the distance abruptly perceived between the spot where one discovered oneself to be alone, and the place where he assumes that the other is. Between the one and the other of these places, an abyss is revealed. Suddenly one understands that space is not a communicating milieu, a ground of union, a privileged zone where beings find themselves together. Suddenly one knows that

[48] "One view of a place is as a particular articulation of those relations, a particular moment in those networks of social relations and understandings." Massey, Doreen. *Space, place, and gender*, 118.

[49] Relph, E. C. *Place and Placelessness,* 8-17.

[50] Relph, E. C. *Place and Placelessness,* 22.

[51] It could be argued that one of the differences between his account and Malpas' is that Malpas does see Proustian places bounded.

space is exactly the contrary. "[52] Space determines that beings are obliged to be far away from each other.[53]

Lefebvre and, after him, Edward Soja, seem to have been able to traverse Relph's continuum between direct experience and abstract notions of space. Their first (perceived, acted upon, the "real" material world) and second (representations) spaces are integral to Thirdspace (space of representation, *real-and-imagined*),[54] which is "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols".[55] The criticism of both authors of binary logics led to the creation of what Soja names "thirding-as-Othering," a critical method that allows understandings to consider that there is a third, frequently embracing, possibility.[56] With this approach, dualities among place and space, space and time, container and contained are neither broken nor reinforced but traversed. Their method not only "thirds" space, but spatial imagination itself. Soja states: "Lefebvre's production of space (the making of history and the composition of social relations in our society) is the triple consciousness of the complex linkages between space, time, and social being."[57]

After this account, this work can now state its adherence to the idea that spaces which are experienced, acted upon, represented, remembered, and evoked, are as 'real' as geographic space. Their very constitution upon immaterial relations among their constituents and with other places underlines their independence from physical

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[52] Poulet, Georges. *Proustian space*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, 43.

[53] Idem.

[54] Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1996, 6.

[55] Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*, 33-9.

[56] "This critical thirding-as-Othering is the first and most important step in transforming the categorical and closed logic of either/or to the dialectically open logic of both/and also… Thirding introduces a critical "other-than" choice that speaks and critiques through its otherness. That is to say, it does not derive simply from an additive combination of its binary antecedents bur rather from a disordering, deconstruction, and tentative reconstitution of their presumed totalization producing an open alternative that is both similar and strikingly different." Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1996, 10, 60-1.

[57] Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, 7.

existence. Several authors arguing for these relations will be presented later. Heidegger's statement that thinking of the Heidelberg bridge transports us to the bridge is an important notion with which to finish the first part of this chapter: "This thinking toward that location is not a mere experience inside the persons present here; rather, it belongs to the essence of our thinking *of* that bridge that in *itself* thinking gets through, persists through, the distance to that location. From this spot right here, we are there at the bridge – we are by no means at some representational content in our consciousness. From right here we may even be much nearer to that bridge and to what it makes room for than someone who uses it daily as an indifferent river crossing."[58]

1.2 BOUNDARIES

The debate about the existence of boundaries in the very definition of place presents contrasting positions. Michel de Certeau (1984) argues that one of the roles of his *spatial stories* – narratives that "traverse and organize places"[59] – is that of marking out boundaries.[60] He states that "there is no spatiality that is not organized by the determination of frontiers."[61]

De Certeau points out the necessary existence of movement in the creation of places, which is crucial for the purposes of this research. His account, however, proves to ascribe it only the role of defining boundaries or the possibility of action upon but

[58] Heidegger, Martin. *Basic writings from Being and time (1927) to The task of thinking (1964)*. London: Routledge, 1978, 334.

[59] De Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, 115.

[60] For example, juridical discourse is regarded as a story or, more precisely, a meta-story where an authority determines the limits of an individual's territory. It is argued to be a meta-story because it is built upon narratives of (possibly) confronting people who support their claims of ownership with stories such as an ancestor planting a tree on the limits of her land. De Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*, 122-4.

[61] Ibid., 123.

within a territory.[62] Numerous authors oppose the idea of place as necessarily bounded. Edward Casey (2009), for instance, states the difference between a place and a territory as the latter is a kind of place defined by boundaries.[63] This notion is very similar to Relph's (1976) geographical space, which is delineated and named.[64]

Philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1994) asserts the exchangeability of inside and outside, prone to be reversed ("to exchange their hostility"[65]). He adds: "If there exists a border-line surface between such an inside and outside, this surface is painful on both sides."[66] De Certeau faces the contradicting nature of his "boundaries" at the end of his *Spatial Stories*, where he outlines the paradox of the frontier: "created by contacts, the points of differentiation between two bodies are also their common points. Conjunction and disjunction are inseparable in them. Of two bodies in contact, which one possesses the frontier that distinguishes them? Neither. Does that amount to saying: no one?"[67] Arguably his standpoint on the necessary definition of spaces by boundaries led him to celebrate his spatial stories when a bridge is traversed and the praise of transportable limits.[68]

Doreen Massey (1994) points out the necessary boundedness of places in Heidegger's account as problematic.[69] She says that places are "conceptualized in terms of the social interactions which they tie together,"[70] and these dynamic relations (processes) stretch-out geographically.[71] She then ascribes the specificity of a place –

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[62] Idem.

[63] Casey, Edward. *Getting back into place: Toward a renewed understanding of the place-world*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009, xvi.

[64] Relph, E. C. *Place and Placelessness*, 16.

[65] Bachelard, Gaston. *The poetics of space*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994, 216-7.

[66] Idem.

[67] De Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*, 127.

[68] Ibid., 128-30.

[69] Massey, Doreen. "Power Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place." In Bird, Jon (Ed.). *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change.* London: Routledge, 1993, 64.

[70] Ibid., 66.

[71] Idem.

"continually reproduced"[72] – to the internal differentiation of the relationships among them: " . . . each place is the focus of a distinct *mixture* of wider and more local social relations."[73] Massey argues: "The particularity of any place is . . . constructed not by placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counterposition to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections *to* that beyond. "[74] She sees places as open and porous.[75]

Poulet's (1977) analysis of Proustian spaces states that they lack the topographic continuity that characterises 'real' places: "From the moment one perceives them, on the contrary, one gets the clear idea that they do not extend into the surrounding universe, that they are separate from it." He argues that the transport from ordinary space to these ideal places lies in passing from "a local manner of existing to a manner fundamentally different[:] . . . withdrawing into oneself, one is transported from places forming part of the exterior world to those purely ideal places which have their reality only within our mind."[76]

Massey argues that boundaries may "be necessary – for the purposes of certain types of studies . . . – but they are not necessary for the conceptualization of a place itself. Definition in this sense does not have to be through simple counterposition to the outside; it can come, in part, precisely through the particularity of linkage *to* that 'outside' which is therefore itself part of what constitutes the place."[77] She, however, acknowledges: "All attempts to institute horizons, to establish boundaries, to secure the identity of places, can . . . be seen to be *attempts to stabilize the meaning of particular*

[72] "Clearly places do not have single, unique 'identities'; they are full of internal differences and conflicts." Massey, Doreen. Ibid., 67-8.

[73] Ibid., 68.

[74] Massey, Doreen. *Space, place, and gender*. 5.

[75] Idem.

[76] Poulet, Georges. *Proustian space*, 20.

[77] Massey, Doreen. "Power Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place." In Bird, Jon (Ed.). *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, 67.

envelopes of space-time. They are attempts to get to grips with the unutterable mobility and contingency of space-time."[78]

Naturally, for a conceptualisation of space, we might need to envelope it – along with time. I argue that much of the failure of these attempts is due to the similar way that space and time are enveloped: the former being constrained by boundaries and the latter by a freezing of its forces and relations. Either of these actions tends to dislocate them. Arguably, for us to attain a sense of space and time, these have to be at some point encapsulated. However, as described later, even if some definition must be given to both place and time, our attempts to conceptualise them must acknowledge their changing nature.

[78] Massey, Doreen. *Space, place, and gender*, loc. cit.

1.3 SPACE AND PLACE

At the end of this section this document will argue the regard of place and space as indistinct entities. However, the nature ascribed to each of them by authors who see them differently gave rise to concepts that will prove crucial for the exploration of this research on event constituting place – especially in terms of their coincidence in defining them in terms of movement or stasis.

Tuan (1977) asserts that space and place require each other for definition, and says that space is characterised by the ability to move. Place, consequently, is pause in movement. According to him, the static condition of places allows them to be experienced and given meaning by their inhabitants.[79] This, nonetheless, brings forth queries upon the need for movement in order to experience places.

De Certeau (1984) shares Tuan's perspective as he says that place "is an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability." Space, on the other hand, "is composed of intersections of mobile elements."[80] He then explains: "Space is a practiced place. Thus, the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers."[81] This movement is defined by stories that "carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places."[82] De Certeau's *spatial stories* are an important notion upon which this document will subsequently draw in the exploration of event defining place.

Similarly, Casey (2001) presumes the "distinction between place and space, taking *space* to be the encompassing volumetric void in which things (including human

[79] Tuan, Yi Fu. *Space and place: The perspective of experience*, 6-12, 34.

[80] De Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*, 117.

[81] Idem.

[82] Ibid., 118.

beings) are positioned and *place* to be the immediate environment of (my) lived body – an arena of action that is at once physical and historical, social and cultural."[83]

Poulet (1977) relates the difference between place and space also to movement but, rather than performed by the *contained* elements, by places themselves. He states that places wander in space.[84] His idea is less that of containment than that of *nesting* (by Malpas), because for him, places wander precisely because space is incapable of framing them[85]. This allows places like Proustian ones to intersect the "real." On this line of thought, he might ascribe space a physical nature: a bedroom could be a *space* where *places* brought from memory wander.

With the exception of Poulet, most perspectives that consider space and place different entities ascribe movement to the former and stability to the latter. Sociologist Manuel Castells (1996) gives account of the changing condition of space as "the expression of society. Since our societies are undergoing structural transformation, it is a reasonable hypothesis to suggest that the new spatial forms and processes are currently emerging."[86] From these processes emerges his "space of flows", which will be defined later. Contrastingly, he sees place as "a locale whose form, function, and meaning, are self-contained within the boundaries of physical contiguity."[87] Furthermore, according to Castells, the division between place and the spaces of flows develops in two spatial logics that create schizophrenia that "threatens to break down communication channels in society."[88]

Philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari introduce a very different dualism. It would be a mistake to say that one of their concepts refers to place and the other to

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[83] Casey, Edward. "Between Geography and Philosophy: What does it mean to Be in the Place-World?", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 91 (4), 2001: 683-93.

[84] Poulet, Georges. *Proustian space*, 122.

[85] Idem.

[86] Castells, Manuel. "The Space of Flows." In *The Rise of the Network Society.* Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, 441.

[87] Ibid., 453.

[88] Ibid., 458.

space. The existing division was *cut-up* once more with their intriguing notions of striated space and smooth space. Striated space is "the *relative global*: it is limited in its parts, which are assigned constant directions, are oriented in relation to one another, divisible by boundaries, and can be fit together."[89] Hanjo Berressem explains that it can be "visualized as a landscape separated into fields, in which everything is measurable, straight and enclosed by defined lines."[90]

Smooth space, on the other hand, is "the space of the smallest deviation: therefore it has no homogeneity, except between infinitely proximate points, and the linking of proximities is effected independently of any determined path. . . . Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels. A field, a heterogeneous smooth space, is wedded to a very particular type of multiplicity: non-metric, acentered, rhizomatic multiplicities which occupy space without "counting" it and [which] can *only be explored by legwork."*[91] It "can be compared to the sea and the desert, it is not tenable, fluid."[92]

Deleuze and Guattari's notions opened windows to new concerns of place, and brought interrogations in terms of the very way in which space is *understood* (questions upon it being tenable or fluid brought forth another dimension of study). Furthermore, this division was traversed by Berressem's "crumpled space,"[93] which links smooth and striated space and will be explained subsequently. Again, "thirding-as-Othering"[94] allows going through conceptual boundaries.

As aforementioned, the debate about the differentiation between place and space and between kinds of spaces has proven a useful source of concepts for the purposes

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[89] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, cited by Casey, Edward. *Getting back into place: Toward a renewed understanding of the place-world*, 362.

[90] Berressem, Hanjo (After Weyl). "Multiplicity: Foldings in Architectural and Literary Landscapes*"* In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 93-101.

[91] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, cited by Casey, Edward. Ibid., 365.

[92] Berressem, Hanjo (After Weyl). "Multiplicity: Foldings in Architectural and Literary Landscapes*"* In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*, 91.

[93] Idem.

[94] Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, 10.

of this work. However, the division will be overlooked. This resulted less from a practical decision than from the idea that many of the notions of these authors intersect and observing the duality would certainly limit the research. Lefebvre and Soja regard the fragmentation as a constraint for the conceptualisation of place. Soja says: “As Lefebvre’s work demonstrates, this is an unnecessary and misleading separation/distinction that reduces the meaningfulness of both space and place.”[95] This document refuses to say that events happen in spaces and not in places.

[95] Ibid., 40.

1.4 SPACE AND TIME

The exploration of event defining place will only be possible if the debates on the duality/oneness of space and time are studied. The mutual dependence between time and place is acknowledged by many of the theorists. However, the way these two are perceived, understood, differentiated, and mutually constituted is regarded differently.

Soja (1996), in his book *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, brings forward Foucault's query on contemporary discussions of space treating time as "*richness, fecundity, life, dialectic* while in contrast space has been typically seen as *the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile*."[96]

Relph's (1976) account underpins the division of concepts. According to him, "time is usually a part of our experiences of places, for these experiences must be bound up with flux or continuity."[97] But he regards continuity through time simply as a dimension that affects our experiences of place, not its essence.[98] Contrarily, Bernard Tschumi (2000) states: "Space is temporal because we move through it; time is spatial because . . . it is through space that we are capable of addressing time."[99] Kevin Lynch, in his book *What Time is this Place?* analyses the dynamics of space and time in natural and artificial milieux. He says: "Environment is the clock we read to tell real time."[100]

The symbiotic relation between space and time is outlined in de Certeau's (1984) observation of the loss of space[101] that results from the disappearance of its spatial stories ("narrative structures [that] have the status of spatial syntaxes"[102]). Without the

[96] Michel Foucault, cited by Soja, Edward. Ibid., 15.

[97] Relph, E. C. *Place and Placelessness*, 33

[98] Idem.

[99] Tschumi, Bernard. *Event-Cities 2*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000, 13.

[100] Lynch, Kevin. *What Time is this Place?* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972, 66.

[101] De Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*, 123.

[102] Ibid., 115.

stories that *dictate* the movements of spaces, these freeze. Malpas (1999) says that the concept of time cannot be divorced from space,[103] and Lefebvre (1991), similarly, says that "time is distinguishable but not separable from space."[104]

Poulet (1977) describes Proust's method as "juxtaposition", which is "to place one thing *beside* another[,] . . . not above", distinguished from superposition as it "assumes the simultaneity of the two conjoined realities, whereas superposition requires the disappearance of the one so that the appearance of the other may take place."[105] After him, Malpas (1999) argues that this juxtaposition is possible only through spatiality: "Only the exteriority of space can provide a frame within which a multiplicity of elements can be grasped as existing in simultaneous juxtaposition."[106] The implication of time in what looks as a mere intersection of images in Proustian space is not limited to visions of spaces in distinct moments, but movements and actions taking place within the very visions. It is not a juxtaposition of static images, but of their movement and duration (in space).

The *freezing* of places in time in the attempt to conceptualise space has been pointed out. However, some hypotheses on the way this process developed would prove useful for the understanding of some discourses on time and space division.

Sanford Kwinter (2001) argues that what renders event problematic is the way in which since the Greeks it was seen to "introduce a corrupting element or impure principle into the pristine and already full world of *Creation*. The offending element here is no other than the principle of change, for in cosmological thought, change is either

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[103] In his account, Heidegger's surbordination of space to time in *Being and Time* was rather problematic, and this led him to rectify later in *On Time and Being*. Malpas, J. M. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, 42.

[104] "Phenomena which an analytical intelligence associates solely with 'temporality', such as growth, maturation and aging, cannot in fact be dissociated from 'spatiality' (itself an abstraction) Space and time thus appear and manifest themselves as forms of a symmetrical kind." Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*, 175.

[105] Poulet, Georges. *Proustian space,* 91.

[106] Malpas, J. M. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, 160.

recognized as a first principle or not accepted to exist at all."[107] He adds: "The problematization of *time* entails a challenge to the primacy of the role of space, and the reintroduction of the classical problem of *becoming* in opposition to that of Being. With movement is introduced the larger problem of dynamical and evolutionary systems and complexity, and the more remote question of a *middleness* that is opposed to essential or foundational beginnings and ends."[108]

As examples of his *Spatial stories*, de Certeau (1984) brings forth the map and the itinerary, which define places by dictating movements within them. They differ as the map describes what there is ("seeing") and the itinerary where to go ("spatializing actions").[109] However, according to him, their origin is shared. The map "slowly disengaged itself from the itineraries that were the condition of its possibility. The first medieval maps included only the rectilinear marking out of itineraries[,] . . . along with the stops one wants to make . . . and distances calculated in hours or days. . . . Each of these maps is a memorandum prescribing actions."[110]

De Certeau gives account of the way in which the map becomes autonomous since the fifteenth century, when the geographical representation "colonizes" and makes space abstract. "It eliminates little by little the pictural figurations of the practices that produce it."[111] Thus, itineraries were supplanted by geometry and the spatial stories were frozen, dislocating event and place.

A phenomenon of freezing developed similarly in one of our means to apprehend space: painting. Lothar Hönninghausen (2005) argues that the relationship between time and space in painting and literature underwent significant changes from the Middle Ages

[107] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*, 5.

[108] Ibid., 11.

[109] De Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*, 119.

[110] Ibid., 120.

[111] Ibid., 121.

through the Renaissance to Postmodernism.[112] The central perspective in paintings of the Renaissance is contrasted by Hönninghausen to David Hockney's multi-perspectivist paintings.[113] Hockney says about his work:

> "The longer you look at it, actually, the more you create space in your head because you're converting time to space. They are obviously interchangeable in our minds. . . . That's why we can't have a feeling of space without time.
>
> Perspective is a theoretical abstraction that was worked out in the fifteenth century. It suddenly altered pictures. It gave a strong illusion of depth. It lost something and it gained something. That loss . . . was the passing of time."[114]

Castells (1996) establishes a difference between "space of flows" and space (referred to as *place* at the end of his essay). He defines the former as "the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows". Ordinary space is "a material product, in relationship to other material products – including people – who engage in [historically] determined social relationships that provide space with a form, a function, and a social meaning."[115] To him, space is crystallized time.[116] His description of space – not the space of flows, though – is the archetype of the vision of time frozen in space as the environment is seen as an entity testifying (past) social processes.

Kwinter (2001) says: "Each thing, it may be said, changes and arrives *in time,* yet the posture of externality that permits precise measure and perfect mastery can be struck and assumed only in space; one must first withdraw oneself from the profuse, organic flux in which things are given, isolate discrete instants as projected frozen sections, and then interpolate abstract laws like so much mortar to rejoin these sections

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[112] Hönninghausen, Lothar. "Where are We? Some Methodological Reflections on Space, Place, and Postmodern Reality" In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 44.

[113] Idem.

[114] David Hockney, cited by Hönninghausen, Lothar. Ibid.,44

[115] Castells, Manuel. "The Space of Flows." In *The Rise of the Network Society*, 441-2.

[116] Ibid., 441.

from the new perspective. But the very gesture that carries thought away from the 'event' and toward the 'thing' abstracts and spatializes time in the act of instrumentalizing it."[117]

Elizabeth Grosz (2001) argues: "We cannot help but view the world in terms of solids, as things. But we leave behind something untapped of the fluidity of the world, the movements, vibrations, transformations that occur below the threshold of perception and calculation and outside the relevance of our practical concerns."[118] After Bergson she says: "If we *shut up motion in space . . .* then we shut up space in quantification, without ever being able to think space in terms of quality, of difference and discontinuity."[119]

1.4.1 Experience of Time and Space

Certainly a factor that leads numerous theorists to dislocate time from space is the distinct manner in which we apprehend them. Casey (2009) says: "Time is one; space is two – at least two." To him, time is unified and gathered in coherent units, whereas "space is self-proliferating."[120] He seems to disregard, however, that the fact that these units are created and measured by us, might be less proof of time's consistency than *striations* of time – if we were to use Deleuze and Guattari's term. Contrastingly, to Lynch (1972), "unlike spatial constructs, temporal ones are less easily

[117] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*, 4.

[118] Grosz, Elizabeth. *Architecture from the outside: Essays on virtual and real space*, 175.

[119] Ibid., 116.

[120] Casey, Edward. *Getting back into place: Toward a renewed understanding of the place-world*, 349.

verified by direct perception. . . . Estimates of duration are notoriously subjective."[121] Hönninghausen (2005) shares this viewpoint. For him space is more concretely experienced than time.[122] Arguably, the complexity of different understandings of space and time led to freezing one of them – that which was considered harder to grasp.

Castells (1996) occupies the middle ground as he faces the complexity. Nonetheless, he ascribes little dynamism to ordinary space (referred to by him as place). He says that the space of flows is characterized by timeless time: "flows induce timeless time, places are time-bounded."[123] The atemporality of his space of flows is hard to deny[124]. However, he seems to disregard that these social processes take place in the *worldly* "lived" space. His example of the different temporality lived by most people – "the dramatic contrast between instant wars and the elimination of war in the life horizon of most people in the dominant countries"[125] – ascribes a *timeless* nature to what he calls *places.* Paul Virilio (1996) says: "Since universal *world time* gets ready to supplant tomorrow the historical importance of time of old localities, urgency calls for us to reform the 'entire' dimension of general history, for making way for it as 'fractional,' of the event restricted but precisely located."[126]

[121] "Thus time structure is more subject to modification by internal state or external suggestion[;] . . . the past seems longer the more recent it is or the more filled it is with notable events." Lynch, Kevin. *What Time is this Place?*, 123.

