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**MISFIT AND CORPOREALITY IN *INCENDIES* (DENIS VILLENEUVE,
2010)**

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to provide an analysis of the misfit concept defined by the New Materialisms, as it appears in the Canadian movie *Incendies* (Denis Villeneuve, 2010). Thus, the study focuses on the corporeal dimension, illustrating the human being, capable of experiencing both the fit(ing) and the misfit(ing) condition in its both material and spiritual existence. In this regard, the key-points in the analysis of the film are the focus on the affect, the representation of the vulnerable body as agent, as well as the meeting between the body and the world within the misfit relationship. Moreover, the (post)exilic experience is connected rather to the reconstruction of the memory and to the acceptance of one's own corporeality, than to the concept of space. Thus, the personal history surpasses the collective history, in a discourse about fatality of the destiny and about the miraculous power of love.

Key words: misfit, corporeality, (post)exile, memory, history, Denis Villeneuve

Introduction

The Canadian director Denis Villeneuve, who is known and has been awarded several prizes for movies like *Maelström* (2001) or *Polytechnique* (2010), succeeds with the movie *Incendies* in presenting the audience a story about the human destiny caught between the aversion of the violence and the miracle of love. Nawal Marwan, mother of the twins Jeanne and Simon, takes refuge in Canada as

a consequence of several traumatic experiences. After her lover Wahab, who belongs to the refugee camp, is being killed by her brothers, Nawal has to endure once again the rules of tradition and of her family when the boy she gives birth to (Nihad/Abu-Tarek) is taken away to an orphanage. Grandmother's advice to study at university becomes eventually an (in)voluntary participation in the conflict between nationalists and refugees. Consequently, it is this conflict that influences Nawal's decision to set a journey in search of her lost son. The way to the orphanages becomes for the protagonist also the way where she discovers the cruelty and the violence of the rules regarding the religious belonging. The bus set on fire - which is an explicit representation of the title - that Nawal manages to escape just because of the fact she is a Christian, teaches her the lesson of the violence, of the action and reaction. Thus, after killing the leader of the nationalist group, Nawal is sent to the prison of Kfar Ryat where she is raped, without knowing, by a torturer who is her own son, and gives birth to the twins Jeanne and Simon. A fortuitous encounter at the public pool in Canada is the one that reveals her that the son (recognized by the tattoo on the heel) and the rapist in the prison (recognized by his face) are the same person. This determines the woman to choose silence as a solution and to let the twins discover on their own the secret of her life. However, Jeanne proves herself more intuitively responsive than her brother Simon who persists in refusing to do anything regarding his mother's past. The girl starts a journey in search of the past and her aim is to gradually reconstruct her mother's story and, with a little help from Simon, she manages to decipher the thrilling secret of their father's and brother's identity, defined by a mathematical expression: one plus one is one. Finally, as Laura T. Ilea underlines,

“the conclusion seems to be a family-melodrama, but at an attentive analysis, this is the only possible, absurd path to solve the logic of action and reaction, explaining the fact that in a war area you can never be neutral, because, no matter what happens, your hands will always be dirty, fully covered by excrements and blood.” (Ilea, 2015, 72)¹

¹ “concluzia pare a cădea în melodrama familială, însă la o analiză mai atentă, ea e singura cale, absurdă, de a tranșa logica acțiunii și reacțiunii, a faptului că într-o zonă de război nu poți fi nicicând neutru, că, indiferent de condiții, mâinile îți sunt mereu murdare, mânjite până la cot în excremente și sânge.” (My translation)

On the other hand, it is necessary to specify from the very beginning that the scenario of the Canadian production is an adaptation of Wajdi Mouawad's² homonymous play, written in 2003 and staged for the first time with only nine actors at Théâtre de Quat'Sous in Montréal (Muzele orfane, 2003, 273). Thus, the complexity of the movie enriches the play, considered to be one of the masterpieces of Canadian dramaturgy, bringing in the foreground problems of the contemporary world through the theatrical discourse:

“Mouawad proposes us a sort of theatre which is both political and poetic, both humorous and heart-rending, a type of research that makes us reach the roots of the violence and courage simultaneously. It is a powerful, percussive play, which is sometimes similar to a purifying ritual. It is a shocking fresco with conspicuous social and political colours.”³ (Muzele orfane, 2003, 353)

² “Playwright born in Lebanon who immigrated in France when he was 8 years old, and then in Québec when he was 16 years old. Actor, stage director and playwright, he is one of the most appreciated playwrights in Québec. As an actor he has been applauded not only in his own plays, but also in Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs*, Albert Camus' *Caligula*, Cekhov's *Three Sisters*. As stage director, he staged over 20 performances, including Sofocle's *Oedipus the King*, Euripide's *The Trojan Women*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Pirandello's *Six characters in search of an author*, Cekhov's *Three Sisters*. As playwright, he has written 12 plays so far: *Partie de cache-cache entre deux Tchécolovaques au début du siècle* (1992), *Journé de noces chez les Cromagnons* (1992), *Alphonse* (1993), *Willy Protogoras enfermé dans les toilettes* (1993), *Les mains d'Edwige au moment de la naissance* (1995), *Le Songe* (1996), *Couteau* (1997), *Littoral* (1997), *Rêves* (1999), *Pacamambo* (2000), *John* (2001), *Incendies* (2003). (...) In 2003 he worked as both script-writer and director for the movie *Littoral*, adaptation of his own play. He was co-founder of the Theatre Ô Parleur in Montréal (1990) and he managed it together with Isabelle Leblanc until 1999. Between 2000-2003 he was artistic director of Théâtre de Quat'Sous in Montréal. (...) He was awarded the title of Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters for his entire work by the French Government in January 2002. (Muzele orfane, 2003, 352)

“om de teatru născut în Liban, emigrat în Franța când avea 8 ani și apoi în Québec când avea 16. (...)actor, regizor și dramaturg, este unul dintre cei mai apreciați oameni de teatru din Québec. (...)Ca actor a fost un interpret aplaudat nu numai în propriile sale piese, ci și în *Scaunele* de Eugène Ionesco, *Caligula* de Albert Camus, *Trei surori* de Cehov. Ca regizor a pus în scenă peste 20 de spectacole, printre care *Oedip rege* de Sofocle, *Troienele* de Euripide, *Macbeth* de Shakespeare (...), *Șase personaje în căutarea unui autor* de Pirandello, *Trei surori* de Cehov. Ca dramaturg, a scris până acum 12 texte pentru teatru: *Partie de cache-cache entre deux Tchécolovaques au début du siècle* (1992), *Journé de noces chez les Cromagnons* (1992), *Alphonse* (1993), *Willy Protogoras enfermé dans les toilettes* (1993), *Les mains d'Edwige au moment de la naissance* (1995), *Le Songe* (1996), *Couteau* (1997), *Littoral* (1997), *Rêves* (1999), *Pacamambo* (2000), *John* (2001), *Incendies* (2003). (...) În 2003 a realizat – în calitate de scenarist și regizor – un film de lung metraj după piesa sa *Littoral*. A fost cofondator al Teatrului Ô Parleur din Montréal (1990) pe care l-a condus (împreună cu Isabelle Leblanc) până în 1999. În perioada 2000-2003 a fost director artistic la Théâtre de Quat'Sous din Montréal. (...) Este Cavaler al Ordinului Național al Artelor și Literelor, care i-a fost decernat de guvernul francez în ianuarie 2002, pentru ansamblul operei sale.” (My translation)

³ “Mouawad ne propune un teatru în același timp politic și poetic, comic și sfâșietor, simbolic și realist, un soi de cercetare care ne face să ajungem, simultan, la rădăcinile violenței și ale curajului. Este o operă puternică, percutantă, care capătă uneori alura unui ritual purificator. O frescă- șoc în care culorile sociale și politice sunt evidente.” (My translation)

Thus, the Lebanese playwright from Québec manages to bring in front of the camera several delicate aspects, that concern not only the contemporary political and social discourse regarding the national identity, the exile and the abolition of the cultural and religious borders, but also the way the individual perceives his own human, authentic condition in relationship with the Other. Moreover, one of the shocking aspects both in the play and in Villeneuve's movie is the re-enactment of Oedip's myth using a contemporary perspective. In this regard, the critics have stressed the direct relationship with Greek ancient tragedy, visible both in the atmosphere and at the narrative level. However, this reference does not eliminate the authenticity of this story which is placed in an extremely atypical topos and develops themes related to contemporary cultural contexts:

“This shady, intelligently built play, dominated by a savage and haughty/proud language, unmasking the absurdity of the war lying in its root itself, namely in the astounding depths of the being where Eros is flirting with Thanatos, [this play] is worthy of being the heir of the Greek tragedy.”⁴ (Muzele orfane, 2003, 353)

Therefore, Villeneuve's movie is even more percussive since it synthesizes in pictures things that cannot be expressed in the lines. Thus, unlike Mouawad's play, Villeneuve's movie is more concise, reducing significantly the quantity of lines that, despite their explanatory role, tend to expose too clearly the meaning of the story.