[122] Hönninghausen, Lothar. "Where are We? Some Methodological Reflections on Space, Place, and Postmodern Reality" In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*, 42.

[123] Castells, Manuel. "The Space of Flows." In *The Rise of the Network Society*, 495.

[124] Contrastingly, Tuan ascribes timelessness to distant places (timeless paradises: Utopias, Eden). See Tuan, Yi Fu. *Space and place: The perspective of experience,* 122.

[125] Castells, Manuel. "The Space of Flows." In *The Rise of the Network Society*, 495.

[126] Virilio, Paul. *Un paysage d'événements*. Paris: Galilée, 1996, 10. My translation.

1.4.2 Space and Time: Juxtaposition

Doreen Massey (1994) does not sidestep the complexity of the diverging apprehensions of space and time and offers a view of place that acknowledges the symbiotic relationship between them: "*Space* is created out of the vast intricacies, the incredible complexities, of the interlocking and the non-interlocking, and the networks of relations at every scale from local to global. What makes a particular view of these social relations specifically spatial is their simultaneity. It is a simultaneity, also which has extension and configuration. But simultaneity is not stasis. Seeing space as a moment in the intersection of configured social relations (rather than as an absolute dimension) means that it cannot be seen as static. There is no choice between flow (time) and a flat surface of instantaneous relations (space)."[127]

Massey acknowledges the increase of this complexity by phenomena like Harvey's postmodern *time-space compression*: "a term which refers to movement and communication across space. It is a phenomenon which implies the geographical stretching-out of social relations (referred to by Anthony Giddens (1984) as *time-space distantiation*), and to our experience of all this."[128]

[127] Massey, Doreen. *Space, place, and gender,* 265.

[128] Massey, Doreen. "Power Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place." In Bird, Jon (Ed.). *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, 59.

1.5 TOWARD THE EVENT

> "Nature itself is wild, indifferent, and accidental; it is a ceaseless pullulation and unfolding, a dense evolutionary plasma of perpetual differentiation and innovation. . . . If the real has a claim to make on our imagination it is much less for any theory of what it *is* than for the fact that things *occur* within it."[129]
>
> **Sanford Kwinter**

The path this work has chosen is that which conjoins dualities, accepting complexity and recognizing that, rather than *being*, space and time *become*. If *event* is explored as a constituent of place, its commonplace notion where time backgrounds place should be overcome.

The approach chosen for going beyond these dualities is Soja's 'thirding-as-Othering', which "recomposes the dialectic through an intrusive disruption that explicitly spatializes dialectical reasoning. . . . Thirding produces what might best be called a cumulative *trialectics* that is radically open to additional othernesses, to a continuing expansion of spatial knowledge."[130]

Soja, (1996) after Lefebvre, says: "Spatial knowledge, as a means to *thread through the complexities of the modern world*, is achievable only through approximations, a constant search to move beyond (*meta)* what is known."[131] This research will certainly be built upon approximations, and its outcomes are expected to be approximations themselves. Soja concludes: "Each thirding and each trialectic is thus an "approximation" that builds cumulatively on earlier approximations, producing a

[129] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*, 4, 11.

[130] Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, 61.

[131] Ibid.,56.

certain practical continuity of knowledge production that is an antidote to the hyperrelativism and "anything goes" philosophy associated with such radical epistemological openness."[132]

Berressem (2005) thirds Deleuze and Guattari's approximations with his "crumpled space," which is the "differential of striated and smooth place; as a complex, manifold site that is actualized from a virtual, infinite multiplicity and situated on a continuous scale between complete striation and complete smoothness, both of which are abstracted ideals."[133] This notion will bring us close to *evental space*.

De Certeau's (1984) spatial stories define boundaries of places, but as events they define their very existence. Casey (2001) says that things happen in places, but that places happen as well.[134] He says that "to speak of space-time is to speak once more of event. For an event is at once spatial and temporal, indeed indissolubly both. Thus "event" can be considered the spatiotemporalization of a place."[135]

Kwinter (2001) sees time as an engine, rather than a procession of images.[136] "Time always expresses itself by producing, or more precisely, by drawing matter into a process of *becoming-ever-different*."[137] Massey's view is that "of space-time as a configuration of social relations within which the specifically spatial may be conceived of as an inherently dynamic simultaneity[,] . . . an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification."[138] Henri Bergson states that "what is real is the continual change of form: form is only a snapshot view of a transition."[139] If we are to escape from freezing

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[132] Ibid.,61.

[133] Berressem, Hanjo. "Multiplicity: Foldings in Architectural and Literary Landscapes*"* In Benesch, K., & Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*, 91.

[134] Casey, Edward. "Between Geography and Philosophy: What does it mean to Be in the Place-World?", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 91 (4), 2001, xxv.

[135] Ibid.,339.

[136] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*, 4.

[137] Idem.

[138] Massey, Doreen. *Space, place, and gender*, 2.

[139] Henri Bergson, cited by Kwinter, Sanford. Ibid., 11

relations that change we must renounce forms and surfaces, holograms of moments whose existences succeed faster than our understanding.

Our approximations of evental space could then start with Grosz's thoughts: "In opening up space to time, space becomes amenable to transformation and refiguring; it becomes particular, individualized. . . . If time is neither linear and successive nor cyclical and recurrent but indeterminate, unfolding, serial, multiplying, complex, heterogeneous, then space too must be reconfigured not as neutral, nor as singular, and homogeneous but as opening up to other spaces, not regulating processes and events so much as accompanying them."[140]

[140] Grosz, Elizabeth. *Architecture from the outside: Essays on virtual and real space*, 116-9

CHAPTER TWO. EVENTAL SPACE

According to Virilio (1996), events take the place of the landscape, and in it the past and the future emerge simultaneously. In this place things no longer follow one another, and they never stop. "The absence of duration of perpetual present circumscribes the cycle of History and its repetitions."[141]

2.1 THE EVENT: CHAOS

Kwinter (2001) states: "when something occurs, it may be said that that which previously remained only a potential or a virtuality now emerges and becomes actual, though only in place of something else that could have arisen here at this time, but did not. This double "difference" – between what is here now but previously was not, and between what emerged and what did not, in all of its complexity and fatality and in all of its own pregnant virtuality or potentiality is what I will call *the event*."[142]

What is crucial about Kwinter's theory of event is that not only does it acknowledge the changing nature of space, but it sees this changing nature as non-linear or subject to a fixed process. It is given sudden changes by events. Massey's (1993) conceptualisation of places in terms of social interactions renders them, by definition, dynamic. Since these interactions are processes, "places are processes too."[143] But she recognises: "the spatial has *both* an element of order *and* an element of

[141] Virilio, Paul. *Un paysage d'événements*, 9-10. My translation.

[142] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*, 48.

[143] Massey, Doreen. "Power Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place." In Bird, Jon (Ed.). *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, 66.

chaos."[144] After Frederic Jameson and his "chaos of the spatial", she argues that "the temporal is not, and cannot be, tidy and monolithic."[145]

Grosz (2001) says: "Space, like time, is emergence and eruption, oriented not to be the ordered, the controlled, the static, but to the event, to movement or action."[146] The notion of time and space as processes is challenged by the idea that process by definition entails some cyclical stability. Event, Kwinter's "novelty," is a vehicle, by or through which something new appears in the world.[147] It disrupts a *static process of change.* "Events are always tear points in the tissue of Being, qualitative transformations of matter or destabilized essences."[148]

[144] Massey, Doreen. *Space, place, and gender*, 265.

[145]Ibid.,268.

[146] Grosz, Elizabeth. *Architecture from the outside: Essays on virtual and real space*, 116.

[147] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*, 5.

[148] Ibid.,142.

2.2 SPACE OF EVENTS

Lefebvre and Soja's Thirdspace is: "a knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotions, events, and political choices that is existentially shaped by the generative and problematic interplay between centers and peripheries, the abstract and the concrete, the impassioned spaces of the conceptual and the lived, marked out materially and metaphorically in *spatial praxis*, the transformation of (spatial) knowledge into (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power."[149]

This space is defined by its relations (between its elements and with other places), processes, turns, bendings, simultaneity, multiplicity, chaos. It is by definition attached to time, but detached from any framing of it. It is Massey's place as the articulation of social interrelations at all scales, a moment in those networks[150], "the lived world of a simultaneous multiplicity of spaces: cross-cutting, intersecting, aligning with one another, or existing in relations of paradox or antagonism."[151]

Castells' (1996) "space of flows" is undoubtedly evental. But it is not *all* evental space. He detaches it from the *places* where people live[152]. And not only do these places and people exist because of each other, they *constitute* each other. Castells' *places* are defined by the particular mixture of flows[153] and the flows define these places. They are the same – multiple – space. The structural schizophrenia between two spatial logics – the timeless space of flows and the time-bound places[154] – that he claims undoubtedly exists. However, timelessness is not exclusive of the space of flows. As has been argued, *places,* and the relations and events that define them, are not bound to a single time-frame, and this schizophrenia is due to the multiplicity inherent to space.

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[149] Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, 31.

[150] Massey, Doreen. *Space, place, and gender*, 5.

[151] Ibid.,3.

[152] Castells, Manuel. "The Space of Flows." In *The Rise of the Network Society*, 453-495.

[153] See Massey, Doreen. loc. cit.

[154] Castells, Manuel. loc. cit.

Casey (2009) says that places are events. Also, "place is the generatrix for the collection, as well as the recollection, of all that occurs in the lives of sentient beings, and even for the trajectories of inanimate things. Its power consists in gathering these lives and things, each with its own space and time, into one arena of common engagement."[155] The trajectories and relations of animate and inanimate things in (and out of) a place, as Massey asserts, intersect in its space. But this intersection, rather than converging at one point and occurring at one time, is traced by multiple intersections at different, fluid times.

De Certeau's (1984) definition of space makes it eventual: "A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. . . . It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities."[156]

As previously pointed out, Poulet (1977) says that: "space is a sort of undeterminable milieu where places wander in the same fashion that in cosmic space the planets wander. Yet the movement of the planets is calculable. But how does one calculate the movement of places that are wandering?"[157] Their sudden apparition disrupts the continuity of space and time. They could have been brought by an event with no relationship to them. John Berger's *Field*, according to Jill Stoner (2007), appeared in his mind at a railroad crossing as he let a train pass by: "a description of a transformative event."[158]

Proustian space has been shown to provide a rich source for the concepts of thinkers of place and space. Franz Kafka's literature is drawn upon by Kwinter (2001) to build his eventual space. He says that the space in the writer's work is not architectonic: "it has no boundaries, fixed positions or places, or even a definable ground – it is made

[155] Casey, Edward. *Getting back into place: Toward a renewed understanding of the place-world*, 329.

[156] De Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*, 117.

[157] Poulet, Georges. *Proustian space*, 12.

[158] Stoner, Jill. "Rain in the City" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City.* London and New York: Routledge, 2007, 225.

up entirely of relations, movements, passages. Kafka's work does not present an image of a total or even partial world but rather concerns itself with carving pathways, trajectories, vectors, and transverse movements that touch, penetrate, and filiate through an always indeterminate number of worlds."[159]

"The *swerves* – switchpoints for the sudden and indeterminate changes of state of Kafkan narrative – are rooted in the world of space (Being) but nevertheless represent anomalies, *singularities*, that is, necessary departures from it. These swerves begin as microscopic events that intervene in and mobilize an inert world of fixed relations by projecting into everything the aleatory flow of time. But it is not the global or linear time of a progress or *development*, which merely evolves and consolidates the identity of Forms in space (Being), but a time that destabilizes Forms."[160]

2.2.1 Event defining Place, and Place defining Event

Event traverses the fields of logico-epistomological space that, according to Lefebvre (1991), are "apprehended separately: the *physical* – nature, the Cosmos; the *mental*, including logical and formal abstractions; and the *social*."[161] Massey (1994) ascribes to the evental both the possibility of creating/defining space and time[162] and of being defined by them. "Spatial form as 'outcome' (the happenstance juxtapositions and so forth) has emergent powers which can have effects on subsequent events. Spatial form can alter the future course of the very stories which have produced it."[163] Events thus define places and places define events.

[159] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*, 142.

[160] Idem.

[161] Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*, 11.

[162] Massey, Doreen. *Space, place, and gender*, 263.

[163] Ibid.,268.

Berressem (2005) states that in evental (or topological) space, "the identity of objects does no longer lie in their specific form but in their spatial structure[,] . . . in its relative positions within an inherently complex, dynamic spatial con*text*. This space defines the parameters within which the object can be modeled and as such it is, and will remain, an integral part of the object."[164]

Ideal spaces have been shown to play a central role in the conceptualisations of place by many theorists and will be crucial for the subsequent chapters of this document. In *À la recherche du temps perdu*, present events bring back memories. "Suddenly, by chance, the coincidence of a certain actual sensation and a certain former sensation determines a rising up of memories. The lost moments are found again. . . . Thanks to memory, time is consequently not lost, and if time is not lost, neither is space. . . . There is a space *finally regained*, a space that is found and discovered thanks to the movement released by memory."[165] According to Poulet (1977), "it is not only a certain period of its childhood that the Proustian being sees rise up from his cup of tea; it is also a room, a church, a town, a solid topographical whole, which no longer wanders, no longer wavers. . . . Creation or re-creation of space, the phenomenon of the Madeleine has thus for its consummation the integral reconstitution of place."[166] Proustian space is not argued by Poulet to be only in the realm of the "imagined." An event can define what we view as "real spaces." The author recalls the episode where Marcel is to kiss his beloved Albertine, where what is occurring revolves the *real* space around him.[167]

Nonetheless, as Giuliana Bruno (2007) exemplifies in the process of remembering, space can define event as well. She draws on Quintilian's understanding of the way memory works architecturally to argue that "to create a memory, one would imagine a building, and, peripatetically, populate each room and part of the space with an image; then, to recall the memory, one would mentally retraverse the building,

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[164] Berressem, Hanjo. "Multiplicity: Foldings in Architectural and Literary Landscapes*"* In Benesch, K., & Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*, 93.

[165] Poulet, Georges. *Proustian space*, 57-8.

[166] Ibid.,16, 66.

[167] Ibid.,85-8.

moving around and through the space, revisiting in turn all the rooms. . . . As Quintilian (1922: 221-3) has it, memory stems from a narrative, mobile, architectural experience of site."[168]

Kwinter (2001) asserts: "The event, then, is thus both an embracing and an excavation of a milieu. The milieu in turn is carved by the event and bears its shape. Every event is defined and exhausted by the production of a new milieu; it is a forcing to the surface of once virtual relations that have now become actual."[169]

Casey says that "it is by bodies that places become cultural in character."[170] To him, this "middle term between place and self" is *habitus*.[171] In cultural activity, *habitus* could be then considered our means to create events, and with that, places. Hönninghausen (2005) offers an example of this as he refers to Arjun Appadurai's discussion of the *diasporic* and *transnational* situation of "nation states destabilized by mass migrations."[172] The event of migration transforms territories.

Events give cities their unique characters. Soja has taken his studies on Los Angeles beyond the events taking place in the city. He has studied the events *shaping* the city: "Looking back to the future, still another 'new' Los Angeles seemed to burst on to the scene in 1992. . . . As the nation's second largest city began to disappear in smoke and fire during that violent spring, many of the most confident interpretations of the new urbanization processes seemed as if they too were being engulfed in flames."[173]

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[168] Bruno, Giuliana. "Haptic Space: Film and the Geography of Modernity" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City.* London and New York: Routledge, 2007, 17.

[169] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*, 168.

[170] Casey, Edward, cited by Hönninghausen, Lothar. *Where are We? Some Methodological Reflections on Space, Place, and Postmodern Reality*

[171] Casey, Edward. "Between Geography and Philosophy: What does it mean to Be in the Place-World?", 686.

[172] Hönninghausen, Lothar. "Where are We? Some Methodological Reflections on Space, Place, and Postmodern Reality" In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*, 45.

[173] Soja, Edward. "Postscript: Critical reflections on the Postmetropolis" In *Postmetropolis: Critical studies of cities and regions*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, 396.

People's imaginaries reveal that events define places. Stoner says that when Ridley Scott's movie *Blade Runner* came out in 1982, it was criticised for not having enough action.[174] The audience expected the future Los Angeles to be represented with (at least) its present dynamism. Virilio (1996) quotes filmmaker Abel Ferrara: "You cannot live in New York during the day; here you cannot live but the night."[175]

Relph (1976) asserts: "Much ritual and custom and myth has the incidental if not deliberate effect of strengthening attachment to place by reaffirming not only the sanctity and unchanging significance of it, but also the enduring relationships between people and their place."[176] Traditional events that take place in urban squares and villages are attempts to empower an event to redefine a site, to give it back its yearned qualities. The quintessential creation of places in imaginaries by tradition is myth-telling. The places in them owe their very existence to an event, to a past action of some deity.

The event defines space and space defines the event. Massey's (1993) remark on the specificity of a place "constructed out of a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus"[177] is once more fundamental. The way in which those relations *happen* is only possible because of the place and its singularities. The events of 1992 could happen in the exact manner that they did *only* in Los Angeles. New York and its qualities allow its nightlife to be the way it is.

[174] Stoner, Jill. "Rain in the City" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City*, 220.

[175] Virilio, Paul. "Le grand soir" In *Un paysage d'événements*, 163-70.

[176] Relph, E. C. *Place and Placelessness*, 32.

[177] Massey, Doreen. "Power Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place." In Bird, Jon (Ed.). *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, 66.

2.2.2 Event un-defines Place

In his essay "L'immatériel de guerre", Virilio argues that the progress in war technology has led history to the immaterialisation of means of destruction, as well as the progressive impersonalising of commandment.[178] This could lead us to think of the obvious intention of all wars – immaterialising the enemy's territory – as the possibility of event to (un)define a place.

Sabine Sielke's (2005) account of the collective sharing of the "experience of the traumatic events of September 11"[179] exemplifies the shrinking of distances due to the "power of representation and the construction of reality through media technologies." She acknowledges the differential of experiencing the attacks from a "safe distance" on the television screen, but she argues the almost "real" character they had through the "incessant repetition, the loop of that image" [180] by the media. Perhaps postmodernity drives history to a deeper *personalisation* of events in distant places. Undoubtedly, the images of this event *re*-defined New York in multiple ways to inhabitants and to those who have never set foot on the city, as a precinct was *un*-defined (immaterialised).

[178] Virilio, Paul. "L'immatériel de guerre" In *Un paysage d'événements*. Paris: Galilée, 1996: 163-70.

[179] Sielke, Sabine. "Between, Beyond, Elsewhere: Mapping the Zones and Borderlands of Critical Discourse" In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 108.

[180] Ibid.,112.

2.2.3 Multiplicity

This research, in its attempt to conceptualise place through event, will undoubtedly face the actuality that space (and especially *evental* space) is experienced, grasped, represented, understood and contested in multiple ways: *lived* in multiple ways.

How feasible is Malpas' (1999) intent to attain a conceptualisation of place that exhibits the structure, "constituted through the interplay of a number of elements", as a whole?[181] He states that the "recognition of the complexity of place should . . . direct our attention to the very unity in which place also consists."[182]

Nonetheless, Massey (1994) asserts the existence of a simultaneous multiplicity of spaces because "social relations of space are experienced differently, and variously interpreted, by those holding different positions as part of it."[183] Furthermore, "the identities of place are always unfixed, contested and multiple."[184] Virilio (1996) says that "a landscape does not have an obliged sense, a privileged point of view; it is oriented only by the *parcours* of passers-by."[185]

In our efforts to contribute to the theoretical body of space, we discover that any place that we try to conceptualise is in reality many places. If we are to probe the way in which event defines place, the problem just gets bigger. An event defines place in multiple ways, and I argue that Malpas' detachment from subjectivity in any attempt to conceptualise place is unattainable. He claims that "place is not founded *on* subjectivity, but is rather that *on which* subjectivity is founded," and that its structure "extends beyond the subject to encompass a world of objects, events and persons."[186] This is hardly

[181] Malpas, J. M. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, 39.

[182] Ibid.,163.

[183] Massey, Doreen. *Space, place, and gender*, 3.

[184] Ibid.,5.

[185] Virilio, Paul. *Un paysage d'événements*. Paris: Galilée, 1996, 11. My translation.

[186] Malpas, J. M. Ibid.,35.

questionable, but certainly we experience, grasp, understand, contest, and act upon places as subjects, and we part from that when we attempt to conceptualise them.

The problem here is that the definition given to a place by an event is multiple. It will have infinite (subjective) graspings and accounts. The objective side of the event is that, independently from the experiencing subject, it happened (or did not). Yet, any attempt to conceptualise something is centred on a narrative through which, according to Malpas, "one is able to interconnect elements within a larger structure in a way that 'makes sense' of those elements."[187] Must this narrative be objective and unitary? Is it even possible?

A large number of events happen by human agency. But many do not. And experienced or not, they occurred. I argue that we *humanise* them – certainly as we experience them, but if we did not – when we try to give account of them, to understand them. Whether they are part of the past or are presently happening, our narrative of them *subjectivises* them. One could query the purposes of the modernist attempts to free all objects from the individual: are we not subjects trying to understand our world?

Numerous efforts to conceptualise place have frozen its space or its time to try to manage their "unutterable mobility and contingency."[188] But as we do that, we turn space and time into *things*, the consequence so grieved by Kwinter and Grosz. Casey (2009) says that "a place is something for which we continually have to discover or invent new forms of understanding, new concepts in the literal sense of ways of "grasping-together" because "a place is more an *event* than a *thing*."[189] Spaces change, and their conceptualisations must change as well.