At the same time, the way *Incendies* connects the theme of identity, the postexilic experience and the corporeality both as subject-agent of the subjective, individual horizon and as object-victim of the cultural, collective frame transforms it in a reference point for the Canadian literature/cinematography (and not only). Moreover, both the play and the movie respect the general structure and evolution of the Canadian literature (art, in general), just in the way Ronald Sutherland describes it, starting with the territory of the traditional culture and breaking up with its authority in search for the revelation of a vital truth:

⁴ “Umbroasă, construită inteligent, dominată de un limbaj sălbatic și semeț, această operă, care demască absurditatea războiului de la însăși rădăcina lui, adică din profunzimile amețitoare ale ființei în care Eros flirtează cu Thanatos, această operă, spunem noi, este o demnă urmașă a mării tragedii grecești.” (My translation)

“During this evolution [of the Canadian literature], three major interlocking themes have emerged: 1. The Land and Divine Order; 2. The Breakup of the Old Order; 3. The Search for Vital Truth.” (Sutherland, 1971, 3)

It is obvious that this diagram is permanently changed as time goes by, but it reflects also a continuous interest for the human condition always swinging between fit and misfit, disregarding the individual differences related to ethnic belonging and nationality. After all, “the problem of ethnic relations (...) has never been a basic theme of Canadian literature. And perhaps this fact is a good omen.” (Sutherland, 1971, 58) In this context, the world and the individual experience a mutual misfitting relationship, which explains the “ex-centric” status - according to Linda Hutcheon’s terminology (Hutcheon, 2003, 61) - of the characters in *Incendies* regarding their own corporeal history and memory. In fact, we experience the representation of two neutral avatars of a disruptive memory since the Canadian space is perceived as an exilic one and the oriental space, to whom initially belonged Nawal Marwan determines a new exile, but this time for her children, Jeanne and Simon. Thus, the movie (and the play as well) creates the image of an “exilic body” (Šlapkauskaitė, 2006, 219) and memory, rather than an exilic space.

Theoretical considerations

The aim of this paper is to provide an analysis of the *misfit* concept defined by the New Materialisms, namely in Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s study *Misfit: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept*, as it appears in the Canadian production *Incendies* (Denis Villeneuve, 2010) we discussed about above. Thus, the study focuses on the corporeal dimension, illustrating the human being, capable of experiencing both the fit(ting) and the misfit(ting) condition in its both material and spiritual existence.

Thus, the author mentioned above defines the concepts of fit and misfit in the following manner:

“Fitting and misfitting denote an encounter in which two things come together in either harmony or disjunction. When the shape and substance of these two things correspond in their union, they fit. A

misfit, conversely, describes an incongruent relationship between two things (...). The problem with a misfit, then, inheres not in either of the two things but rather in their juxtaposition, the awkward attempt to fit them together. When the spatial and temporal context shifts, so does the fit (...) Misfit emphasizes context over essence, relation over isolation, mediation over origination. (...)The discrepancy between body and world, between that which is expected and that which is, produces fits and misfits.” (Garland Thomson, 2011, 592-593)

Therefore, the definition of the misfit concept implies several things, as moving away the focus from disability, lack of autonomy and self-determination, and focusing on the misfit idea, which could create for the disabled subjects the possibility of agency and of reevaluating itself. Nevertheless, the concept of misfit introduces the idea of multiple incorporations and alienates us from the experience of a disabled, isolated body. The materiality of the misfit concept is illustrated through the discrepancy between body and world. Moreover, this explains why the discrimination and the injustice are related more to the materiality of the world than to social attitudes. Thus, we are more and more influenced by un-belonging and misfitting as we move forward in time. The way we experience the world is more and more disturbed and the misfit becomes the definition of our human condition situated between two extremes illustrating our permanent situation of being exposed. The body is functioning as individuality – at least by means of discourse – in an environment influenced by pre-established norms and rules, despite its formally liberal and heterogeneous character. However, this apparently common environment seems to neglect the individual variation of the corporeal forms and their resistance to the myth of autonomy in relation with the notions of dependence and vulnerability.