Lefebvre's aim to "discover or construct a theoretical unity between 'fields' which are apprehended separately"[190] certainly means less *one* way of conceptualising things than multiple ways that build this unity. After all, his Thirdspace is featured by multiplicity

[187] Malpas, J. M. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, 81.

[188] Massey, Doreen. *Space, place, and gender*, 5.

[189] Casey, Edward. *Getting back into place: Toward a renewed understanding of the place-world*, 329.

[190] Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford, OX: Blackwell, 1991, 11.

and simultaneity. Events, like time and space, are disjointedly apprehended and given account of. *One objective* conceptualisation restrains us even more than dualisms.

We could say, after Massey, that these multiple understandings do not deny the particularity of a place[191], as only *this* place allowed them to arise as they did and articulated them. A single space intersects with itself in infinite ways, and so do its conceptualisations. Our way of giving account of its events is narrative, and this must resemble space in its openness, in its change. Our accounts of places and events, must be as dynamic and open-ended as their subjects. Narrative must be as evental as space.

2.3 BEFORE THE EXPLORATION

Lothar Hönninghausen (2005) says that our traditional notion of time and space is being eliminated and replaced by virtual reality and cyberspace. "Even though cyberspace, a mathematically generated world, remains indirectly dependent on expectations initiated by our ordinary perceptions, digitalization necessarily implies that our spatial experience is no longer based on experience, but on abstract calculation."[192]

Virtual space certainly brings new challenges to the theories of space, but it also produces infinite opportunities as it allows for the creation of different concepts, questions and articulations. Poulet, Malpas and Kwinter's work has shown to compellingly build conceptualisations of place upon the space in literature.

This research attempts to follow their method in the space of cinema. I draw on the spaces from two movies by Alejandro González Iñárritu and Guillermo Arriaga to probe the mutual constitution of place and event. As aforementioned, this investigation intends to contribute to the theory of (evental) space bringing forth concepts as dynamic

[191] Massey, Doreen. Idem.

[192] Hönninghausen, Lothar. "Where are We? Some Methodological Reflections on Space, Place, and Postmodern Reality" In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*, 47.

as their objects of study. Stoner (2007) gives account of the "famous argument about the invention of calculus – attributed to Newton, then to Leibniz, and finally resting again with Newton."[193] She argues that the Newtonian approach must have been chosen because Leibniz's version was "a mathematics not put to use to pursue the elusiveness of limits, but rather an illustration of what cannot be known; not a useful science like City Planning but an aesthetic speculation."[194] Stoner then says that "calculus is the mathematics of events – the derivative gives us a rate of change, the integral accumulation of quantities."[195] Stoner prefers Leibniz's approach, and so do I. That is exactly evental space and spatial events.

"The narrative form and history-telling, can never do more than scratch the surface of Thirdspace's extraordinary simultaneities."[196] This work intends to generate approximations[197] of space. What must be said is that this is not a study of evental space. This is a study that explores how all space is evental.

[193] Stoner, Jill. "Rain in the City" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City*, 230-1.

[194] Dirk J. Struik, (1948), cited by Stoner, Jill. Idem.

[195] Stoner, Jill. Ibid.,231.

[196] Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, 57.

[197] Ibid.,56.

CHAPTER THREE. SPACE IN FICTION: CINEMA AS A TOOL

3.1 SPACE IN FICTION

Michel de Certeau (1984) quotes Maurice Merleau-Ponty: “space is existential and existence is spatial.”[198] The first part of this chapter will argue for the importance of fictional spaces in the study of place. The characteristics of narrative ascribe space qualities that are worth examining as cinema is the lens through which place will be analysed in the present work.

3.1.1 Sequences: Simultaneity

Michael Hoffman and Patrick Murphy (2005) state that, “as applied to fiction, space is even more metaphoric than the concept of time.”[199] According to them, the physical existence in space of painting and sculpture allows them to be experienced “all at once, in a single and instantaneous visual perception,”[200] which differentiates them from fiction as this latter unfolds in time and its parts are not physically connected, but sequential.

At first sight, the sequential nature of fiction could be regarded as a limitation. A series of *images* unfolding in time on the screen or pages arguably give space in fiction little possibility of embracing a multiplicity of events. “El Aleph” by Jorge Luis Borges has been largely quoted by theorists of space. In this short story, the narrator gives account

[198] De Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, 117.

[199] Hoffman, Michael and Murphy, Patrick. “Introduction”, In Hoffman, M. and Murphy, P. (Eds.). *Essentials of the theory of fiction*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005, 11.

[200] Idem.

of his encounter with the Aleph, "a point in space that contains all of the other points,"[201] described as a three-centimetre sphere where the entire universe is contained (in an unreduced condition): "Each thing was infinite things, because I could clearly see it from every viewpoint in the universe. . . . In that gigantic instant, I saw millions of delightful and awful deeds; none of them struck as much as the fact that they all occupied the same spot, with no superposition or transparency. What my eyes saw was simultaneous; what I will transcribe, successive, because language is so. Something, however, I will gather."[202]

Borges regards the linearity of language as a restraint in the attempt to portray multiple events. But Hoffman and Murphy say that "novelists have often manipulated a story's temporal unfolding by telling a tale out of chronological order, and in that way exploiting the tension among story, narrative and plot."[203] Arguably, the breaking-up of a temporal sequence to give account of simultaneities allows also for the spatial construction of what otherwise would be a single, flat, scene. Recalling de Certeau's words, places – considered by him fixed, static – are transformed into spaces by stories.[204]

Joseph Frank (2005), in his essay "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," describes the spatialisation of narrative through the fragmentation of the time-continuum by Flaubert, Joyce, Proust and Barnes.[205] Gustave Flaubert's "cinematographic method"[206] consists of descriptions of simultaneous actions at three levels of the scene.[207] "He

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[201] Borges, Jorge L. "El Aleph" In Enguídanos, Miguel (Ed.). *Borges: Sus mejores páginas*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970, 148. My Translation.

[202] Borges, Jorge L. "El Aleph" In Enguídanos, Miguel (Ed.). *Borges: Sus mejores páginas*, 150-1. My translation.

[203] Hoffman, Michael and Murphy, Patrick. "Introduction", In Hoffman, M. and Murphy, P. (Eds.). *Essentials of the theory of fiction*, 11.

[204] De Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, 118.

[205] Frank, Joseph. "Spatial form in Modern Literature", In Hoffman, M. and Murphy, P. (Eds.). *Essentials of the theory of fiction*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005.

[206] Ibid., 61.

[207] "On the lowest plane, there is the surging, jostling mob in the street, mingling with the livestock brought to the exhibition; raised slightly above the street by a platform are the speechmaking officials,

dissolves sequence by cutting back and forth between the various levels of action[:] . . . the spatialization of form in a novel. For the duration of the scene, at least, the time-flow of the narrative is halted: attention is fixed on the interplay of relationships within the limited time-area."[208] According to Frank, James Joyce applies this method on a gigantic scale in *Ulysses*, a novel composed "of an infinite number of references and cross-references which relate to one another independently of the time-sequence of the narrative. . . . These references must be connected by the reader and viewed as a whole. . . . Joyce's most obvious intention in *Ulysses* is to give the reader a picture of Dublin seen as a whole."[209] As we will see in subsequent chapters, the movies by González Iñárritu and Arriaga make constant use of this time-sequence break-up. In fact, these filmmakers introduce, as well, a spatial fragmentation as they go back and forth, not only within the same place, but along different places.

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bombastically reeling off platitudes to the attentive multitudes; and on the highest level of all, from a window overlooking the spectacle, Rodolphe and Emma are watching the proceedings and carrying on their amorous conversations." Idem.

[208] Ibid., 62.

[209] Frank, Joseph. "Spatial form in Modern Literature", In Hoffman, M. and Murphy, P. (Eds.), *Essentials of the theory of fiction*, 62.

3.1.2 Multiplicity in Fictional Space

De Certeau (1984) states that walkers create space and inscribe in it an infinite number of stories.[210] Walkers create and perceive multiple spaces. He cites Merleau-Ponty: "There are as many spaces as there are distinct spatial experiences."[211] The multiplicity of space has been touched upon in the previous chapter, and now we analyse the way in which fiction deals with it. Another duality is added to the already complex multiplicity of space: space of fiction versus "real" space.

Winfried Fluck (2005) says that "all perceptions of space are constructs. . . . Physically speaking, a room or a landscape consists of an aggregate of physical matter; experientially speaking, it consists of a number of sense impressions."[212] He further states that, "in order to arrive at a meaningful shape, the viewer has to link these physical particles and sense impressions by means of . . . a principle that provides it with some kind of meaning (if only that of representing a "chaotic" world)."[213] As he explores the process in which physical space becomes imaginary space, Fluck argues that fictional forms of representation, including the representation of space, "bring an object into our world but they are not identical with that object. They create an object that is never stable and identical with itself."[214] He speaks of the *aesthetic object*: "We do not look at it any longer in terms of its referential representativeness but regard it as a form of representation that has the freedom to redefine and transform reality or even to invent it anew."[215]

Fluck asserts that as a literary text is read, "characters as well as descriptions of space retain a dimension of indeterminacy that has to be overcome by the reader through her own imagination. In paintings, photographs, and especially in film and

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[210] De Certeau, Michel. "Walking in the City" In *The practice of everyday life*, 91-110.

[211] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, cited by de Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*, 118.

[212] Fluck, Winfried. "Imaginary Space; or, Space as Aesthetic Object" In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture.* Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 25.

[213] Idem.

[214] Ibid., 31.

[215] Ibid., 26.

television, this indeterminacy is reduced because of the iconic nature of the sign. We see the object in front of us and do not have to imagine it. . . . In reading a novel, we can create the image of a person along the lines of our own imaginary, a character in film is not entirely open to this kind of reinvention."[216]

On the screen, space "profits from visualization: on the one hand, it gains determinacy through visual representation and thereby achieves solid object-status; on the other hand, it retains a certain degree of indeterminacy, because its representation is not directly linked, as the representation of a character is, to a specific identity."[217] Fluck points to semantic openness, of which directors have taken advantage by employing space as an externalization of their character's interiority. Furthermore, he argues: "Whereas transfer processes with regards to characters may depend on sympathy for physical appearance, etc., space invites a much more directly somatic – and therefore 'unconscious' – transfer. This transfer can also be described as a form of embodiment."[218] This openness of space and its consequent potential of embodiment by an audience, allowed not only to experience it, but to reinvent it, is a key element for the exploration of evental space in the films chosen for this work.

[216] Ibid., 38.

[217] Idem.

[218] Idem.

3.1.3 Spaces in Fiction: Evental labyrinths

Jorge Luis Borges creates labyrinths in his short stories and, as Proust, Flaubert and Kafka, provides theories of space with *heterotopias*[219] to construct reflections of existential space. "El Aleph" is his best known piece. Its description of infinite places juxtaposed in one single point has been a fascinating subject of analysis for numerous theorists. The Argentinean writer said: "What eternity is to time, the Aleph is to space. In eternity, all time – past, present and future – coexists simultaneously. In the Aleph, the sum total of the spatial universe is to be found in a tiny shining sphere barely over an inch across."[220]

I draw upon some other short stories by Borges for the exploration of evental space in literature. "La casa de Asterión"[221] ("The House of Asterión") is the description of the Minotaur's labyrinth: his home and prison. The mythical character's account of the existence of an infinite number of doors, wells, patios and troughs, backgrounds the physicality of this place: "Every part of the house exists many times, every place is any other place. . . . The house is the size of the world; better said, it is the world."[222] The space is thus shaped only by the movements of Asterión, whose static existence (Being) is changed by the events he narrates (Becoming). The minotaur, in his solitude, runs across the labyrinth, plays and mentally duplicates himself, rests, and receives the eventual visit of men, sent there to be sacrificed. He awaits impatiently the arrival of him whom he calls his "saviour": Tesseus. The inevitable visit of the mortal who will take his life is the event that will define the end of the labyrinth.

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[219] Along with utopias, heterotopias is Foucault's term for sites "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." Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces", *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 1986): 22-27.

[220] Jorge Luis Borges, cited by Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, 54.

[221] Borges, Jorge L. "La casa de Asterión" In Enguídanos, Miguel (Ed.). *Borges: Sus mejores páginas*, 132-4.

[222] Idem. My translation.

Borges' labyrinths are frequently the main characters of his stories.[223] "Los dos reyes y los laberintos" ("The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths") narrates a duel between two kings. Each had to find the way out of his opponent's labyrinth. Both places differed significantly. The first king, from one of the islands of Babylon, called upon architects and magicians for the construction of a labyrinth so complex that it was feared by men and never overcome by those who penetrated it. The king of Arabia was taken there and remained lost for a long time. Once he came out, he took the other king to his labyrinth, where there were "no stairs to go up, no doors to break through, no tiring galleries to traverse, no walls to block the path": the desert.[224]

The description by Cristina Grau (1989) reminds us of Deleuze and Guattari's smooth space: "The desert is the worst imaginable labyrinth as it has no structure to unravel, because it is woven with time and space and it always duplicates itself, indefinitely, seemingly infinitely. The desert has the key requisite of a labyrinth: never to allow out she who goes in. Its peculiarity is infinity, perceived at the very beginning; it breaks the hope of coming out, which exists in built labyrinths."[225] In this labyrinth the lack of the event of overcoming a barrier defines its infinitude. Perhaps what renders it labyrinthine is its fixity.

I choose two more stories which, together with "La casa de Asterión," create labyrinths where Borges offers key examples to our evental space. In "El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan" ("The Garden of Forking Paths"), the narrator describes his conversation with the man whom he was to kill in the end. They talk about Tsui-Pen's labyrinth, "El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan", which is really a book with all the possible bifurcations of a man's life and, consequently, the representation of all the possible biographies of all men, all cities seen or imagined, all the animals, all the trees."[226] Again, it is a labyrinth whose "space" is defined by the events of an infinite

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[223] Grau, Cristina. *Borges y la arquitectura*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1989, 63.

[224] Grau, Cristina. *Borges y la arquitectura*, 127. My translation.

[225] Ibid., 126. My translation.

[226] Ibid., 62. My translation.

number of lives. The short story concludes with a magnificent metaphor of the oneness of place and event: the narrator, a German spy in British territory, shoots his host in order to communicate to his peers the name of the place they must attack, which is also his victim's name.[227]

"La muerte y la brújula" ("Death and the Compass") narrates the pursuit of a murderer who creates a labyrinth within the city, structured by the spots where the victims are killed. What is fascinating about this labyrinth is that, in it, Borges once again challenges its spatial (3D) existence as the spots define a linear path by events – the murders. What renders this line labyrinthine is the fact that each move takes place in a spot exactly in the midpoint of the previous ones.[228]

3.1.4 Spaces in Fiction: Examples of Evental Space in Movies

The next part of this chapter will attempt to justify the use of cinema as a tool for an exploration of evental space, but in what follows I will comment on two movies which could direct our thoughts toward evental space in film.

3.1.4.1 *Cinema Paradiso*[229]

The story of this film by Giuseppe Tornatore (1989) is told through the main character's (Salvatore di Vita, 'Toto') revival of his childhood and youth in the Sicilian town of Giancaldo. The flashbacks bring back specific periods of his life, and through these memories, the places of the village are reconstructed. Events reshape the places of the town. The most telling of Tornatore's metaphors is that where the stages of Salvatore's life – always guarded by Alfredo, the projectionist – are reflected in the character of the town, where, according to

[227] Borges, Jorge L. *Ficciones*. Madrid: Alianza, 1997.

[228] Idem.

[229] *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso,* DVD. Directed by Giuseppe Tornatore. Screenplay by Giuseppe Tornatore and Vanna Paoli. Cristaldifilm, 1989.

Nezar AlSayyad, “the film shows the introduction of modernity through the evolution of the cinema.”[230] The cinema as an attraction new to a small village echoes Salvatore’s childhood. “The fact that it [*Cinema Paradiso*] is also the name of the film indicates the centrality of the theatre to the life of this small town during and immediately after World War II.”[231] Salvatore’s youth, on the other hand, is reflected through the replacement of the old theatre by *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*, “built by a lottery-winning Neapolitan, who lives in Giancaldo. . . . And Salvatore, now a teenager, becomes the projectionist, replacing Alfredo, who has lost his eyesight.”[232]

In the end, “the demise of Cinema Paradiso as a theatre is an allegory for the end of the paradise of Toto’s childhood and the dissolution of the close-knit world of the small town”[233] – the metaphor of the death of a place as the death of a period of Salvatore’s life.

3.1.4.2 *Alice in Wonderland*[234]

Tim Burton’s 2010 movie narrates Alice’s return to Wonderland as a youth. Unlike other spaces in fiction, this dreamlike place is purely evental and, arguably, detached from physicality and from mental construct.

Some familiarity with the first part of the story would tempt us to say that Wonderland is an ideal place (it exists only in Alice’s mind). However, the sequel – a story which had a somewhat free narrative, not strictly following the second book – gives this fantastic space a distinct nature. Whereas the Wonderland

[230] AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real.* London and New York: Routledge, 2006, 50.

[231] Idem.

[232] Ibid., 52.

[233] Ibid., 53.

[234] *Alice in Wonderland*. Directed by Tim Burton. Screenplay by Linda Woolverton, inspired on the book by Lewis Carroll. Walt Disney Pictures, 2010.

where Alice arrived as a child was a creation of her imagination (and, probably, the consequence of a mushroom intoxication), the devastated land where she is brought as a teenager proves a very distinct existence.

Wonderland has been taken over by the Red Queen during the last years, and the place is barely recognisable. Once Alice arrives there, she is told of the miseries the land has experienced while she was in the "real" world, growing up. Wonderland, especially the Wonderland during Alice's absence, is a space that this film presents as evental, even denying its origin in the girl's imagination. As she became a teenager, Alice no longer thought of the place of her fantasies, she might have even forgotten it. But it did not cease to exist. In the girl's absence (physical and mental), a series of events occurred and drastically reshaped the space. During these years, Wonderland was not only shaped, but it was given its very existence by the events that changed the lives and spaces of the imaginary characters. These things happened out of the ideal world of Alice's imagination, and Wonderland was a space purely evental.

3.2 MOVIES AND THEIR SPACES: WHY CHOOSE CINEMA?

> Comment tenter d'appréhender cette perspective intemporelle où coexistent l'avant et l'après, sinon comme un film? Mais un film dont le plan-séquence maintiendrait constamment l'origine et la fin…[235]
>
> Paul Virilio

Martina Leeker (2005) says of virtual reality: "Although these digital spaces are not 'real spaces', we refer to them bodily and they have an impact on our psycho-physis. As a forum of experience, communication, and information, they are integrated in daily life and contemporary culture as a reality comparable to that of space and time."[236]

Jill Stoner (2007) quotes Italo Calvino in the description of the imagination as a sort of movie inside our head: "This mental cinema is always at work in each one of us, and it always has been, even before the invention of the (technology of the) cinema."[237] This work's selection of cinematic space was in part influenced by Stoner's two forms of urban imagination in movies: "*Cinema* (sharing its etymology with *kinetic*) is the medium in motion, while *film* refers to its transparency. Both words oppose the solidity of buildings – the first challenges the stasis of architecture, the second its opacity."[238] In terms of representation, cinema might allegorise the fluidity and the evanescence of events in space. This research explores (urban) space through its events. Therefore, the

[235] Virilio, Paul. *Un paysage d'événements*. 9.

[236] Leeker, Martina. "Dancing the Digital: American and European visions of Digital Bodies in Digital Spaces" In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture,* 451.

[237] Italo Calvino, cited by Stoner, Jill. "Rain in the City" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City*, 219.

[238] Stoner, Jill. "Rain in the City" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City*, 219.

motion and transparency of movies are crucial for the assertion of both the occurrence and the juxtaposition of these events.

Al Sayyad argues that both the real and the reel in the twentieth century become mutually constitutive, and that "urban theory and theories of modernity may be greatly enhanced by using cinema as a critical medium of experience."[239] David Harvey says that cinema "has perhaps the most robust capacity to handle intertwining themes of space and time in instructive ways – the serial use of images, and the ability to cut back and forth across space and time…"[240]

Kevin Lynch (1972) says that our perceptual apparatus is limited, as we cannot "see" the development of a flower and many rapid movements of our changing world. He suggests the extension of our senses' reach by artificial means: "A film compresses twenty-four hours of city changes into three minutes, and a new world is revealed. . . . Films, photos, signs, diagrams . . . bring those invisible processes within everyone's grasp."[241] It would be hard to agree with the idea that the possibility of grasping what our senses cannot is what makes cinema useful for the exploration of space. As has been argued in the first chapter, the mobility and untenability of our world should be acknowledged as we assert the evental nature of space. The travel between reality and imagination is what renders film valuable as a tool for experiencing and studying space, not an accurate depiction. And it is precisely in the tension among the real, the fiction and the imaginary – the depicted space, the space of the movie and the space in the viewer's mind – that new possibilities for exploring space arise.

[239] AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real*, 4.

[240] Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1990, 308.

[241] Lynch, Kevin. *What Time is this Place?*, 187.

3.2.1 FRAGMENTATION, JUXTAPOSITION, MONTAGE

Michel Foucault (1986) describes the theatre as a *heterotopia* since it "is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible."[242] Juhani Pallasmaa (2001), as opposed to Lynch, sees in film less a way of overcoming the limitations of human perception than a possibility of offering them some play. "The two-dimensional imagery of cinema represents the three-dimensional and multi-sensory world" through the montage of separate experiential fragments to produce "an impression of continuous and real world."[243]

Here I must state the aim of this work, which is an affirmation of the evental character of places, rather than any intention of using cinema as a means to attain a full understanding of space and its fluidity. Our senses can only receive scattered pieces of space, and cinema evokes this with the fragmented views it offers. AlSayyad (2006) says that such fragmentation means it is only possible to know the world "in disjointed and chaotic ways,"[244] an acceptable condition for this exploration of space which not only acknowledges, but builds upon such *chaos*. "The screen and the lens become new modes through which the city is experienced and policed, leading to a *revision of point of view and a radical mutation of our perception of the world*."[245]

[242] Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces", *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 1986): 22-27.

[243] Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema*. Helsinki: Rakennustieto Oy, 2001, 14.

[244] AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real*, 9.

[245] AlSayyad, Nezar, after Paul Virilio. Idem.

3.2.2 THE CINEMATIC PATH

Movies were deemed a valuable tool for this exploration of space not only because of the depiction of spaces they offer. Such an understanding would be concerned solely with representational issues. This section draws upon some theorists who argue that the cinematic path is actually an architectonic one.

Pallasmaa (2001) states, after Walter Benjamin, that both cinema and architecture "imply a kinesthetic way of experiencing space, and images stored in our memory are embodied *and* [*sic: as?*] haptic images as much as retinal pictures."[246] [247] The architect brings forth Benjamin's long quoted comparison between the surgeon – who penetrates the body – and the cameraman, who penetrates space. The cameraman is opposed to the painter, who relates with space from a distance. But because of the nature of their connection with the subject, the work carried out by both the surgeon and the cameraman is "engaged with fragments."[248]

Giuliana Bruno says: "When the point of observation shifts into a sequence of viewpoints that create a geographical route, this is a filmic route."[249] Benjamin (1935) criticises the commanding depiction of the fragments in film's sequence of images. [250] Nonetheless it is precisely through these "prescriptive" captions that the cinematic path is constructed. Space is represented in the specific fragments chosen by the director in order to conduct the audience along a trajectory that is to be understood and contested

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[246] Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema*, 18.

[247] Giuliana Bruno explains: "Haptic refers to the sense of touch. . . . As a function of the skin, then, the haptic . . . constitutes the reciprocal con*tact* between the environment and us. It is by way of touch that we apprehend space, turning contact into communicative interface. As a sensory interaction, the haptic is also related to kinesthesis, or the ability of our bodies to sense their own movement in space." Bruno, Giuliana. "Haptic Space: Film and the Geography of Modernity" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City*, 13.

[248] Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema*, 18.

[249] Bruno, Giuliana. "Haptic Space: Film and the Geography of Modernity" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City*, 24.

[250] Benjamin, Walter (1935). "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproduction" (Third Version) In During, Simon (Ed.). *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007, 65.

in diverse ways. If the spectators were to *experience* the spaces from the movies by their own movement therein, the process would certainly be different. And it is these directive captions which give cinematic space the – still open – sense intended by the director. Furthermore, this space remains somewhat prone to appropriation (embodiment and reinvention) by the viewer according to the aforementioned argument on the openness of space in fiction by Fluck – the somatic transfer to which space invites.[251]

Film director and theorist Sergei Eisenstein says it is through *montage* that the fragments presented by cinema are linked in one point – the screen.[252] Nonetheless, I argue that this merging of pieces is merely representational because what renders the cinematic path spatial is precisely the fragmentation of its phenomena. And in spite of this fragmentation, the places remain connected – though not unified – by the traversal of the viewer. Bruno (1997) says that the spectatorial voyage[253], "architecturally constructed and diversified," is a matter of (dis)location.[254]

[251] Fluck, Winfried. "Imaginary Space; or, Space as Aesthetic Object" In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*, 38.

[252] "The word *path* is not used by chance. Nowadays it is the imaginary path followed by the eye and . . . the mind across a multiplicity of phenomena, far apart in time and space, gathered in a certain sequence; . . . and these diverse impressions pass in front of an immobile spectator." Sergei Eisenstein (1989), cited by Bruno, Giuliana. "Haptic Space: Film and the Geography of Modernity" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City*, 24.

[253] " . . . because of film's spatio-corporeal kinetics, the spectator is a *voyageur* rather than a *voyeur*. . . . The camera becomes the vehicle: it becomes, literally, a spectatorial means of transportation." Bruno, Guiliana. "Site-Seeing: Architecture and the Moving Image," *Wide Angle: A Film Quarterly of Theory, Criticism and Practice* 19 (4), October 1997: 10-6.

[254] Bruno, Guiliana. "Site-Seeing: Architecture and the Moving Image," *Wide Angle: A Film Quarterly of Theory, Criticism and Practice* 19 (4), October 1997: 13.

3.2.3 EVENTAL SPACE IN FILM

Finally, it is the eventual capturing of spaces in films that drove this research to study places through cinema. Bruno (1997), after de Certeau, says that filmic frames are transformed by "an open relation of movement to events. Not just vectors or directional arrows[,] . . . spatial practices[:] . . . veritable *plots.*"[255] As the viewer traverses the cinematic path, she is allowed to experience its diverse spaces through the events that she lives. The tip of these events has been caught by the camera, and as a whole they are experienced in the spectator's imagination.

Harvey suggests film and music as possible answers to Bergson's questions on how "spatializations in general, and aesthetic practices in particular, [can] represent flux and change . . . if these latter are held essential truths to be conveyed."[256] One of the reasons I chose cinema as a tool for this exploration of eventual space is, precisely, that cinema's nature is itself eventual. This, of course, does not only refer to the obvious eventual construction of spaces when watching a movie – the fact that the spectator grasps a place as she witnesses an event taking place therein. In fact, this work builds upon the contingency of the cinematic path, which Benjamin criticises as he says that the viewer is not even allowed a short time to reflect on what she has seen, because she is struck by a new image.[257] And it is precisely this untenable nature of film that allows this work to parallel cinema to the unpredictability and volatility of eventual space. Friedrich Nietzsche sees the world as "a monster of energy, without beginning, without end[;] . . . not a space that might be 'empty' here or there, but rather as a force throughout, as a play of forces and waves of forces[,] as a becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness . . . "[258]

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[255] Ibid., 18.

[256] Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 206-7.

[257] Benjamin, Walter (1935). "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproduction" (Third Version) In During, Simon (Ed.). *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007, 65.

[258] Friedrich Nietzsche (1968), cited by Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 274.

CHAPTER FOUR. *BABEL*: Causality

"Pain is universal . . . but so is hope."[259]

In *Babel*[260] Alejandro González Iñárritu and Guillermo Arriaga explore the tension between universal conditions of humanity and the particularities that constitute it. The biblical reference of the title stands for this complexity, but the movie attempts to show that the confusion and chaos depicted are less the product of the diversity of languages than the misunderstanding of othernesses and the contingencies of the world. This analysis of *Babel* is built upon this fluidity of existence and the ways events with the most complex relations can define space.

German philosopher Ernst Bloch says: "Not only does the man make his world, but the world makes the man."[261] The universals and particulars woven into the drama are engraved in – and conditioned by – the places of the movie, which are physically apart and remarkably different. *Babel* tells four stories. The sequence of each one is unaltered, but its narrative is constantly cut by the intermission of another one. Unlike other films, this travel from one story to another is not articulated by a "meanwhile." This fragmentation confuses the plot for a while, until the viewer understands the connections between the places of the movie. And it is precisely this juxtaposition of incidents which allows this chapter to assert that place is shaped by event.

The interwoven sequences tell four stories of people from very different geographies, related by a causal chain of incidents. Yussef and Ahmed are two

[259] Tagline of *Babel*.

[260] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

[261] Bloch, Ernst. "Formative Education, Engineering Form, Ornament" In Leach, Neil (Ed.). *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, 43.

Moroccan brothers who take their family's goats to graze on the hills every day. A man called Hassan Ibrahim sells their father a powerful rifle that is handed to the boys to kill jackals. As they play and challenge each other, Yussef aims at a tourist bus and takes a long-distance shot. He and Ahmed can see that someone has been hurt and run back home. The person who received the bullet is Susan, an American tourist traveling with her husband, Richard. Before the incident, the couple is shown to have a difficult relationship, and their trip is Richard's attempt to work out their differences – later the audience finds out that he had abandoned the family when their youngest child had passed away.

While the bus drives along the hills of Morocco, Susan is shot. As the bleeding does not stop, Anwar, the tourist guide, tells Richard that the closest place to take her is Tazarine, his village. There a local veterinarian sews up the wound while they wait for help. Richard's despair grows as political problems hamper the arrival of an ambulance and the rest of the tourists leave with the bus. The critical situation seems to bring the couple together, and a helicopter finally arrives and takes Susan to a hospital.

Yussef and Ahmed are forced to tell the truth to their father when Hassan Ibrahim leads the police to him. As the man decides to escape with his boys, Ahmed gets killed during a shooting between Yussef and the cops. Heartbroken by the death of his brother, the lad turns himself in.

The film shows two stories which at the beginning are hard to connect. The first starts with the depiction of an American home where the parents are on holiday and the children are cared for by Amelia, the housekeeper. With a phone call, she is told by the father – who the audience will later know is Richard – that she must stay longer because of an accident during the trip. After some attempts to get someone else to take care of Mike and Debbie, Amelia decides to take them to Mexico to her son's wedding. But as Santiago, her nephew, drives them all back, the American authorities demand the permission letter from the children's parents. A frenzied Santiago drives away from the inspection booth and breaks into the border of the United States. As they are chased, he drops off Amelia, Mike and Debbie in the desert and promises to get them later. The

following morning, lost and desperate, Amelia leaves the young siblings and walks away to get help. She comes back with a border officer, and cannot find them. Finally, she is told that the children were found alive, but that the US authorities have decided to deport her.

The other drama interwoven in *Babel* is the story of Chieko, a deaf-mute girl whose mother committed suicide and who lives with her father in a high-rise apartment in Tokyo. The teenager goes through pain and solitude as she refuses to connect with her father and fails to do so with males of her age. After a rough day, she calls Lieutenant Mamiya, a detective who has been looking for her father. At her home, she talks to him about her mother's death, and lies saying that she jumped off the balcony – she had actually shot herself. He then tells her that he needs to interrogate her father about something else, a rifle from his past hunting days. When the detective is about to leave, she takes off her clothes and tries to seduce him. Lieutenant Mamiya, disconcerted, resists, and Chieko breaks into tears. He consoles her, says goodbye and walks away. On his way out of the building, he runs into Mr. Wataya, Chieko's father, and asks him about the rifle. The man says he gave it to Hassan Ibrahim, his hunting guide in Morocco some time ago. As the audience understands the connection between this story and the other three, Mr. Wataya is shown coming into the apartment, where he seems unable to find the girl until he goes to the balcony. Probably expecting to see that Chieko has jumped, the spectator gets the father's view of the teenager naked, leaning on the handrail and watching the night cityscape. The final scene of the movie portrays a rapprochement between Chieko and Mr. Wataya as he hugs his crying daughter.

The fragmented presentation of the plot and the travel from place to place arguably spatialise the audience's imagination. This chapter will argue that event defines place as a causal relation of deeds traverses "different" spaces. There is a remarkable tension between the "difference" and "oneness" of these sites. The following pages analyse these qualities, at the same time defined and subverted by the incidents. The contingency of this world renders its various places at times bounded and specific, and at times homogenised.

4.1 DIFFERENTIATION OF PLACES

Babel metaphorises the distinct nature of all of its spaces in the *layering* of the places of its characters. Their stories develop at different "heights": Yussef and his family live on a hill in Morocco. Richard and Susan are American tourists who travel along this landscape, whereas their children, Mike and Debbie, await their arrival at home in the US. The story of these kids develops mostly "on the ground" – they go by car to the wedding in Mexico. Contrastingly, Chieko and her father live on the top floor of a high-rise building in Tokyo.

4.1.1 (Un)Rootedness

The different character of the places is introduced through the (un)rootedness shown by the individuals in the spaces of the narratives. The more alienated people feel, the stronger the contrast between their homeland and where they are. On the one hand there is Yussef and Ahmed, firmly rooted in the hills where their story unfolds. The case of Amelia depicts the ambiguity of an immigrant's condition: she is strongly attached to Mexico as the tight relationship with her family and her belonging to the place reveal, but she is also anchored in the US, which she regrets having to leave. She claims to have built a life in this country over 16 years.

Richard and Susan, as well as the tourists who accompany them, are clearly unfamiliar with the place where they are. Scenes of Morocco are mostly open-air, and the camera often makes horizontal moves to shoot the peculiar landscape where these Americans feel unrooted. Their unbelonging to this country contrasts significantly with the familiarity shown by Yussef and Ahmed in the outdoor scenes.

Music is used recurrently to emphasise the (un)rootedness of all characters, but the audio resources play a crucial role in the portrayal of Chieko's estrangement. The

milieux where the deaf teenager is shot are highly acoustic and the audio of many sequences switches between Chieko's mute perception and the world's noisy continuum. The banality of postmodern life draws an abyss between her and the world as she is shown to be unrooted from the very room of her house by the television shows she watches – she gets only the visuals of the advertisements that have sonorous messages of consumerism.

Chieko's top-floor apartment, bounded almost completely by glass, offers her a privileged view of the city. This panopticon turns the inhabitants of the place into *voyeurs*, "lifted out of the city's grasp."[262] In Michel de Certeau's words, "this panorama-city is a *theoretical* (that is, visual) simulacrum, in short a picture, whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices"[263] – the practices of living and walking down in the city. But Chieko rejects this advantaged view and leaves the pent-house as often as possible. Out on the streets with her friends, her desire is not that of observing, but of belonging to Tokyo. She strives to be one of the *walkers*: "the ordinary practitioners of the city."[264]

As she traverses the metropolis, the girl constantly manifests her nonconformity with the fragmented perception she has of everything (she seems to ignore that everybody grasps only fragments). She uses drugs in an attempt to get attached to the world, and shows profound happiness as she fragments this world "willingly," and has a shared vision of it with her new friends.[265] Captivated, Chieko observes the pieces of the city offered to her by the movement of the train. The windows of the vehicle allow her to see a synthesis of the urban space, and she becomes a *voyeuse* of the city from *the inside*. The *parcours* of the train, through a speeding showcase of Tokyo's sites (visibly fragmented), turns the girl into a *voyeuse/walker.*

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[262] De Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, 92.

[263] Ibid., 93.

[264] Idem.

[265] But the scene emphasises the illusory nature of this joy as, ironically, the youths' promenade through the city has a playful musical accompaniment.

But when Chieko is taken to a dance club, once more she finds herself unable to grasp the fragmentation. The arrangement of this place purposefully disorients its visitors, who cannot set a *legible* view of each other as in there the lights are not meant to clarify sights, but to confuse them. The dance floor is conceived as a plain space where the lack of elements to define it is outweighed by the positions of the dancers, clustered together and hardly able to traverse it. Their spontaneous position-taking renders the nightclub *evental* thanks to its open layout. Chieko feels estranged among the people who *think* they understand the place. Once again she ignores that they are drawn to it for the same reason she took the drugs: they fragment the world by a conscious decision, and they are attracted to reality's confusion and ungraspable nature, caricatured by the club.

The teenager's forceful coming back to her alienated condition is masterfully portrayed on her way home as she faces a collage of images of the blinding and noisy night life of her city. The urban spaces are revealed *open to any citizen*, but full of confusion and unable to bring its inhabitants together. Strangers walk through them and, in the midst of a chaotic, ungraspable milieu, they just tend to avoid each other. Again, the musical score of this scene foregrounds Chieko's unrootedness.

Chieko watches the city unravelling as the train moves. Still from *Babel.*[266]

[266] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

David Harvey (1990) quotes Frederic Jameson's view of the "spatial peculiarities of post-modernism as symptoms and expressions of a new and historically original dilemma, one that involves our insertion as individual subjects into a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities."[267] However, Harvey questions the uniqueness and newness of this experience[268] – not exclusive of this period. In *Babel* Tokyo shows itself as multiple places, differently perceived and contested by its inhabitants: it is the space where some feel having come to terms with its fragmentation; it is the space where Chieko resents her unbelonging; and it is the space that simultaneously embraces and estranges its citizens. This multiplicity of the urban landscape is emphasised during the girl's traversal of the city, and is supported by Lieutenant Mamiya. His walks across diverse sites of Tokyo reveal him as a character who happens to be both rooted and unrooted. In the movie he plays the role of the citizen who seemingly belongs to the metropolis but that in reality has continuous shifts from rootedness to estrangement. His nightly strolls allow us to see the city taken over by blinding advertisements, which during the day have been present but, during the night, overpower the very architectural elements of urban space and command people's directions. Day and night the city proves to estrange its own inhabitants with an overwhelming landscape of publicity. The metropolis no longer speaks to the individual, but to the consumer, and the citizen feels unrooted from her own territory, which leads her to avoid encounters with others on the vertical and horizontal surfaces of the city (ads and public plazas, respectively).

But as seen with Chieko, Tokyo at certain moments embraces its inhabitants, and we can observe a Lieutenant Mamiya who no longer wanders and now gets oriented by his city. He walks confidently to Chieko's apartment, guided by the streets, movement and signage of the urban centre. The ungraspable *multiple Tokyos* are

[267] Jameson, F., cited by Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1990, 304.

[268] Ibid., 305.

portrayed in their contingency but, more importantly, in their boundaries, which are simultaneously built and dissolved, being – or better said, becoming – at the same time many Tokyos and one Tokyo.

Tokyo. The battle between advertisements and architecture to direct the paths of citizens. Still from *Babel*.[269]

The gaze of the alienated becomes crucial for the depiction of the character's unbelonging. In one of the most powerful sequences, Mike and Debbie are driven across the Mexican border, where they are submerged into the unknown. Along their path the movie displays a collage of stereotypical images from the border city of Tijuana. Again, the music plays a key role, and the estrangement is splendidly transmitted as most of the visuals are shot from the children's perspective in the back seat of the car. As with Chieko's train voyage, the city speaks to the newcomer through the montage of its vistas as one drives the roads. Economically dependent on its visitors, Tijuana seeks to display on its streets the commodities it offers to those who traverse it: street vendors, open retail spaces, prostitutes. Mike and Debbie take in this unknown place.

[269] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

Mike looks from the backseat at the streets in Tijuana. Still from *Babel*.[270]

Similarly, Susan watches from the window of the bus a group of Moroccan women walk in their niqabs in the middle of the desert. After the accident, the other tourists' concept of the country of their holiday dramatically shifts to that of a dangerous place. The sequence of their entrance to the small town of Tazarine underpins their unrootedness as the images are taken from the inside of the vehicle. Richard carries Susan to Anwar's place and the rest of the group stays at an open ground at the edge of the village, from where they can see its intricate streets and alleys, a labyrinth that expresses itself hardly welcoming to visitors. Even the open space where they stand has entangled paths and is difficult to walk through. Estranged and fearful, the tourists remain therein as Tazarine seems unwilling to shelter them from the unbearable sunlight.

[270] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

Tazarine receives its visitors. Still from *Babel*.[271]

4.1.2 The Home

The houses of the four narratives play a crucial role in the depiction of the substantial differences among the places of *Babel*. Not only is their physical arrangement visibly dissimilar, but also is the way in which homes are re-created by the families and in which the spaces shape their very existence.

The architecture of Chieko's home is sheltering. The lobby of the building is transparent to the outside, but highly secured, and its spacious surface is dominated by the watchful eye of the receptionist. Likewise, the apartment visually opens to the exterior, but remains protective through the vertical distance it establishes with the "other" spaces. As aforementioned, Chieko rejects this protection as she desires to fuse with the sites from which her place attempts to defend her, so she remains little time therein. Also, her mother's suicide unrooted the girl from her dwelling (and from what has been left of the family, her father). For her, home is no longer a shelter, but a site of death, mourning and solitude. The girl's sequences inside it are introduced with pictures of what is no longer there: her childhood, moments shared with her mother, her father's

[271] Idem.

hunting days. Even the final scene shows a thoughtful Chieko rooted to the *outside* of the apartment as she looks at the cityscape from the terrace.

In this regard, Chieko's home is remarkably different from Yussef and Ahmed's, to which the Moroccan family is shown deeply attached in the scene where they share the dish at dinner. The stability of this place is broken after the boys' confession of the shooting. The architecture of the house is notably introverted: the existence of very few openings reveals that the space turns in on itself as the family is gathered therein.

Amelia's home in Mexico, like Chieko's, is presently shaped by the stories its photographs tell: not only about those who have passed away, but probably about those who left in the search for a "better" life. The family's territory erases its boundaries and welcomes outsiders as friends come to join the celebration of the marriage, open to the streets. The whole town gets reshaped by the event as its avenues open up for the wedding procession and many villagers take part of the festivity. The open site where the party takes place becomes everybody's home. This happens not only because it is physically shared by the guests, but also because many of them, by tradition of popular marriages, have contributed in the re-creation of the space: the *padrinos* collaborate with the conviviality – *padrinos* for music, *padrinos* for drink, *padrinos* for cake. The area enacts this "enlarged" home as a big outdoor kitchen works incessantly to provide the queuing guests with food as they gather to eat at numerous tables. The open place allows friends and family to move freely along its spaces, but the ephemerality of this shared home is portrayed at shots of the silent, empty site the following morning, where dogs eat what remains.

The home where Amelia works in the US is remarkably different. The layout of the house is open, but its eating, gathering, working and sleeping areas are clearly defined. The orderly place as well marks the boundaries between the spaces for the family and for the domestic worker: Amelia's bedroom is located apart, by the laundry room. The arrangement of the dwelling contrasts as well with the Moroccan home in its wide openings to the exterior. As opposed to Yussef and Ahmed's abode, it has areas for family gatherings both inside and outside (the swimming pool), connected visually

through a glass wall. Unlike the Moroccan house, Susan and Richard's is vastly furnished and clustered with household items. The pieces of furniture in Mike and Debbie's bedroom accommodate their many toys, belongings and pictures, whereas Yussef and Ahmed's chamber has only their sleeping mats, a few images on the wall and a gas lamp.