On the other hand, we take into account that “a body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies” (Deleuze, 1988, 123), defining “a body in its individuality” (Deleuze, 1988, 123) In this context, the body understood as affect is related to the meaning of the affects and emotions as ideas, and not as being opposed to them. After all, “Deleuze’s argument is that emotions and affects are ideas” (Probyn, 2010, 80), so “they are a particular combination of thought and body in which distinction between the two is no longer important.” (Probyn, 2010, 80). Moreover, the body marked by affects creates its own autonomous memory as

a way of reconstruction and as a possibility of inventing the world it lives in. Thus, we are talking about a discursive body (even if it is a dead or alive body) as subject of representation and interpretation, without depriving it of its autonomy or authenticity. The body-affect is shifting its simple status as instrument made for understanding the world and becomes an independent identity in dialogue with the world, possessing the conscience of its own existence in the world and of its own capacity of agency:

“the body as incorporated consciousness, functions as the body-in-the-world, which is to say as much as consciousness is intentional, so the body is in constant dialogue with the world it is directed towards. In essence, it is through the body that consciousness defines itself against the world it perceives.” (Šlapkauskaitė, 2006, 220)

Thus, the corporeal memory or “the bodily dimension of the memory” (Šlapkauskaitė, 2006, 226) opens new possibilities of configuring identities related at the same time to the past, to the present or to the future. In this regard, the body-affect becomes an important actor both within the individual and collective history. Moreover,

“to use Mikhail Bakhtin’s terms, the body figures as our primary chronotope, which effectively posits us in relation to space and time. Merleau-Ponty notes that our body serves as our main point of reference in interpreting our temporal and spatial horizons.” (Šlapkauskaitė, 2006, 220-221)

Of course, the body as a physical dimension draws attention over existence’s concrete horizon both in a temporal and spatial meaning, avoiding at the same time the temptation of too abstract or too spiritual infused dimensions. In this regard, the corporeal memory understood as individual or even collective history warns us about the way the abstract/spiritual discourse can be destructively filled with exclusive norms and prejudices that encourage the exclusion or, *lato sensu*, the misfit.

The genealogy of the misfit

The very first and most obvious sign of the misfit in *Incendies* is the tattoo on the right heel of Nihad/Abu Tarek himself, presented individually right from the first frame that ends with the dramatic look of the boy piercing spectators' eyes. Thus, right from the beginning, the movie sets the premises of a history of the misfit body. Consequently, the boy itself, a rejected orphan living on the edge of a permanently disturbed society, is a marginal. In fact, we are talking about a society where the ethnic-religious conflicts itself represent the main element generating a perpetual misfit. Nawal Marwan, the half-missing protagonist of the movie, who dies before the story of the scenario actually begins, lives her life between fitting and misfitting, in a permanent imposture estate which is characterised at the same time, by the pride and the shame conferred by her own status. She is misfit in the society she leaves because of the illicit love she feels for a Muslim refugee; misfit in the same society because she is the mother of an illegitimate child who would be taken away from her right after the birth; misfit in relationship with herself as a mother without her child and as a woman without her husband; she is misfit as a Christian in a bus full of Muslims, and then as a Christian killing the leader of the Christian group; misfit as prisoner in Kfar Ryat, known as "la femme qui chante" (the woman who sings), in a space connected to the silence and to the violence; misfit in the place she abandons (The Middle East), as well as in the place she arrives (Canada); but misfit also in her relationship with the twins taken away (again!) from her, that have to accept and stand her absolutely shocking silence she chooses in front of the revelation she experiences. That is the reason why Nawal Marwan is one of those individual for whom the fitting status itself becomes, eventually, a sign of misfit.

Thus, if we accept Oedipus' myth as a misfit model, where the main characters Oedip and Iocasta become at the moment of the truth's revealing symbols of self-exclusion – Oedip by means of blinding and exile and Iocasta by hanging herself – then *Incendies* develops an entire genealogical archive based on this model of misfit, including all the characters (Simon, Jeanne, Nihad/Abu Tarek/Nihad Harmanni) as inevitably prisoners in this system:

“One thinks of the iconic Oedipus: lame and blind, cast out on the road for his hubris, patricide, and incest. People with disabilities [and one of the possible disabilities one can have is to be an orphan] become

misfits not just in terms of social attitudes—as in unfit for service or parenthood—but also in material ways. Their outcast status is literal when the shape and function of their bodies comes in conflict with the shape and stuff of the built world. The primary negative effect of misfitting is exclusion from the public sphere—a literal casting out.” (Garland-Thomson, 2011, 594).