Ahmed and Yussef shelter in their bedroom after the shooting. Still from *Babel*.[272]

In spite of the evident physical differences, the American and Mexican houses show a shared condition: instability. Richard and Susan's place seems tense and vulnerable as it is only cared for by the babysitter. The situation of the home only worsens before the chance of losing one of its parental figures. Susan sees this as she makes her husband promise to take care of the children if she dies. The sole possibility of the home being left to the father, who fled in the past during a critical situation, is very hard for the mother, who knows that her death would dramatically change the place.

Amelia's house in Mexico is depicted as a joyful place where the family is united. However, it proves its instability as the woman's son says goodbye to her after the

[272] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

wedding, and announces that he might see her in the States if things “do not work out” in their own country. In spite of the tight family bonds within this home, it could be said that the place does not offer that shelter, that protection from the contingency of the world.

Instability and balance, as well as belonging and detachment, are qualities that homogenise the homes of *Babel* but that differentiate them at the level of their particularities. As will be mentioned, some characters resist this division as they attempt to intersect places.

The American home. Still from *Babel.*[273]

[273] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006

4.1.3 Boundaries

In the scene where the young couple is first shown on their vacation in Morocco, Susan asks Richard why they have gone there. “To be alone,” he says. “Alone,” she sceptically repeats as she gazes at the other tourists. Richard expects this distant place to bring him and his wife together. He sees this distinct environment as a better opportunity for their marriage to be rebuilt than their hometown has proven so far.

Just like Doreen Massey, Nezar AlSayyad (2006) ascribes the definition of a town not to its size or population, but to “specific relationships within the town and the relationship of the town to the outside.”[274] As described for Tokyo, the boundaries of all of the places in *Babel* are constantly defined, traversed, dissolved and reconstructed. Arguably, the behaviour of these boundaries is conditioned by the events, and *Babel* explores these transformations as they shape and are reshaped by othernesses, understanding of differences and human universals.

During the critical situation where Susan needs to be taken to a hospital, serious disagreements between US and Moroccan governments seem to close the boundaries of these countries. The American authorities blame terrorist cells in Moroccan territory for the accident, and are then not allowed to send a helicopter to get the young couple. The accident has brought about serious political complications; misunderstandings between “different” places reinforce frontiers. The heated declarations of political leaders are quickly communicated by the mass media. A tense situation is brought about by the closeness allowed by “time-space compression” – a term coined by David Harvey. In *The Condition of Postmodernity*, he explains it as: “processes that so revolutionize the objective qualities in quite radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves. . . . The history of capitalism has been characterized by speed-up in the pace of life, while so overcoming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inwards upon us. . . . Space appears to shrink to a ‘global village’ of telecommunications . . .”[275]

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[274] AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real*, 48.

[275] Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 241.

Harvey points out the geopolitical dangers that attach to the rapidity of time-space compression,[276] because the "easy" transition in our mental maps does not imply that political thinking will shift with such fluency. [277] As geographical boundaries are overcome by telecommunications, these latter accelerate the possibility of a clash of political positions and the creation of previously nonexistent barriers.

Babel shows the emergence of boundaries and the re-definition of places in critical situations. An exotic site for a holiday turns out to be full of threats for the tourists who travel along with Richard and Susan. They realise their estrangement with Morocco, and they create new barriers themselves once the "simulacrum"[278] of their touristic experience falls apart. But the place reacts as well. As aforementioned, when the group of tourists enters Tazarine, the boundaries of the village become evident. From the beginning its configuration alienates the newcomers: all of the houses show few openings to look inside, but are arranged around the space that receives the visitor. So villagers can look without being looked at. The entrances to Moroccan homes emphasise this condition as natives, sitting on the thresholds of closed doors, can observe the outsiders without exposing their spaces. The intention of the architecture is echoed by the reaction of the place. As Richard carries his wife toward Anwar's house, the buildings along the streets start to shut their openings, but the place keeps "exhibiting" the foreigners as their path is easily followed by the inhabitants. If Anwar were not guiding Richard's steps, the disoriented tourist would be confused by the intricate alleys of Tazarine, but he would still be regarded by its people. The exposure of the estranged gets to the point of allowing curious children to observe a terribly injured Susan inside Anwar's home. As the youngsters cluster by the entrance and windows of the place, the guide's grandmother has to scare them off and shut the openings.

[276] Ibid., 305.

[277] Idem.

[278] Harvey's term for the assembly of images that brings together different worlds to daily life, "in such a way as to conceal almost perfectly any trace of origin, of the labour processes that produced them, or of the social relations implicated in their production." Ibid., 300.

Curious children watch Susan from the outside of Anwar's house. Still from *Babel.*[279]

Also, the boundaries between the countries of the movies are metaphorised by the figure of the policeman. These characters are involved in all four stories and the distinct behaviour of the guardian of the places of the movie emphasises their differences. The violence with which the Moroccan policemen proceed is significantly different from the Japanese detectives' subtle ways. The Moroccan detective is allowed by its space to aggressively interrogate Hassan Ibrahim outdoors, whereas Lieutenant Mamiya reaches Mr. Wataya in private places to ask peacefully about the origin of the rifle.

Likewise, the absence of Mexican officers at the border contrasts with the strictness of the American authorities. The limits between these two countries are thoroughly explored in the movie.

[279] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

Moroccan detective beats up Hassan Ibrahim. Still from *Babel.*[280]

AlSayyad states a redefinition of the urban experience after the twentieth century rise of ethnic communities in the many cities of the First World. In it, "the hybrid postmodern spaces of the city based on new axes of identity and encounters of difference . . . [, nonetheless, do not] always encourage the celebratory pluralistic tendencies or multicultural practices synonymous with globalization. . . . Hybrid places do not always accommodate hybrid people, just as hybrid people do not always create hybrid places."[281] The barriers between US and Mexico have proven to have sudden shifts from porous to bluntly closed. In spite of their physical proximity, the countries are substantially different, not only in terms of shapes, but also of understandings. As Santiago drives Debbie and Mike across the Mexican border, the boy says that his mother has told him that this country is very dangerous. Santiago responds: "Yes, it's full of Mexicans," and laughs at Mike's confused look. Stephen Kern explains one of the responses to the postmodern condition as that of "a growing sense of unity among

[280] Idem.

[281] AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real*, 207.

people formerly isolated in distance and lack of communication."[282] He, nevertheless, points out the ambiguity of this situation as proximity also generates anxiety – "apprehension that the neighbours were seen as getting a bit too close."[283]

This anxiety is clearly reflected in the tightly closed borders of the United States. *Babel* provides a compelling portrayal of the very distinct nature of both sides of the frontier. It is completely permeable as one enters Mexico and strictly selective (supervised) toward the States. Among the collage of images presented at the entrance to Mexico, there is that of a "WANTED" sign on top of a couple of illegal immigrants. These "others" are considered hazardous once they are not in "their" place and move into "one's own". In the movie, the United States is the only country not depicted *as itself*.[284] Challenging physicality and its portrayal, *Babel* offers a tentative construction of the country as it is contextualised by its personae and its references, and supplemented by the viewer's imaginary.

The film explores the changing behaviour of boundaries. However, as it portrays their porosity, enclosure, elasticity, emergence, disappearance and redefinition, it affirms the tension resulting from the stretching of places beyond their geographical territory but these, in many respects, remain physically bound. Thanks to telecommunications, Richard can make a call to ensure that his home is secured by the housekeeper and can call for an ambulance. But still Rachel needs to be transferred to a hospital. Also, the rifle could be taken to a land far away from where it was bought and its misuse had effects that traversed boundaries beyond the imaginable. But when Mr. Wataya is informed of what happened with his weapon, he cannot know if Hassan Ibrahim, the man he gave it to, is okay. Arguably, time-space compression phenomena traverse

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[282] Kern, Stephen, cited by Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 270

[283] Idem.

[284] André Gardies' referential space, "whereby a film is geographically, socially and historically rooted." François Penz denotes it as "the city being itself." André Gardies, cited by Penz, François. "The City Being Itself? The case of Paris in *La Haine*" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City.* London and New York: Routledge, 2007, 46.

boundaries whose contingent behaviour might or might not allow an easy *way back*. As Harvey puts it: "The collapse of spatial barriers does not mean that the significance of space is decreasing."[285]

Babel foregrounds the differences and boundaries of places as all of the stories are related to flight. After the accident, Yussef's father, knowing that the authorities are looking for the culprits, deems it necessary to flee with the boys. Their whereabouts are no longer considered safe, and a distant place might provide them with the security they need. Susan reproaches Richard for having run off when their youngest child died, and their holiday is itself an escape from the couple's own home, full of sad memories. Amelia and Santiago break away from the threatening inspection booth. As well, her own economic condition forced her to leave her country years ago. Chieko's flight from a milieu that for years has proven to her hostile is both physical and psychological. If, according to Edward Casey (2009), travels bind spaces[286], those undertaken to flee have the opposite effect: they draw boundaries between one's own and the "other." The individual who flees seeks in the new space the security that "home" does not provide. Travels here prove to have an inverse effect of relating/dividing sites.

Places can as well prove unrelated to themselves or have multiple boundaries within a single spot. The accident makes a space construct boundaries with itself as the tourists on the "same" bus, estranged already from their Moroccan surroundings, become alienated with each other as they argue about where to go. To most of them, Tazarine is another dangerous town where the rest of them could be slaughtered, whereas, to Richard, it is the only place that could offer his wife a chance to survive. The discussion on where the bus should be driven makes the vehicle, as well, a conflicted site with multiple boundaries.

"Similar" people not understanding each other and creating barriers within the same place are also depicted in Chieko's story. Not only do individuals create these

[285] Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 293.

[286] Casey, Edward. *Getting back into place: Toward a renewed understanding of the place-world*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009 275-89.

barriers, but they turn a single space into many different spaces. Chieko is frequently portrayed in milieux where she is seen as an-"other." After the puzzled gaze of a boy who just realises that she is deaf-mute, she decides to become estranged "willingly". She then draws new barriers to the world which she "should" feel part of.

The contingent behaviour of boundaries is brought forth by *Babel* in the scene where Amelia tucks in Mike and Debbie. She has a soothing conversation with the children about their baby brother's death. Her explanation, articulated in Spanish, is responded to in English. Here, the simultaneous porosity and enclosure of places is compellingly synthesised as an understanding between them is attained but, at the same time, certain barriers are preserved: each understand the other's language, but sticks to her own and, in the end, Amelia remains in this ambiguous condition where she is *like* family, but not family truly. The architecture of the house simultaneously dictates and follows the dictation of her "difference," as she sleeps in a modest bedroom away from the space of the family.

Amelia talks to children at bedtime. Still from *Babel.*[287]

[287] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

This analysis of boundaries will conclude with the description of that created by *negative space*[288] in the film. The first chapter of this work quoted Martin Heidegger and his assertion of the possibility of experiencing a distant place when thinking of it (Heidelberg Bridge).[289] The space between the longing subject and the longed object – or place – has been argued as not containing, but dividing.[290] The characters of the movies miss those who are away and re-create the space that separates them. Richard and Susan are "trapped" in a Moroccan town whose layout estranges them with few openings and plain home spaces that contrast with the complex tracing of its streets. The couple thinks of their children, left back home, thousands of miles away. Richard telephones them in an attempt to overcome this barrier. As for the negative space between the couple and their dead child, Sammy, there is very little time-space compression can do. Here the boundary is insurmountable; it is the very space of existence. At the beginning of the movie, Richard and Susan are shown unable to understand each other and a negative space is drawn between them in spite of their physical proximity, a situation shared by Chieko and her father.

Similarly, the space which – existentially – separates Amelia from the kids she takes care of is reminded to her as she is at the American officer's desk. Although she made mistakes that endangered their lives, she explains her deep love for them: "Mike and Debbie are like my own children . . . " She is then abruptly told that they *are not* her children. This negative space is extended as she is not informed if they are okay and with the officer's final sentence of de-rooting her from the place where she belongs as a worker.

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[288] Poulet, Georges. *Proustian space*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, 43.

[289] Heidegger, Martin. *Basic writings from Being and time (1927) to The task of thinking (1964)*. London: Routledge, 1978, 334.

[290] Poulet, Georges. Loc. cit.

4.2 PLACES HOMOGENISATION

In his essay, “The Overexposed City,” Paul Virilio argues the change through which the notion of *limitation* has gone. Formerly conceived as a boundary, “the limitation of space has become commutation: the radical separation, the necessary crossing, the transit of a constant activity, the activity of incessant exchanges, the transfer between two environments and two substances. . . . The ‘boundary, or limiting surface’ has turned into an osmotic membrane, like a blotting pad.”[291] Policemen have been analysed as the figures that underpin the differences among places in *Babel*. However, their role is rendered ambivalent as they are also the characters who articulate these different spaces. Their participation in the narrative is crucial as they help reconstruct the causal relation of events among distant places (the Moroccan and Japanese polices). They are also spaces’ “gatekeepers”: at the same time the blunt boundary that hampers the intersection of places (the US border police), and the permeable limit that unites them (the Mexican border police). Their condition switches in a way as contingent and unpredictable as Lieutenant Mamiya’s rootedness and belonging in Tokyo. These characters also metaphorise the whimsical nature of boundaries. The policeman in *Babel* parallels Simmel’s *door*, which both separates and connects spaces: “The door reminds us that the bounded and boundaryless adjoin one another . . . as the possibility of permanent interchange. The door represents . . . how separating and connecting are only two sides of precisely the same act.”[292]

[291] Virilio, Paul. “The Overexposed City” In Leach, Neil (Ed.). *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, 385.

[292] Simmel, George. “Bridge and Door” (1994) In Leach, Neil (Ed.). *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, 65-7.

4.2.1 Time-Space Compression

> "Mass television ownership coupled with satellite communication makes it possible to experience a rush of images from different spaces almost simultaneously, collapsing the world's spaces into a series of images on a television screen."[293]
>
> David Harvey

Manuel Castells argues that "the global city phenomenon cannot be reduced to a few urban cores at the top of the hierarchy,"[294] and, according to Virilio, it is now possible to arrive at places without actually leaving one's own.[295] However, as it has been argued, time-space compression allows for overcoming certain barriers and does not for others.

Sabine Sielke's aforementioned argument on the shrinking of distances and its consequent possibility of sharing experiences from distant places is illustrated throughout the movie.[296] Along the sequences, there are certain turns where the stories relate by mass media. Susan and Richard's story is "all over the news." Also, as Chieko skips channels on the television, the news briefly show pictures of Yussef and his father, already arrested in Morocco. The girl, ignorant of her relation to these deeds, flips the channel, and only the audience can weave the stories together. Lieutenant Mamiya, in

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[293] Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 293.

[294] Castells, Manuel. "The Space of Flows." In *The Rise of the Network Society.* Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, 411.

[295] Virilio, Paul. "The Overexposed City" In Leach, Neil (Ed.). *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, 383-4.

[296] Sielke, Sabine. "Between, Beyond, Elsewhere: Mapping the Zones and Borderlands of Critical Discourse" In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 108-12. See also Chapter 1 of this work.

one of the last sequences, drinks *shōchū* at a restaurant and glances at the news of Susan's release from the hospital. This time the character might recognise the story, for he has been investigating the origin of the rifle. *Babel* "thins-out"[297] places and exposes the changing nature of their relations as it establishes among them links that follow a different path from the causal event connection of the beginning. The way in which the events initially related the places (the rifle's path) is not strictly followed by the "new" connections (mass media, telecommunications, and characters' traversal). Casey (2001) says that the surface of *thinned-out places* "is perforated, open to continual reshaping and reconnecting with other surfaces. . . . Programs on television or items on the Web melt away into each other as we switch channels or surf at leisure."[298]

However, time-space compression is a phenomenon with far more complexity than the mere transmission of images and messages. Amelia's migration to the States exemplifies the citizen movement that results from the processes of change of late capitalism. AlSayyad states: "While some [people] become increasingly connected via transport and telecommunications networks, others become increasingly disconnected and isolated. Most importantly, however, capital can freely move across this world, setting up new production facilities with the same ease as it abandons old ones, frequently depriving people of their livelihoods in one place while forcing them to migrate to others."[299] After Arjun Appadurai and Lothar Hönninghausen[300], Chapter 2 has argued that migration reshapes territories.

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[297] "Places become thinned-out and *merge with space*." Robert Sack (1997), cited by Casey, Edward. "Between Geography and Philosophy: What does it mean to Be in the Place-World?", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 91 (4), 2001: 684. "It is a matter of what has been called *glocalization,* whereby a given locale is linked to every other place in global space."

[298] Casey, Edward. "Between Geography and Philosophy: What does it mean to Be in the Place-World?", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 91 (4), 2001: 684.

[299] AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real*, 126.

[300] Hönninghausen, Lothar. "Where are We? Some Methodological Reflections on Space, Place, and Postmodern Reality" In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*, 45. See also Chapter 1 of this work.

The phenomenon of time-space compression and its reaches have led writers like Manuel Castells to argue that the fact that a city is not a form, but a process[301] is recent, and that this is probably just due to a "structural domination of the space of flows."[302] Time-space compression has undoubtedly accelerated many of the processes, but these processes are not exclusive of postmodernity. The definition of a place has always been subject to its relations to the outside, and these relations have existed long before mass communications and even Fordism and flexible accumulation. Time-space compression has turned out to be an accelerator of relations that would probably occur in different ways – in this case, relations of causality. But spaces reshaped by complex and unpredictable connections with other spaces have long existed. Space has always been evental.

4.2.2 Intersections

Places in *Babel* homogenise at distinct scales. For instance, the entire territory of Morocco is merged with the single spot where the accident happened. To the tourists, as well as to the US government, all the country is a dangerous space where terrorism reigns. As it has been argued, the fluid and contingent nature of places is portrayed in the movie as they are related initially by a causal series of events and, later, the spaces intersect by distinct paths. Each space has been reiteratively argued to be multiple spaces, not only because of various perceptions of it, but because of its becoming "an-other" as it intersects places outside, as well as its "own" identities.

[301] Castells, Manuel. "The Space of Flows." In *The Rise of the Network Society.* Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, 429.

[302] The author defines *flows* as: "purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors in the economic, political and symbolic structures of society. Castells, Manuel. "The Space of Flows." In *The Rise of the Network Society.* Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, 429.

According to Harvey, “uniqueness of place matters more than ever, ironically, because of the collapse of spatial barriers.”[303] As the tourists can travel to Morocco, they happen to realise the differences between this place and their own. Like their children in Mexico, Susan and Richard become aware of their physical and existential distance from home. The unfurnished, enclosed and bare Moroccan house differs with theirs in terms of shape, but it homogenises for a while with their place as it provides shelter from the threatening exterior – ironically, not enacted by villagers, but the group of tourists who pressure Richard to leave the town.

Still pictures play a crucial role in the homogenisation of places in the movie. As they connect with distant spaces, photographs reshape the very place where they are seen. The tourists who travel with Richard and Susan, while being driven along the Moroccan hills, look at their cameras and the pictures that will allow them to take back home the distant places they have visited.

Similarly, Chieko’s apartment is a site where images bring forth spaces that are not physically, but temporally far away – and, more importantly, no longer accessible. Richard and Amelia carry with them pictures of their beloved[304] in an attempt to overcome the space which separates them. In a Proustian manner[305], they try to bring their homes with them. Photographs also allow the viewer to connect places when no explicit reference is given by the narrative. The Moroccan and Japanese police can establish the connection between distant spaces and their events through the picture of Mr. Wataya’s hunting trip to Morocco. Finally, needless of a camera lens, a heartbroken Yussef observes the hill down which his dead brother is carried, and this landscape, very similar to that where they took their goats, brings back the memories of the playful moments with Ahmed.

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[303] Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 293-4.

[304] Richard carries them in his wallet and Amelia takes them to her bedroom.

[305] See Proustian space in Chapter 1.

Hassan Ibrahim shows the police officers his picture with Mr. Wataya. Still from *Babel*.[306]

In the previous section, homes were shown to portray the differences among sites but, similarly to the policemen, they have grounds where these distinct places merge: the bedrooms. In spite of their different appearances, bedrooms have a common quality: they are refuges. Mike and Debbie, in their shared space, find themselves protected from the fear of the unexpected death that took their baby brother away. Yussef and Ahmed hide together in their room as they dread the consequences of the shooting. When asked for a safe place to take Susan by a desperate Richard, Anwar decides to take them home, and in the bedroom where his grandmother awaits, the three of them feel protected. Amelia's decoration of her chambers at the house where she works brings her the security of her home. This arrangement gives the bedroom a particularity worth mentioning: it creates boundaries within the American house and it homogenises her home in the States with the one in Mexico.

[306] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

Ahmed offers Richard and Susan refuge in his place. Still from *Babel*.[307]

The stories in *Babel* are seemingly unrelated, and the initial lack of connection among them is emphasised by the stark contrasts of the movie. The hustle of the Mexican home differs significantly from the orderly, quiet Japanese apartment, as well as from the calm American house. Unlike the other dwellings, the Moroccan homes are enclosed and unfurnished. The small village of Tazarine appears calm until it is disrupted by the arrival of strangers. Also, the landing of the helicopter seems an event rarely seen in the town. Contrastingly, Tokyo reveals itself as an enormous, dynamic and crowded city, and its inhabitants are used to its intense rhythm.

In terms of events, in the movie the depiction of a space where a dramatic scene takes place is followed by that of a peaceful one – the sequence where Susan struggles not to receive painful stitches on her wound is followed by Chieko's silent wait at the dentist. Subsequently, the narrative reaches a climax where all the stories are at a critical point. This connects them although the viewer still ignores the relation: then the spaces are linked by the situation of crisis, before the causal connection among them is known. This resource is used in order to link the distant places in the audience's imagination, even if chronologically these "moments" did not intersect. They only did in

[307] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

human or *emotional time*.[308] The association of places grows stronger as the sequences in the movie are given shorter spans and with the final merge of scenes through the musical score. Overcoming the constraints of sequence, *Babel* unifies the places as the same musical piece is played along the closing scenes of the distinct stories.[309]

Before starting the analysis of the causal relation of events redefining places in *Babel*, it is important to point out specific cases of events shaping space. The analysis of this film builds upon a series of occurrences connecting "different" places. However, it is also important to point out that spaces relate to themselves and are reshaped – thus rendered multiple and contingent – by their own events.

[308] See Castell's timeless nature of places, Chapter 1 of this work. Castells, Manuel. "The Space of Flows." In *The Rise of the Network Society*, 495.

[309] However, this homogenisation is not total as the Morocco of the end of the movie is seen differently by the characters, it is multiple: Richard was given hope by the release of his wife, whereas Yussef sees his own place rendered sad from now on.

4.3 PARTICULAR PLACES DEFINED BY PARTICULAR EVENTS

Susan has told her child that Mexico is very dangerous. Like Morocco, this country was merged with its specific points of violence and the totality was redefined: crime from specific places rendered the whole country dangerous. AlSayyad states that in the symbolic modern space "the unresolved ambivalences about race and ethnicity lead to its polarization and its emergence as a place of discursive ambiguity."[310] Morocco and Mexico are redefined by their criminal events as much as by their people's "otherness."[311]

As it has been argued, the film shows that homes are reshaped by events: Chieko's home has been so after her mother's suicide, Yussef's is no longer safe after the accident, Susan's house would be dramatically changed if she dies, and Amelia's is redefined by the wedding as a new family is born. The multiplicity of place due to events is metaphorised in the remarkable contrast between the site during the wedding and immediately afterwards.

[310] AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real*, 207.

[311] In the movie, the Moroccan government resists these redefinitions: "Superficial evaluations cannot ruin our image or the economy." *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

The wedding in Mexico. Still from *Babel.*[312]

Chieko's apartment contrasts with the other spaces of *Babel* as it is frozen in the past. There are things going on in the present, but it receives its force from the past event as the layout of the place transforms itself through its photographs and the heads of animals from Mr. Wataya's bygone hunting days. Reluctant to be stuck in the past, the girl spends little time therein, as her disordered bedroom tells. Her mother committed suicide at her home and Chieko aims to transform the place once more with her own death. Her lie to Lieutenant Mamiya – she says that her mother jumped from the balcony – expresses this intention. Fortunately, Chieko also lies about this and decides not to end her life. However, the slow sequence where her father is entering the place allows the viewers to construct the event of Chieko's suicide in their imaginations. Multiple events then build and are built by the place before the movie shows what "really" happened, and this stands for the fact that subtle moves might change dramatically lived space.[313]

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[312] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

[313] Juhani Pallasmaa says: "A masterful artist makes the viewer/reader think, see and experience other things than what he/she is actually being exposed to. . . . The value of a great film is not in the images projected in front of our eyes, but in the images and feelings that the film entices from our soul."Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema*. Helsinki: Rakennustieto Oy, 2001, 35.

Chieko's father finds her on the balcony. Still from *Babel.*[314]

It is important to return to the argument of Chapter 2 about the mutual definition between place and event. Events shape space but they only take place in this way because of the particularities of space. *Babel* illustrates the way in which specific qualities of places set the conditions for events to develop as they do, and the mutual shaping between event and space is cyclical and endless. As Doreen Massey has it: "The spatial organization of society is . . . integral to the production of the social, and not merely its result."[315] We will now go back to the differentiation/homogenisation of places brought about in a broader scale by the causal relation of events in the shaping of space.

[314] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

[315] Massey, Doreen. *Space, place, and gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, 4.

4.4 EVENTS

According to Massey (1994), a place is not limited within itself as its particular mix of relations "stretch beyond – the global as part of what constitutes the local, the outside as part of the inside."[316] Julia Kursell and Armin Schäfer (2005) denote the evental nature of space as they assert that "a transformation of space is not effected by changing its elements, but by changing the relations between these elements."[317]

As in Proustian space the lack of a topographical continuity[318] is traversed by memory, the distant – and also topographically discontinuous – places of *Babel* are connected by the events. Georges Poulet argues that the ways of places touch, and the intervals that separate them disappear by the passing of (imaginary or real) travelers.[319] Similarly, Edward Casey states that "journeys are not just travels in time or across space," but argues the mutual constitution between places and journeys.[320] However, his account is based on *human* journeys. And although people's movements through space allowed events to develop as they did, the film proves that events at some point acquire a much faster movement, out of the control and understanding of the individuals that caused them. They seem to have taken on a life of their own. To Casey the linking of places is due to bodies' traveling between places;[321] Virilio argues it is because of their relations; and this research intends to *third*[322] these stances as it proposes *event* not only as a link, but as a creator of place.

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[316] Ibid., 5.

[317] Kursell, Julia and Schäfer, Armin. "Slow spaces: Remarks on the Music of John Cage" In Benesch, K. and Schmidit K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 485.

[318] Poulet, Georges. *Proustian space*, 19.

[319] Ibid., 76.

[320] Casey, Edward. *Getting back into place: Toward a renewed understanding of the place-world*, 289.

[321] Ibid., 326.

[322] See Soja's "thirding-as-Othering" in Chapter 1. Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1996, 10, 60-1

4.1.1 Causality

Yussef. Still from *Babel.*[323]

The rifle – a vehicle for causal connection – is the main character of the movie and at some point hiding it is believed to be the only solution to the chaos it brought about. Its power is synthesised in the very attempt to give it a non-place to *undo* what happened. After Frederic Jameson, David Harvey states: " 'the truth of experience no longer coincides with the place in which it takes place,' but is spread-eagled across the worlds' spaces."[324] Each event that results from the previous one proves the instantaneous linking of spaces. A superficial assessment would lead us to assert that an event can only link two places (where it arose and where it had an impact). However, in the essence of the single event lies its *real* definition, the fact that it was not a series, but an indescribable web of occurrences that constituted it, not only in the past, but also in its future results, which, not yet materialised, exist (as a possibility). Embedded in each event are the converging deeds (and their spaces) that brought it to reality.

This complexity that relates dislocated spaces and times in the past, present and future, is introduced in the film through the presentation of the "results," and the need to

[323] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

[324] Jameson, cited by Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 261.

dig into the relations among places to find the "causes." The spatial navigation toward the cause follows a path chronologically inverse to that of the series of events – as a police investigation will work: reversed entropy. It is not until the final sequences that the viewer is able to establish the associations and *freely* move back and forth along the spaces. However, this cognitive connection follows strictly the path of the events (even if in an inverse direction); and *Babel* explores the many other grounds in which the places and new events will touch. Once reshaped by an event, space will allow new intersections with itself and with other spaces in ways different than the initial.

Events are shown in the movie not to articulate only the spaces of the cause and the consequence, but also those where the cause of a certain event was the consequence of others and so forth. Alejandro González Iñárritu has asserted his intention to explore the complexity of space, chaos and the "butterfly effect." As Kwinter has it, "the event is a principle of individuation, indeed *the* principle of individuation in a nature understood as complex and dynamic – it divides, limits, but especially produces."[325] The narrative and the cinematographic resources used in *Babel* give a compelling portrayal of this complexity, but they have had to limit their story to a somewhat linear chain of events. The totality of effects of a single happening would be, nonetheless, impossible to describe. Moreover, the causal relation goes beyond what our time-bound perception can grasp. Alev Adil states: "The city is haunted by its screen memories, histories that the films forgot."[326]

Even if *Babel*'s stories are fragmented to give some sense of "order," the time relation between events remains ambiguous (as has been said, events are not related by a "meanwhile"), and this, far from backgrounding time, underpins time and space's contingency. The causal chain of events traverses distant places and redefines them. It

[325] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, 48.

[326] Adil, Alev. "Longing and (Un)belonging: Displacement and Desire in the Cinematic City." Paper from the Conference *INTER: A European Cultural Studies Conference in Sweden*, organised by the Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden (ACSIS) in Norrköping 11-13 June 2007. Conference Proceedings published by Linköping University Electronic Press.

makes them intersect, dissolve or close their boundaries, reshape their inner and outer conditions, and allow reconstruction of and by their individuals and relations. The evental nature of the places probed in this analysis undoubtedly builds upon human experience and agency on space. Nonetheless, events out of human influence and understanding prove to define *many* places. As has been said, the multiplicity of space depends on the many ways in which it is experienced.[327] Nonetheless, this multiplicity also arises from its constant reshaping by contingent events. The mobility of space stands against any attempt to conceptualise it in a totality, or to say that a single total space is constituted by many "smaller" spaces. Places' boundaries dissolve, spaces merge with each other, new boundaries emerge, a single place with no boundaries is many spaces as an event occurs and is (or is not) experienced. Spaces intersect, they become what they were not, they are no longer what they were and in their fluidity lies their "will be," the essence of their *becoming-ever-different*.[328] In Sanford Kwinter's words, it is the "ever-fresh endowment that affirms a radical incommensurability between what happens at any given instant and what follows."[329]

Babel offers an insightful portrayal of the physical differences among its places. Nevertheless, what must be acknowledged in our assertion of the event redrawing these boundaries and juxtaposing spaces is that this series of events takes the shape it does due to the conditions of the sites. The atmospheres, the complex "intangible" relations and the incidents existed as shaped by – and simultaneously shapers of – the architecture of their places. The somewhat "static" built form proved an evental nature as it changed its behaviour: the visitor-hostile architecture of Tazarine eventually became a shelter for Richard and Susan. Likewise, the confusing streets of Tokyo at some point guide its citizens (Chieko and Lieutenant Mamiya). The space of the American home closes its boundaries every night as its doors set apart the housekeeper

[327] See Chapter 1.

[328] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, 5.

[329] Idem.

from the family. The frozen space of Chieko's apartment relates once more to the present and the future as the balcony brings father and daughter together. As well, it connects to the spaces from which it rises up through the balcony, at the unsaid promise of an attachment of the family to their present world. The architecture of the Mexican home opens and closes its boundaries at the beginning and end of the wedding.

One of the concluding sequences of the film shows a grateful Chieko handing a message to Lieutenant Mamiya, which the audience will never read. Its contents remain open-ended, just like the spaces of the movie and the events of the lives of its characters. In the final scene the camera, focusing on Chieko and her father, moves away from them as the cityscape fills the screen. The two figures are blurred in the distance and metaphorise the evanescence of space, underlining how once we understand a fragment of the place, it no longer exists.

The camera moves away from the father holding his daughter. Still from *Babel*.[330]

[330] *Babel*, DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Paramount Pictures and Paramount Vantage, 2006.

CHAPTER FIVE. *AMORES PERROS*: The single event

Amores Perros[331] (2000) is the first film from the trilogy[332] where director Alejandro González Iñárritu and writer Guillermo Arriaga explore a complex series of events with their causes and outcomes reshaping the lives of people who move in different geographies.

Amores Perros is divided into three parts: "Octavio y Susana," "Daniel y Valeria" and "El Chivo y Maru." Three conflicting love stories develop simultaneously in the "same" place: Mexico City. Each narrative follows the account of its main characters, but it takes sudden turns allowing the audience to peek at the other two dramas. The fragmentation of the sequences parallels that of the metropolis, which reveals itself as a layered geography where citizens from distinct social status do not share a physical space within the same city. AlSayyad (2006), after Mike Davis, argues that the "fortress mentality" that characterises cities like Los Angeles, "destroys any possibility of creating public space . . . [and] takes class separation to architectural and spatial extremes[:] . . . the city of defensible spaces."[333] Furthermore, he says: "[N]ew modernity is devoid of class encounter; instead, each class has created its own city within a city."[334]

Mexico City offers its inhabitants of different social conditions few grounds for encounter. The event is the phenomenon which links the *multiple cities* that exist within the territory of the most populated urban center. The first part of *Amores Perros*, "Octavio y Susana," tells the story of Octavio, a working class youth who enters the

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[331] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

[332] *Amores Perros* was released in 2000, *21 Grams* in 2003, and *Babel* in 2006. Director of Photography Rodrigo Prieto participated in the three movies.

[333] AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real.* London and New York: Routledge, 2006, 10.

[334] Ibid., 13.

underworld of dog fighting in order to raise money to flee with his brother's wife, Susana. González Iñárritu interprets this plan as an intention of assuming the role of the "man of the house,"[335] which the boy has been denied by the mother who prefers the eldest son, Ramiro. This narrative is distinguished by intense and violent sequences, which contrasts with the following drama, "Daniel y Valeria," where a couple starts living together after Daniel, a middle-class advertising executive, leaves his family for a younger Spanish model. These characters have an early confrontation with the conflicts of a worn-out marriage after Valeria's path collides with Octavio's through an archetypal urban event: a violent car crash while the boy flees from enemies of the dog fighting business. Having just started cohabitation, the couple enters a crisis as Valeria goes through solitude, despair and, eventually, paranoia, as she is confined to her new apartment in a wheelchair as part of the recovery for her injured leg. Her situation worsens as her dog, Richie, gets lost in a hole under the wooden floor. Valeria starts having fierce fights with Daniel as she sees that he does not understand her misery or that of her trapped pet.

The third drama is introduced along the lines of the first two through short captions of a silent character who wanders the streets with a pack of dogs and works as a hit man. "El Chivo" is a former professor who left his daughter and wife to become a "guerrillero," and was imprisoned for 20 years. He now refuses any contact with society, living in solitude with a new family: his dogs. He witnesses the car crash and rescues Octavio's dog, Cofi, who was lying on the back seat of the vehicle after having been shot at its last fight. Once recovered, the animal massacres Chivo's dogs. As he mourns the loss of his family, Chivo understands the horrors of his own murders.[336] He decides to leave his life as a killer and to pursue an indirect encounter with his long-missed daughter, Maru.

[335] Commentary by director (2006). *Amores Perros*, DVD.

[336] Commentary by director (2006). *Amores Perros*, DVD.

5.1 MULTIPLICITY

> "The city is a phenomenon that exceeds all our capacity of description, representation and recording and, consequently, it is always experientially infinite."[337]
>
> Juhani Pallasmaa

5.1.1 Gazes

Each individual lives within her own city. After Lefebvre, AlSayyad (2006) argues that the multiplicity of the space produced in the city "creates a phenomenally diverse urban landscape, in which the eyes of one spectator can see the city as a jungle of decay and disease, while another may view it as a playground of creativity."[338] Arguably, the views of the inhabitants of an urban centre determine not only these multiple cities, but also the way in which citizens move through, recreate and are recreated by their space.

David Harvey (1990) states that the concept of space can be diverse "within outwardly homogeneous populations."[339] AlSayyad says that the "postmodern city offers varied cultural and spatial experiences and no single unified vision."[340] We could cast doubt upon the exclusivity of this condition to postmodernity, but what is important is that not only is the space given varied meanings by people; space itself establishes identities and possibilities. "El Chivo" wanders the city. He could be considered a *flâneur*[341], but

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[337] Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema*. Helsinki: Rakennustieto Oy, 2001, 21.

[338] AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real,* 169-70.

[339] Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1990, 203.

[340] AlSayyad, Nezar. Op. cit., 123.

[341] According to Benjamin, "the man of the crowd is no *flâneur*," but he (Baudelaire assumed a male *flâneur*) moves with skill and ease among the crowd. "The *flâneur* is still on the threshold, of the city as of the bourgeois class. Neither has yet engulfed him; in neither is he at home. He seeks refuge in the crowd."

not only does he have zero interaction with the crowd; his vagrant appearance makes him invisible wherever he goes. He is a *voyeur*. According to AlSayyad, the *voyeur* "no longer occupies the spaces he observes, but remains physically remote. . . . Although the city is exposed to him, he gains power by retreating into the panopticon's opaque centre."[342] The condition of invisibility and ubiquity allows individuals like "El Chivo" to better understand the city, the "other world" he examines during his strolls or through the newspaper.

Octavio embodies the subject who physically remains as a *blasé*.[343] He traverses the urban space strictly following the paths that the city "dictates" corresponding to his (social) condition. However, his ideas of escape reveal his gaze and attitude as resistant. Contrastingly, Valeria is a figure who finds in spectacle the freedom to move around the spaces of the metropolis through the ubiquity of her image. She is the icon of the pervasive publicity of a perfume. The model is the observed individual who certainly ignores who looks at her or the places from where she is regarded. Her image in the advertisement has more mobility than she does even before the accident. Once this happens, her metaphoric captivity becomes a physical one, and she must gaze at the city from a single place, only through the windows of the apartment and through images in magazines.

Benjamin, Walter. "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1973) and "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" (1978) In In Leach, Neil (Ed.). *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, 26-37. Valentine says that the *flâneur*, indifferent to the pace of modern life, enjoyed strolling anonymously around the streets in the role of an urban (male) onlooker, voyeuristically taking in the spectacle of city life but not participating in it." Valentine, Gill. *Social Geographies: Space and Society*. New York: Prentice Hall, 2001, 225.

[342] Again, the voyeur is thought of as a male citizen. AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real*, 148.

[343] The "incapacity to react to new stimulations with the required amount of energy constitutes that blasé attitude. . . . The essence of the blasé attitude is an indifference toward the distinctions between things. . . . They appear to the blasé person as homogeneous, flat and grey colour with no one of them worthy of being preferred to another." Simmel, George. "The Metropolis and Mental Life" In Leach, Neil (Ed.). *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, 73.

5.1.2 The Layered City

"[Locality is] primarily relational and contextual rather than . . . scalar or spatial."[344]

Arjun Appadurai

Amores Perros was not shot in sets. Filmed in real locations both in the streets of Mexico City and in houses of its different social strata, the spaces of the movie could be denoted as *referential*: "whereby a film is geographically, socially and historically rooted."[345] As François Penz has it, "the city being itself."[346] This condition is crucial for the argument on the multiplicity of places within the "same" topographic space.

David Harvey (1990) says: "Symbolic orderings of space and time provide a framework for experience through which we learn who or what we are in society."[347] *Amores Perros* depicts urban dwellers' apprehension of their own spaces, and the way in which spatial configurations communicate to them their meaning as individuals and their potential for interaction and movement. The movie reveals the inhabitants of the city as simultaneously adopting a *blasé* attitude and resisting their confinement into specific geographies.

Gill Valentine (2001) says that although the street "has been romanticized and celebrated as a site of political action, an environment for unmediated encounters with strangers, and a place of inclusiveness,"[348] public space has been shaped to insulate

[344] Arjun Appadurai, cited by Hönninghausen, Lothar. "Where are We? Some Methodological Reflections on Space, Place, and Postmodern Reality" In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 45.

[345] André Gardies, cited by Penz, François. "The City Being Itself? The case of Paris in *La Haine*" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City.* London and New York: Routledge, 2007, 46.

[346] Idem.

[347] Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 214.

[348] Valentine, Gill. *Social Geographies: Space and Society*. New York: Prentice Hall, 2001, 169.

'othernesses.'[349] Mexico is revealed as a layered city as its inhabitants move through specific geographies, which are dictated by – and also dictators of – their social class. Different denizens share *one* urban territory and yet have no grounds of contact. The same geographic space has then multiple cities, each with a firm boundary that remains unseen until it is transgressed. Valentine cites Tim Cresswell's exposition of "the way that these normative landscapes are often 'taken for granted,' only becoming apparent when they are disrupted."[350] For instance, "El Chivo" leaves his invisibility outside a video centre. He approaches and points a weapon at the waist of Luis Miranda, an affluent subject whom the ex-"guerrillero" has been paid to kill. The scoundrel had remained unnoticed as he followed the path of the high-class man. And then not only does his menacing gun disrupt the victim, but also does Chivo's transgression of limits, his rapprochement toward the bodily space of the wealthier man. Similarly, a "public space" such as a restaurant, is denied by society to someone with Chivo's looks. But he breaks into it also through violence as he shoots an entrepreneur from the outside.

As has been mentioned, Castells says: "space is the expression of society."[351] The film portrays numerous spaces within Mexico City. After Gaston Bachelard, Juhani Pallasmaa describes director Tarkovsky's characters as they "do not appear as persons on an architectural stage; the space and the characters have been cast in the very same matter."[352] Likewise, the architecture of *Amores Perros fuses* with its characters. At a particular level, González Iñárritu and Rodrigo Prieto[353] capture individual's moods in the colours and lighting of places. But, most importantly, they denote personae through the physical configuration of their geographies. Edward Casey says that place has

[349] Idem.

[350] Ibid., 5.

[351] Castells, Manuel. "The Space of Flows." In *The Rise of the Network Society.* Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, 441.

[352] Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema*, 29.

[353] Director of Photography.

absorptive virtues.[354] The distinct morphology of spaces shown in *Amores Perros* foregrounds the differences among the inhabitants of the *many* Mexico Cities.

Octavio's path unravels along a violent, decadent city. The boy's scenes show the confinement of his stratum to a space that offers no security, but that proves to be all that people have to hold on to. The central patio where the dog fights take place belongs to a house whose family will no longer use this area for child play and recreation, but for money-making through an illegal activity and through the "invasion" of private space by strangers: dealers and clients. The enclosed layout of the dwelling makes it suitable for the outlawed practice of dog fighting. Its introversion dictates the paths of individuals along the corridors that surround the courtyard, from which the owner has visual control.

Dogfights in the courtyard. Still from *Amores Perros*.[355]

[354] Casey, Edward. *Getting back into place: Toward a renewed understanding of the place-world*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009, xxiv.

[355] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

The deteriorated architecture of the place metaphorises that of – all levels of – society, prone to fall into crime and betrayal. The blunt boundaries of this city come forth as Octavio climbs to the rooftop with the owner of the business, from which one can see a landscape clustered with houses very similar to the one where they are. Octavio's rival, "Jarocho", proposes revenge at another dwelling, with an enclosed space which offers the same protection from the "policed" outside. Cofi's last fight then takes place inside the empty pool of a run-down middle-class house. This site lacks openings and its confined aisles lock up Octavio and his friend among their enemies.

The city, through its vast surfaces for publicity on (the walls and tops of) buildings, makes Valeria's feminine image accessible – unlike the person herself. The model's geographies are quite distinct from those of her ubiquitous advertisements. Valeria is invited to television shows where she intends to disguise her personal affairs. As a result of her overexposure as a figure of spectacle, she creates a fake romance with another television star in order to conceal her relationship with Daniel, and the "invasion" of his family home. These two realities underline the topographic divide between her and the crowds: she and her false boyfriend are to be recognised at public places. The architecture of Valeria's whereabouts carries out this separation as the television studio – like the programme itself – allows the crowds only visual contact with the celebrities through an insurmountable railing along the edge of the parking lot.

Valeria's space intersects with Octavio's before the accident as the show on which she is a guest is playing on the TV set in his bedroom. The film emphasises the dissimilarities between their worlds at the static shot of the room. The space of spectacle where the model chats with the presenters of "Gente de Hoy" simulates a comfortable living room. Tables with flower vases and lamps are arranged near couches for speakers who do not face each other, but rather the camera. This shot remains still long enough for the audience to inspect the distinct layout of Octavio's boyish, working-class bedroom, where stickers and plastic figures are clustered on the shelves by his desk. The lived spaces as well differ notably: the teenager is in a critical situation collecting money for the last bet while Valeria speaks superficially about her dog on the show. After Fawell, AlSayyad (2006) asserts that the camera "can replace the face-to-face

interaction . . . [which] occurs across the medium of the cinema and the screen. . . . [L]ives [are] lived next to each other without touching."[356] Time-space compression here proves not only to fail to link places, but also to underline their divide, the *unreachable* condition that one has with regard to the other. As will be argued, the event will actually relate these otherwise never-touching geographies.

Octavio and Valeria's spaces touch few hours before the accident. Still from *Amores Perros*.[357]

The places of "El Chivo" would seem at first glance very similar to Octavio's. He moves through the city looking like a homeless man, and he shapes the space himself by committing murders in public. "El Chivo" is the only character in the film who traverses the different layers of the city. He does this through his invisibility, unattainable to the other individuals who "belong" to a determined stratum. The man is invisible because, in spite of being where society does not expect him to be, it is assumed that there is nowhere where vagrants "should be", so he just gets ignored. His *voyeur* condition allows him to look at the city that does not look back. He only becomes noticed when it is inevitable – after shooting victims in crowded places, but he manages that through flight. His "homeless cart" also gives him freedom. Valentine (2001), after Neil Smith, gives account of the *jumping* of scales vagabonds achieve through this means:

[356] After John Fawell, AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real*, 166.

[357] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

"The mobility afforded by the Homeless Vehicle . . . enables homeless people to carve out a space for themselves within the exclusionary landscape of the city and to challenge definitions of *community*."[358] Moreover, through this cart the city opens its streets to him better than to other denizens as the man can move along either pedestrian or vehicular space. Chivo uses his mobility through the layers of the city to penetrate the spaces of characters from the privileged class. A man called Gustavo M. Garfias hires Chivo to kill his partner, who turns out to be Gustavo's half brother. The target's name is Luis Miranda, whose path as a wealthy urban dweller is surreptitiously followed by Chivo outside a highly-secured corporate building, a restaurant and a hotel. In the three stories of *Amores Perros*, as in *Babel*, the figure of authority plays the role of articulator. The corrupted policeman who acts as a medium between Chivo and his clients embodies the liminal condition of Mexican "judiciales," who are simultaneously the guardians and the threats of urban space: the very thresholds between the invigilated and the criminal city.

"El Chivo" traverses the city with his homeless vehicle. Still from *Amores Perros.*[359]

[358] Valentine, Gill, after Neil Smith. *Social Geographies: Space and Society*, 9.

[359] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

Benedict Anderson (1983) says that nations are "imagined because the members of even the smallest . . . will never know their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each they carry the image of their communion."[360] Because of the difference among individuals, the layers of the city they inhabit do not touch physically – they will prove to do it through the event, though. However, the multiplicity of the urban centre shows not to be reduced to the levels described so far. Instead, each layer is layered itself in many ways. One of these is shown in *Amores Perros* as reality and pretence. In the movie, the working class drifts between the legal and illegal geographies of the city (it is certainly not exclusive of that stratum), while the middle class totters along its spaces of spectacle and family life; and the upper class is portrayed in-between the layer of family bonds, and that of rivalry and greed.

5.1.3 The Homes

Amores Perros transmits the atmosphere of its places through long-sequence shots, to attain an "immersive feel" among the viewers. According to Penz, this strategy "allows the audience to experience the space in real time, to get a feel for the topology of the place, its levels, its thresholds."[361] Moreover, the varied *parcours* along the spaces of *Amores Perros feel real* through their capturing with Rodrigo Prieto's hand-held camera. The diverse landscapes of the inhabitants of Mexico City are depicted in the movie through sequences shot on the streets and in their houses. The role of these urban spaces thus becomes crucial for the exploration of the layered city.

Valentine (2001) states: "The home is not just a three-dimensional structure, a shelter, but it is also a matrix of social relations . . . and has wider symbolic and

[360] Benedict Anderson, cited by Valentine, Gill, after Neil Smith. *Social Geographies: Space and Society*, 296.

[361] Penz describes the successful portrayal of Paris in Kassovitz's *La Haine.* The director "tried to achieve a documentary feel [of Paris' *banlieues* and central area], harder to get from the classic shot-reverse-shot continuity editing mode." Penz, François. "The City Being Itself? The case of Paris in *La Haine*" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City*, 151.

ideological meanings."[362] Although their physical arrangement is visibly different, the homes of *Amores Perros* enact the similar conflictive atmospheres in the spaces of families. González Iñárritu and Arriaga state that they purposefully contrasted scenes with physical violence (like the numerous abuses of Ramiro toward Susana and Octavio) with scenes where "calm" activities take place. Among their aims was, nonetheless, the paralleling of the tense ambiances of these milieux.[363] As a case in point, during the "peaceful" sequences in Daniel's home before the divorce, there is a silent but hard struggle with his wife because of monotony. In the movie, the kitchen is depicted as the main battleground, as much of the time is shared by the family therein. Laura Podalsky (2006) states that in the stories of *Amores Perros*, "the home is not an escape from the violence of the outside world", but the very site of hostile actions.[364] Like *Babel*, the story explores the universals and particularities of the human condition: its spaces are physically different but they have common atmospheres of rivalry, battle, solitude, yearning, longing, regret, and forgiveness.

The material dissimilarity among the houses stands for the separate worlds of individuals. Octavio's unmaintained place reveals the economic restrictions of a working-class family. The spatial constraint of the dwellers of the house portrays the social situation of popular Mexican homes, which *must* accommodate the growing family: Susana and Ramiro live at his mother's house, and the cradle for the baby is pushed into a corner of their bedroom. This indeed multiplies the grounds of conflict among people with no blood relation: the in-laws. The constant need to rearrange the dwellings to fit more people results in dark sleeping spaces and "asphyxiated" common areas.

[362] Valentine, Gill. *Social Geographies: Space and Society*. New York: Prentice Hall, 2001, 63.

[363] Commentary by director and writer (2006). *Amores Perros*, DVD.

[364] Podalsky, Laura. "Affecting Legacies: historical memory and contemporary structures of feeling in *Madagascar* and *Amores Perros*" In Grant, Catherine and Kuhn, Annette (Eds.). *Screening World Cinema: A Screen Reader*. London: Routledge, 2006, 202.

Octavio's kitchen. Still from *Amores Perros*.[365]

The layout of Octavio's place contrasts with Daniel's: the house with his ex-wife and the place with Valeria look renovated and full of light. His new apartment accommodates few, selected pieces of furniture and a minimalist decoration, as opposed to Octavio's home, crowded with objects of all kinds. Daniel's middle-class condition becomes clear, nonetheless, as he admits his inability to afford fixing the wooden floor, and as he refuses to break it to rescue Richie.

Valeria in her new apartment. Still from *Amores Perros*.[366]

[365] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

"El Chivo" dwells in a derelict house, crammed with abandoned objects. The place has been purposefully left to be consumed by time as the man intends to freeze the few things he has left from his past life: a photo album and a portrait of his daughter as a baby. Unlike the homes described above, Chivo's place lacks movement. The solitary inhabitant of the dwelling merges with its frozen spaces, and the only dynamics are enacted by the pack of dogs.[367] His enclosed, dark dwelling shuts him off from the city on which he has turned his back, and the (dis)arrangement of the space fuses with him. In an attempt to "follow" the steps of Maru that he missed, Chivo breaks into her abode, whose layout underlines the divide between her layer and her father's. In his vagrant appearance, the man walks seemingly estranged around the house, but eager to reach his daughter through her spaces. The decoration reflects the (middle) class to which he no longer belongs.[368] Existentially, however, Maru's home resembles Chivo's place of solitude after the death of her mother – which might be what draws him to her.

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[366] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

[367] "If [Chivo's] dogs represent a connection to life and movement, photographs repeatedly function as signs of death and loss." Beckman, Karen. "Crash Aesthetics: *Amores Perros* and the Dream of Cinematic Mobility" In Beckman, Karen and Ma, Jean (Eds.) *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 152.

[368] At the end of the movie, "El Chivo" decides to abandon his life as a hit man, allegorising his new beginning with a physical transformation. He shaves his face, cuts his hair and nails, and puts on Gustavo's outfit. His new appearance no longer matches his home, which he leaves to enter once again Maru's, where he might now better melt in physically.

"El Chivo" takes care of Cofi at his place. Still from *Amores Perros*.[369]

The high class in *Amores Perros* is represented by the half brothers Gustavo and Luis. Their spaces, nonetheless, are depicted only through their exteriors. Just like "El Chivo," the viewer can only see the shell of the highly-secured building where they work. The movie portrays the secluding nature of these sites as they are denied even to the visual reach of the spectator. Like the United States in *Babel*, this layer is construed through its personae. Arguably, the individuals' geographies shape them as well as Chivo immediately recognises Luis as an affluent man when he is told where he works and lives.

Valentine (2001) states that, in the home, spatial and temporal boundaries are negotiated and contested.[370] As aforementioned, the houses share characteristics that result from human coexistence, and this work can then draw from this its argument on space defined by event. The homes of *Amores Perros*, with their past, present and

[369] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

[370] Valentine, Gill. *Social Geographies: Space and Society*, 63.

future battles, have all been redefined by absence.[371] Octavio fights with Ramiro for the place of the long-gone "father" of the house, whereas Daniel and Chivo yearn in their new lives for the homes they abandoned.

The characters of *Amores Perros* undertake battles for places within the household which are not physical, but existential. Octavio fights to be the "man" of the family, Chivo fights to be the father he was not, and Valeria fights to become Daniel's "wife". These non-geographic places are defined by events: Octavio's planned escape with his brother's wife and child, Chivo's promised return, and Daniel's divorce.

5.1.4 Barriers among "Different" Places

The film suggests that the architecture of Mexico City reacts to its violent sphere through the closing of boundaries as the few "openings" (public places like restaurants, drugstores, banks) seem easily penetrated by the criminal layer. Like in many Latin American countries, the streets of *Amores Perros* are enclosed by the peripheral walls of single-family houses, impenetrable definers of family property and protective shells from the dangers of the metropolis. The paths of pedestrians are then abruptly directed by these barricades in the linear direction of the streets. These spatial dictations would be frequently challenged in American and European suburban neighbourhoods, where, for instance, children can play in the spaces between detached houses.

[371] "The absence of the father." Commentary by director and writer (2006). *Amores Perros*, DVD.

Octavio in his neighbourhood, walking out of a dog fight. Still from *Amores Perros*.[372]

However, this closing of frontiers empowers the criminal city at the creation of liminal spaces in-between these barriers. The closed eyes of neighbours allow delinquents the freedom to act, protected by these very boundaries. Ramiro is kidnapped as he walks out of the supermarket where he works before the gaze of paralysed customers who shelter themselves in the entrance. The director also tells the story of his encounter with the working-class neighbourhood where he was to shoot the movie. Estranged in the area as he and the crew wandered the streets, they were assaulted by a gang.[373]

One could cast doubt on the *publicness* of places like a restaurant as someone with Chivo's appearance might not be admitted. The illusory openness of this site is enacted by its glass walls, which hamper the entrance of those who cannot afford it.[374] As mentioned above, "El Chivo" uses violence to traverse these boundaries (without even walking in) as he shoots a victim through the window.[375] "Public" places for

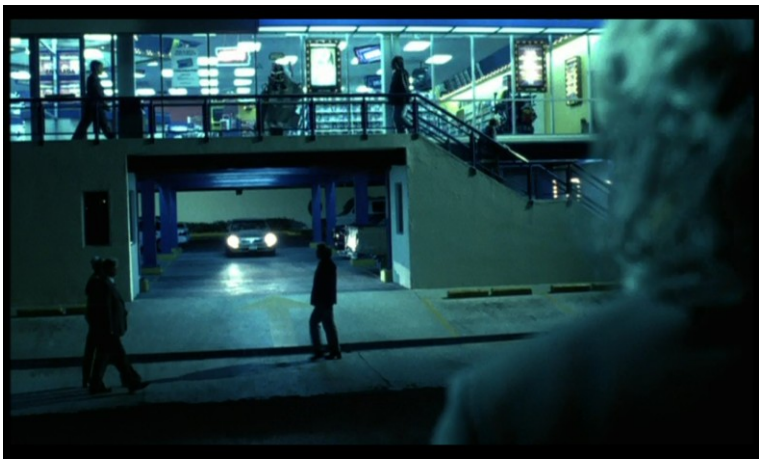
[372] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

[373] Curiously, these youngsters ended up participating in the film. Commentary by director (2006). *Amores Perros*, DVD.

[374] Like Valeria's advertisements, they are visually open, but really inaccessible.

[375] He does the same to break into the private space of Luis' car.

consumerism establish protective barriers. These, however, guard only customers, not ordinary people. The architecture of the video centre where Chivo approaches Luis establishes a physical divide with the "hazardous" outside space. The transparent walls rise to an upper level and clients must walk upstairs. The commercial space offers the pedestrian only its parking area, defined by two walls with luminous advertisements. This space is meant to be looked at by the individual who stands therein, but it does not look back to her. Once the "precious" client becomes an ordinary walker, she is no longer protected by the building. Chivo takes advantage of this liminal space and kidnaps his victim.



"El Chivo" observes Luis outside a video centre. Still from *Amores Perros*.[376]

The hit man takes Luis to his home, but since he has decided to stop killing, he ties him up and abducts Gustavo as well. As Chivo enforces a verbal confrontation between "Cain and Abel," he confines the brothers inside a courtyard, a space easily watched from the interior of the house. The dwelling establishes a blunt divide between the inhabitant and the visitor. More embracing to Chivo's "animal family," the space estranges Luis and Gustavo, who are disoriented by its introversion, intricacy and mess.

[376] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

Tied to a wall and a column, their paths are restrained, and the enclosed patio denies them visual access to the house's intricate corridors, where the movements of Chivo cannot be seen.

"El Chivo" talks to Luis, tied up in the courtyard. Still from *Amores Perros*.[377]

5.1.5 Event as a Boundary

As Ramiro is about to raid a pharmacy, he tells his partner: "As soon as I rob that bank I will leave this city. It's too unsafe around here." This joke by one of the very shapers of the *criminal* Mexico City introduces, like in *Babel,* the crucial role of flight in the definition of boundaries among places.

Trapped in the violent city, Octavio and his best friend, Jorge, attempt to escape their persecutors through establishing a physical barrier – distance – that will pull them away from the threatening space. But when this barrier goes thinner and Jarocho's armed friends are about to reach them, the car crash creates a "space of shock" from which the chasers drive away. It is the event which attains the construction of the boundary. In an inverse situation, Gustavo tries to draw a barrier as he hires Chivo to kill

[377] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

his brother and distances himself from the event he plans to unleash. However, Chivo attaches Gustavo to it as he forces him to the space of his kidnapped brother.

Similarly, after knowing Jarocho's plans, the owner of the dog-fighting business undertakes a geographical escape as he arranges the revenge with Octavio away from his house. The event of conflict (Jarocho's shooting at Cofi) should take place in another space and the man ensures his "safety" and "clean hands" as he suspends himself from the battleground – he, nonetheless, witnesses the encounter at the place proposed.

Daniel and Chivo, on the other hand, draw and erase divides between places as they cyclically flee from and establish contact with them. Daniel physically left his home, but now mentally escapes the new one with anonymous calls to his family. Chivo stays in the same city, but he flees from it through his detachment from society, remaining, as he says, as "a living ghost." The world that he creates within the place from which he has *run off* has one of the strongest barriers depicted in the movie. But again he shows his agency upon it as he drags "others" to his layer through violence. This establishment of boundaries between places and events stands for their mutual definition.

5.1.6 Openings

As has been said, the closing of boundaries of the video centre, ironically, opens up Luis' space to Chivo. The enclosure of layers is evident, but the city proves to allow random intersections of these layers through events. After being assaulted, Ramiro quits his geography with Susana and the baby, and wanders the streets. In an entertainment district they come across "El Chivo," but they obviously ignore the relation between their stories.

Likewise, the open space of a cemetery enables Chivo to slightly touch the layer of his daughter (without her noticing). Octavio has certain freedom to travel along the streets, but the space of the *road* becomes accessible to him as he buys a car. This eventually leads his geography to a collision with Valeria's.

The movie depicts haphazard encounters among the multiple *Mexico Cities*, rendered possible by unpredictable openings of the changing urban space. As those of *Babel*, the places of *Amores Perros* show to react to events through the reshaping of their boundaries and relations.

"El Chivo" observes Maru from a distance as she buries her mother. Still from *Amores Perros*.[378]

[378] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

5.1.7 Photographs

Photographs exert a double function of articulating places: as Simmel's door[379] (see Chapter 4) they both link and divide. Not only do they reshape the portrayed spaces (as in a Proustian manner, these sites are brought to life through evocation), but pictures also define the place where the observing subject stands, which turns into *negative*[380] as it is part of the "larger" space that separates the viewer from what is viewed.

Images simultaneously intersect and fragment spaces, arguably, through the event remembered or yearned. Chivo regards his old photo album, longing for the spaces and times where he was once rooted with his family. When he breaks into his daughter's house, he looks at the pictures in her bedroom. He takes home a graduation photograph where she and her mother hug the stepfather outside a church. Chivo regards the moment he lost and pastes his own picture on the man's face. His somewhat naive attempt to position himself at the space of the photo exemplifies the fundamental role of event shaping the place. Chivo could actually visit this site, but what he wants is to have been there *during the event* that the image froze.

Similarly, in her solitude at the apartment, Valeria regards pictures of her infancy and evokes her moments of health as a child, connecting with her country and with times that are gone. Like Chivo, the walls which contain her feel even harder to traverse as she thinks of how far her home and past are now.

Like in *Babel*, photographs in *Amores Perros* represent a crucial link between places and its characters, even among strangers: at the accident scene, Chivo helps Octavio out of the car but steals his wallet. Afterwards, he looks at the pictures the boy carried. Through them, Chivo, as well as the audience, connect back with the first story.

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[379] Simmel, George. "Bridge and Door" (1994) In Leach, Neil (Ed.). *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, 65-7.

[380] See Chapter 1. Poulet, Georges. *Proustian space*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, 43.

5.2 THE ROAD

> "Most spaces of the city are designed for travelling through rather than socializing in, or are designed in such a way as to minimize unplanned or undesired encounters with strangers."[381]
>
> Gill Valentine, after Ben Malbon

The "behaviour" of the space of the streets is capricious, subject to the changes brought about by events. They seem to be places actually shared by individuals of all kinds (which could be debatable if we go back to Valentine's account of public space denied to vagrants, or the affordance of the road only by people who own a car). The transit area becomes crucial for this chapter as in its physical realm the event makes the manifold cities intersect.

Nonetheless, before the car crash, the characters of *Amores Perros* seem to traverse very *distinct cities* through the same avenues. On the one hand, Daniel and Valeria drive through a congested, but relatively safe metropolis. On the other, Octavio and Chivo navigate a dangerous city. Jarocho shoots Cofi during the "revenge" fight, and Octavio stabs him. Terrified, he tries to escape Jarocho's friends in a car pursuit that ends up in the fatal collision with Valeria. Facing the consequences of his impulse, the boy drives through the *criminal* Mexico City. Chivo also moves through this threatening space, but he renders it violent himself. His agency on the geographies he traverses is, arguably, much stronger than that of the individuals who adhere to the law.

The intersection of two streets brings about the convergence of multiple cities as it offers a *ground* for the car crash. It is here – and now – that the event forcefully pulls the many layers of Mexico City together.

[381] Valentine, Gill. *Social Geographies: Space and Society*, 234.

Occasionally, the road reveals itself as an opening which invites individuals to escape their dictated geography. For instance, the roads of the city allow Chivo (with his cart) in and out of the event.

The road shows to be a ground for encounter. Still from *Amores Perros*.[382]

[382] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

5.3 EVENT

> "Kubrick created a nonlinear narrative – it is no longer sequential storytelling. The result is an existential presentation of an event."[383]
>
> Vincent LoBrutto

5.3.1 The Event Unifying Places

As he gives account of the way in which the experience of space and time was dramatically changed by modernity, Harvey (1990) describes the "capacity to collapse space into the simultaneity of an instant in universal public time" offered by communication and commuting systems[384]. Conceivably, events that directly or indirectly affect the lives of different people have the same effect of creating – even if just for an instant – a "universal" time. This work can then build upon this to argue that an event can also unify places. The intention, however, is not to state that at the "shared" moment, spaces become one, or that the boundaries among them vanish, but that these multiple places *intersect* through the event. The nature of each of them certainly changes at its collision with others, and they will all share qualities (chaos,

[383] LoBrutto, Vincent. *Becoming Film Literate: The Art and Craft of Motion Pictures.* Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2005.

[384] "The first radio signal was beamed around the world from the Eiffel tower. . . . The power of wireless had been clearly demonstrated . . . with the rapid diffusion of news about the sinking of the *Titanic*. . . . [P]ublic time was becoming ever more homogeneous and universal across space." Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 266-7.

shock, despair, violence, and the physical place itself). This convergence might overcome divides but, as argued in the previous chapter, these, as well as the particularities and universals of the spaces, will be subject to an almost whimsical reshaping, impossible to predict and concretely describe.[385]

Octavio's car. Still from *Amores Perros*.[386]

Amores Perros illustrates the convergence of – at least – three spaces: the *violent* city (Octavio), the *spectacle/ideal* city (Valeria) and the *dystopic* city (Chivo). The movie highlights the dissimilar character of the spaces that race towards collision through their distinct rhythms. As it occurs, the event shows its dual condition: it is simultaneously the *cause* and *consequence* of the concurrence of vectors which moved in different directions through a territory that would have never united them otherwise. Writer Arriaga explained the intention of portraying diverse people, racing towards their own objectives through paths that would meet right at the accident.[387]

As mentioned above, the reaction of spaces at the moment of converging is varied. Those which showed certain continuity become fragmented (*negative* spaces

[385] Boundaries might disappear or remain; spaces might merge or each could keep its characteristics. Their "changed" condition might stay, but it might as well go back to the original.

[386] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

[387] Commentary by writer (2006). *Amores Perros*, DVD.

emerge), those that were bounded open up, those that were open collapse, those parted merge, and the very spot where the event took place acquires a new shape. For instance, Chivo, through his agency to define (criminal) spaces, might intend to do so with the assassination of Luis, who is inside a restaurant.[388] However, the car crash happens, and the place is differently shaped. The event then re-*produces* the space in an unexpected way. In its contingency, the reshaping turns out to fragment the place into two layers: that of what happened and that of what did not.[389]

Karen Beckman (2008) argues that the incessant repetition of the car crash renders *Amores Perros* photographic.[390] The four depictions of the accident, through the visuals of three different worlds emphasise its role in shaping them. The film privileges the single event, but also points out that the bluntly separated layers of denizens touch by random, smaller, and even unnoticed events. Each of our days within the city is full of coincidences with people whom we have encountered before (whether we realise it or not) or whom we will encounter in a future.[391] *Amores Perros* illustrates the touching of layers through the randomness of small events. Chivo slightly touches Octavio's geography before the accident as he runs into Jarocho and his fight dog. Octavio's enemy attempts to get his animal to kill Chivo's dogs, but halts before the menacing blade of the man. Jarocho then sees Cofi wandering on the street and walks away. These entrances and exits portray the occasional incurrence of individuals into the "spaces" of others, the intersection of their different places.

[388] As we watch the scene, it is hard to tell if Chivo was just observing his future victim or if he actually intended to shoot him from the exterior of the restaurant as he did with an entrepreneur at an earlier part of the movie.

[389] See Kwinter's "double difference" of event in Chapter 2. Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*, 48.

[390] Beckman, Karen. "Crash Aesthetics: *Amores Perros* and the Dream of Cinematic Mobility" In Beckman, Karen and Ma, Jean (Eds.) *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, 134-57.

[391] By own experience: unexpected encounters with acquaintances in the complex Mexico City is far from rare.

5.3.2 Event Redefining Places

The car crash changes dramatically the *Mexico Cities* that collide. Octavio, unlike his friend Jorge, survives. And a sequence shows Ramiro being shot as he attempts to rob the bank. In spite of Octavio's insistence, the widowed Susana is no longer escaping with him "after all that has happened." Beckman (2008) says that these "characters try to play out the familiar Mexican film narrative of heading north for the border, only to find themselves trapped in the space of Mexico City, their dreams of mobility thwarted."[392]

Almost like her ubiquitous advertisement, Valeria used to drive freely along the streets of the urban centre. But the car crash confines her to the apartment. Her once ideal city has become an *exclusionary geography*[393] as she, in her wheelchair, is no longer assumed to be "able" to traverse its paths. Her space has been reduced to the walls that bound her place, which has changed as well. The architecture that welcomed her when she was healthy shows hostile to her new condition: the apartment is on an upper floor, she then cannot go out. Her home now offers her little communication with the outside through windows. Resembling her advertisements, the place allows visual contact, but not touch with the city.

[392] Beckman, Karen. "Crash Aesthetics: *Amores Perros* and the Dream of Cinematic Mobility" In Beckman, Karen and Ma, Jean (Eds.) *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, 136.

[393] See Valentine, after Young. Valentine, Gill. *Social Geographies: Space and Society*, 44.

Valeria watches her advertisement. Still from *Amores Perros.*[394]

This site is reshaped as well when Richie, her dog, runs into a hole on the floor and gets lost for days. The animal never leaves the house, but it might starve to death or be eaten by rats. This event fragments the apartment as it challenges assumptions of dualities where the inside is regarded as safe, as opposed to the dangerous outside. Valeria's despair increases as Daniel does not seem to understand her suffering or her dog's. They start having aggressive arguments and grow distant. One day, after a great physical effort trying to break the floor, Valeria is taken back to hospital, where she must have her leg amputated because of gangrene. González Iñárritu points out the way in which, in few days, the lovers go through the suffering and hurting that takes couples years.[395] Together, the events of the accident and Richie getting lost defined their apartment as a battleground and accelerated the transformation of the space of the home. Its destruction is metaphorised by the big, scattered holes on the floor, opened up by Daniel as he rescued the dog in the end.

[394] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

[395] Commentary by director (2006). *Amores Perros*, DVD.

Daniel tries to find Richie. Still from *Amores Perros*.[396]

The last part of the movie narrates that, after recovering from the accident, Cofi massacres Chivo's dogs while he is away. The death of the man's "family" turns his geography worthless and he decides to leave it and to approach his daughter's. He also resolves to quit his job as a killer and to stop rendering *violent* the place from which he has been detached until now. Instead of shooting Luis as agreed with Gustavo, he kidnaps them both and enforces a verbal encounter. This ends with Chivo's departure after leaving a gun at the centre of the patio where the brothers are bound – for them to "sort their differences out." The ex-"guerrillero" once more breaks into his daughter's place to indirectly face her. He puts back in its frame the image where he pasted his photo and leaves the money he has collected from his killings. In the space where they could have lived as a family he "talks" to Maru through a message on her answering machine. Chivo explains his failed attempt to fix the world in order to share it with her afterwards. He promises to return once he has the courage to look her in the eye. This enigmatic character had decidedly disengaged with the space that in the past frustrated his revolutionary vision. But this once dystopic site might now offer a chance to reunite father and daughter.

[396] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

After returning the picture, "El Chivo" speaks to Maru. Still from *Amores Perros*.[397]

The geographies of the characters suffer a dramatic change. Octavio's and Valeria's are rendered *static*, as opposed to Chivo's. The event resists the change Octavio intended in his space – flight and redefinition of the home – and gives it another direction. Likewise, Valeria's exciting love nest is turned into a prison. Contrarily, Chivo's failure in the endeavour of changing the world had frozen it. But it becomes prone to motion as the man decides to leave his "ghostly" existence and to pursue a future encounter with the daughter he once lost.[398] The final scene shows Chivo's new beginning as he walks away, followed by Cofi, through an eroded land at what looks like the edge of the city. The mobility afforded by this character is somehow announced along the movie by the numerous sequences where he is shown "outdoors," whereas Valeria's and Octavio's confinement is metaphorised in enclosed rooms and corridors.[399]

[397] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

[398] "*El Chivo y* Maru constitutes the only section of the narrative in which mobility remains a possibility." Beckman, Karen. "Crash Aesthetics: *Amores Perros* and the Dream of Cinematic Mobility" In Beckman, Karen and Ma, Jean (Eds.) *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, 137.

[399] Octavio undertakes a daily escape from home through television.

Octavio and Jorge walk Cofi to its last fight. Still from *Amores Perros*.[400]

[400] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

5.4 EVENTAL SPACE

Throughout his life, “El Chivo” lived the three cities, each of these spaces defined by a specific event. More than twenty years ago, when he became a “guerrillero” and pursued a revolutionary dream, his space was *ideal*. It turned *dystopic* after his capture and time in prison, and afterwards, in his detachment, the man decided to render it *violent*. The very “freezing” of his geography has a sarcastic portrayal in the movie through his arrest during an event typically lived by the inhabitants of Mexico City: using the washroom of the ubiquitous Sanborn’s Café. [401]

The analysis of *Amores Perros* reveals the key role that event has in the intersection of the multiple spaces of the layered city. But the mutual constitution between event and place becomes evident as this deed only arises because of specific conditions of each space. As argued in Chapter 2, event defines place and place defines event.

Through an emphasis of sequences in moving cars, *Amores Perros* echoes the fluidity of (urban) space. González Iñárritu states the disorientation expressed by numerous viewers of the movie because of the contrast between the dynamics of the stories – especially between the first and the second.[402] Conceivably, it metaphorises the unpredictability of event and the distinct rhythms of the places that it pulls together.

As Valeria’s new home goes through a crisis that worsens every day, the couple glances occasionally at her advertisement on the street, which remains intact, and almost looks back at the self-destroying space. It seems that the city stays still before the transformation of the home. The final scene of “Daniel y Valeria” shows the ex-model’s return from the hospital on a mechanised wheelchair. As she comes in, she moves along the cracked floor of the apartment and regards the window. Heartbroken, she finds out that what is left of her ad is a sign that says “Available.” The now modifiable surface where Valeria’s image was once displayed, reminds us that urban

[401] The corrupted “judicial” gives account of this event to Gustavo on their way to Chivo’s house.

[402] Commentary by director (2006). *Amores Perros*, DVD.

space is open to change. The city was indeed moving, even though the couple did not notice. Spaces at all scales and rhythms prove their evental character. The movie recurrently contrasts the dynamics of spaces with brief intermissions of night shots of cars moving slowly on the streets.

After the accident and Ramiro's death, Octavio tries to convince Susana to go on with their project of escaping together. She responds: "You know what my grandma used to say? If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans." With this phrase she reminds us the contingency and sudden change of the spaces of existence.

The movie explores the random linking and fragmentation of the distinct cities through events. As it portrays the tension between spaces of the same geographical place that move at different speed, *Amores Perros* proves that they have times and surfaces of convergence and divergence. In the "different" spaces of Mexico City is materialised the layering of society, and each *city* dictates the affordances of the inhabitants who belong to it. Place, however, is shown to cyclically change from "dictator" to "dictated" of citizen's geographies. People's apparent observance of spatial *canons* has spontaneous shifts as individuals openly resist their boundedness, or unwillingly traverse spaces of "others" – and let others in – through events. The event is simultaneously the cause and consequence of the intersection.

As came forth in *Babel*, the event reshaped the multiple cities that it brought to convergence, and made them share, even if for an instant, an existential space, defined, however, by the fluidity and unpredictability of life. After the "exhaustion" of the event, its spaces might diverge once again, each redefined by the encounter with the others.

"El Chivo" drives Gustavo's vehicle by a building where Valeria's advertisement is being removed. Still from *Amores Perros*.[403]

[403] *Amores Perros,* DVD. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Screenplay by Guillermo Arriaga Jordán. Photography directed by Rodrigo Prieto. Altavista Films, 2000.

CHAPTER SIX. SPACE OF EVENTS

6.1 Fragments

"The landscape of the city is only perceptible as fragments."[404]

Nezar AlSayyad

Sanford Kwinter (2001) sees in Kafka's work "less a picture of a world than a progression of world fragments, aspects, images, sections."[405] Likewise, Joseph Frank points out Proust's impressionist style as the writer's narrative offers views that the readers must "fuse into a unity."[406] González Iñárritu, through Arriaga's account of stories that run in parallel, convergent and divergent directions, provides fragments of the city that the viewer must join, dislocate and reorganise to grasp its chaos or coherence. Her reconstruction will probably not equal the city, but the city has shown not to equal itself either. Its continuous reshaping does not allow it. Kwinter (2001) recognises the instability rendered to space by the contingency of its deeds as he says: "the event . . . is thus both an embracing and an excavation of a milieu."[407]

As examples of what David Harvey (1990) coins as a *postmodern novel*, the movies offer "a metaphorical transect across the fragmenting social landscape[:] . . . the

[404] He gives this description after the panorama offered by Terry Gilliam's film *Brazil*. AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real.* London and New York: Routledge, 2006, 82.

[405] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, 142.

[406] Frank, Joseph. "Spatial form in Modern Literature", In Hoffman, M. and Murphy, P. (Eds.). *Essentials of the theory of fiction*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005, 68.

[407] Kwinter, Sanford. Op. cit., 168.

superimposition of worlds between which an uncommunicative 'otherness' prevails in a space of coexistence."[408] *Amores Perros* and *Babel* allow us to explore different sites and their redefinition through a series of events. This research found crucial for the analysis of evental space cinema's juxtaposition of multiple places and the *parcours* that movies allow through them. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Benjamin criticises the commanding character of cinematographic sequences.[409] However, these "forced" captions, through their movement along the cinematic path, afford the portrayal of rhythms, fragmentation and change of spaces. In cinema, the essence of places is transmitted through a discrete (mobile) presentation of its parts.[410] The sequences of the movies offer a cross section of the geographies of characters from distinct spaces: *walkers*, referred to by Michel de Certeau as "the ordinary practitioners of the city . . . whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban *text* they write without being able to read it."[411]

[408] Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1990, 113-4.

[409] Benjamin, Walter (1935). "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproduction" (Third Version) In During, Simon (Ed.). *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007, 65.

[410] Yet, as argued in Chapter 3, the pieces of space offered to the spectator are construed as a whole, dislocated, and reassembled in her own imagination.

[411] "The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author not spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other." De Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, 92-3.

6.2 Space and Event: Mutual Definition

"Event – the spatiotemporalization of a place."[412]

Edward Casey

The event as both a cause and a consequence of place's constant becoming has been argued in the previous chapter. The films illustrate that incidents make places, but also that they intertwine the layers into which spaces are divided, which would otherwise not touch. Events make places with distinct rhythms converge and diverge, and be redefined by these encounters.

Space is certainly constituted by its events, but it is actually the place's particularities which allow them to happen in the exact way they do. As de Certeau (1984) has it, spatial stories are "marked out by the *citation* of the places that result from them or authorize them."[413] The initial stages of this research led me to think that the outcomes would bring forth the event as the definer of space while backgrounding its physicality. However, the analyses resulted in finding the material condition not only as a frame, but as the very definer of the deeds that shape space. When stating that a place is construed by the relations among its components and with other sites,[414] one must regard the crucial role of the physical being – or better said, "becoming". The event as a whole certainly depends on the relations of the place's elements, but the matter gives it definition. The *past* event is engraved in the physical structure, and this structure also allows the *present* one to take place, and sets the conditions for the *future* event. The

[412] Casey, Edward. "Between Geography and Philosophy: What does it mean to Be in the Place-World?", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 91 (4), 2001, 339.

[413] De Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*, 119.

[414] Massey, Doreen. *Space, place, and gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, 5.

milieu is “carved by the event and bears its shape.”[415] Hermann Weyl states: “matter excites the field, and the field acts upon matter.”[416]

Babel and *Amores Perros* illustrate opposing behaviours of spaces and their events. The places of *Babel* seem physically static, and are traversed by the *moving* chain of events. Contrastingly, the multiple Mexico *Cities* of *Amores Perros* show a dynamic nature, as they are the ones which race toward the single event. This work argues event as the “ground” where the constituents of Lefebvre’s logico-epistemological space (the physical, the mental and the social)[417] fuse into a unity. In this exploration, the architecture of the city has proven to define the paths of its characters toward the event which in turn reshapes this architecture. Moreover, the city offers its *physical* grounds for the occurrence of the event.

[415] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*, 168.

[416] Hermann Weyl, cited by Berressem, Hanjo. “Multiplicity: Foldings in Architectural and Literary Landscapes*”* In Benesch, K., and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 101.

[417] Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford, OX: Blackwell, 1991, 11.

6.3 Complexity

The places of both movies are simultaneously shapers and shaped by their relations and events. Julia Kursell and Armin Schäfer (2005) state: “Space is always actual space and can only be grasped in terms of the relations of sites between forms, things, persons, landscapes.”[418] They add that these relations exist in a grid or matrix that renders them dynamic.[419] Furthermore, they argue: “If space is defined by certain relations of sites, then space without order is slower because it takes more time to reshape its relations.”[420]

In spite of treating the relations as subject to change, Kursell and Schäfer seem to point out in the very elements certain rigidity. These elements are not in a static condition of (dis)order. The constituents of space are as prone to alteration as their “distributional order or functional cohesion.”[421] What makes complex the relations among objects is not only the dynamics of these relations, but also that of objects themselves. Kursell and Schäfer associate their “slow spaces” with Deleuze and Guattari’s *smooth space:* “the continuous variation, continuous development of form” (see Chapter 1).[422] However, this space is, by definition, subject to the reshaping of its connections, of its (dis)order. And these authors ascribe all events the same impact as they assume that chaotic relations will need more time to be affected by an incident.

Undoubtedly an event will follow a more complicated path if the links among the elements of a place are intricate – but this does not necessarily mean that the traversal

[418] Kursell, Julia and Schäfer, Armin. “Slow spaces: Remarks on the Music of John Cage” In Benesch, K. and Schmidit K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 485.

[419] Idem.

[420] Idem.

[421] Idem.

[422] Deleuze and Guattari, cited by Kursell, Julia and Schäfer, Armin. “Slow spaces: Remarks on the Music of John Cage” In Benesch, K. and Schmidit K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*, 471.

will take more time. Moreover, the event reshapes these relations. I find it hard to state that a place is fast or slow due to the complexity of its structure. I think that its pace depends on the changing nature of these links and divisions. A space with a simpler structure can become fast if an event accelerates its components. It is a process as fluid and contingent as that portrayed in the films, where the difference and oneness of spaces are cyclically defined and subverted by events – as is their speed. A single event, or a series of events, can quickly traverse a complex spatial structure.

6.4 Contingency

"The borders of spaces are defined by the range of their potential reshaping."[423]

Julia Kursell and Armin Schäfer

The films illustrate the changing character of places as the behaviour of their boundaries, inner structure and relations with others are reshaped by the contingent events of space. For instance, Mexico City is a *negative space* as its many layers remain separate and its physical being is itself a barrier among its inhabitants. But it also shows that its configuration, the movement of its layers and its time connections can bring these multiple cities together at an urban event: a car crash.

As stated in Chapter 2, Sanford Kwinter (2001), beyond recognising the changing nature of space, states that these transformations are not subject to a fixed process, but that they depend on *novelty*, [424] an element of sudden change and chaos. In its first

[423] Kursell, Julia and Schäfer, Armin. Op. cit., 485.

[424] Kwinter, Sanford. *Architectures of time: Toward a theory of the event in modernist culture*, 4-5.

chapter, this work touched on Deleuze and Guattari's *smooth* and *striated* spaces: the latter has "fixed and variable elements . . . [and] produces an order and succession of distinct forms,"[425] whereas *smooth space* is "heterogeneous . . . tenable, fluid" and multiple[426]. The findings of this work, nonetheless, have brought forth that evental space is not only the philosophers' *smooth space*. In fact, as the second chapter mentioned, Hanjo Berressem *thirds*[427] the duality smooth/striated space introducing his *crumpled space*: the "differential of striated and smooth place; as a complex, manifold site that is actualized from a virtual, infinite multiplicity and situated on a continuous scale between complete striation and complete smoothness, both of which are abstracted ideals."[428] This folded, "constantly emergent space,"[429] is evental space. And the outcomes of this research, building upon this *thirding*, allow us to argue that **event striates smooth space (as a referent) and smoothes striated space (in its fluidity and unpredictability)**. Whereas changing, contingent space gets marked out by the event (even if only in memory), sites with "ordered" relations are rendered untenable by the volatile nature of events.

Jill Stoner states: "Ours is a culture in motion, not just the motion of physical bodies and digital bits, but also the motion of concepts."[430] The findings of this document allow us to reassert certain scepticism upon claims on a universal conceptualisation of place. Instead, I believe in the openness of spatial knowledge stated by Edward Soja as

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[425] Deleuze and Guattari, cited by Kursell, Julia and Schäfer, Armin. Op. cit., 471.

[426] Berressem, Hanjo (After Weyl). "Multiplicity: Foldings in Architectural and Literary Landscapes*"* In Benesch, K. and Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*, 91.

[427] Chapter 1 drew upon Edward Soja's traversal of dualities through his "thirding-as-othering." Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1996, 10, 60-1.

[428] Berressem, Hanjo. "Multiplicity: Foldings in Architectural and Literary Landscapes*"* In Benesch, K., & Schmidt, K. (Eds.). *Space in America: Theory, history, culture*, 91.

[429] Ibid., 93.

[430] Stoner, Jill. "Rain in the City" In Marcus, A. and Neumann, D. (Eds.). *Visualizing the City.* London and New York: Routledge, 2007, 218.

he says that this knowledge emerges from approximations,[431] each of which "builds cumulatively on earlier approximations."[432] As we recognise as such the outcomes of any exploration undertaken in the space of events, our accounts of these events will be, as mentioned in Chapter 2, as open-ended and dynamic as the very stories they are telling.

[431] "A constant search to move beyond (*meta)* what is known." See Chapter 1. Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places,* 56.

[432] Ibid., 61.

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