Nawal Marwan is not the only example of misfit affected by destiny’s mathematics. The same happens with Simon and Jeanne. Turning back to the place they were born has nothing nostalgic and comfortable for them, thus the past is revealed at the cost of an extreme tension. When Jeanne arrives in her mother’s village, the women who come to meet her express hostility, coldness, together with the message of the (paradoxical!) non-belonging to the community. The impossibility to communicate is not only a matter of genealogy, but a matter of language, since a translator is almost always necessary in their journey. Coming back from exile is like coming back into a new exile, since the twins find themselves in a strange situation, against the social and traditional norms of the community their mother apparently belonged to. Jeanne has no direct access to the information she receives, since she almost always needs a guide or a translator. Mastering the French language as a sign of integration in Canada becomes a sign of misfit in the Middle East society. Thus, the definition of “exotic” is no longer related to the idyllic, but also repellent landscape of the desert represented by a continuously degrading architecture. It is precisely this postexilic return that expresses its wish to reconstruct a strange, terrifying past that become the very expression of the exotic, of the unwonted and of the misfit. On the other hand, we must not forget that the one who is returning is not Nawal, but her daughter Jeanne, recreating almost identically the path back to the past. Even if Jeanne’s and Nawal’s body seem to be almost identical, however Jeanne is the one who follows and continues the misfit(ing) track Nawal began to walk on. There are several frames and moments in the movie when their profiles and their clothes seem to overlap, assuming a “felt and attributed identity” or “double consciousness” (Garland-Thomson, 2011, 601) The scene from the swimming pool, where both suits are black or the road in the desert when the camera portraits them wearing a dark-blue shirt and the hair arranged in the same manner are examples that show how the two women intuitively share the same history/destiny. Jeanne wanders through Daresh/the

desert searching for the past just as her mother did when she was looking for her lost son and for a future together with him. After all, the beginning of this strange initiation evokes a counter-movement (considering the general movement of the others): while people leave the South, Nawal goes to the South of the country in search of her son; while all others want to emigrate to a better world, Jeanne is coming back in search of an identity that has been given, but at the same time taken away from her by force.

The body of the burnt buildings, of the darkened prison and the bus set on fire express the impossibility of establishing the connection with the past, thus they reveal a permanent instability, both internal and external, but the despair of fully recovering one's identity as well. After all, Nawal, Nihad/Abu Tarek/Nihad Harmanni, Jeanne and Simon experience an intrinsic misfit, understood as foredoomed ontological condition because of the incapacity and permanent obstruction of the way to the roots. The disentanglement of the past is more than a question of documents hidden in an archive impossible to find, but a solitary way guided by intuition, similar to the pure mathematics which represent the land of solitude (*"la mathématique pure – pays de la solitude"*), as Jeanne's teacher underlines. This would explain the contrast between the authentic, pure, irreducible humanity which is impossible to archive and the history caught in clear documents presented by Jean Lebel, the notary, as the expression of a tradition submitted from generation to generation. Here, the image of the father belongs to an immigrant, a misfit par excellence (Wahab), who becomes a corpse before being a father. Transmitting the familial history is not anymore incumbent to the honourable man, but to the woman Nawal covered with shame. Therefore the movie presents destabilised universes where, in a Freudian manner, the son substitutes the father in all his attributes, especially the sexual and punitive ones. If the son marries her mother Iocasta as a reward and as a love proof in Oedipus' myth, Villeneuve's movie illustrates things differently. Oedip-Nihad-Abu Tarek doesn't receive anything, but takes by force, he does not offer love, but acts in the name of its opposite values, namely the rape, the hate and the violence. Moreover, the murderer of the only true father in the movie (Wahab) – "true" because of his misfit status and also because he is a foreigner – is not the son, as in Oedipus' myth, but Nawal's brothers. It has an important meaning for us that the paternal image is completely absent. Even in Nawal's family, the only masculine images are the brothers as substitutes for the father, situation that could explain the tendency to incestuous relationships right

from the beginning. On the other hand, Simon, another masculine image, chooses the misfit status by explicitly denying his contribution to the revelation of the truth throughout (almost) the whole movie. In this regard, his attitude could be interpreted as a response to the misfit condition of his mother he intuitively remarks and feels. However, even Simon experiences directly some misfit moment when he arrives in Deressa and he tries to find out the truth about his mother by accepting the locals' invitation to a cup of tea. Eventually, this proves that "our particular embodiments are as unchosen as the narratives of our identities". (Garland-Thomson, 2011, 596)

The absent body and the recuperated body

Besides, the narrative-chronological beginning of Nawal's story hides even more examples of her misfit condition. One of them is the love for Wahab, a love that does not respect the rules of the community, as well as Wahab itself, a refugee, who is the very expression of the ethnic-religious misfit. Thus, to act according to personal affects and despite the general cohabitation rules represents a way of becoming an outsider when it comes to traditions. After all, such love stories are typical misfitting models that find their roots in atypical situations based on moral, ethical, religious, political or social conflicts, as it has been proved and discussed by Denis de Rougemont in his book *Love in the Western World*. The economy of the bodies is also very important when it comes to the misfit dimension. The story of the misfit is supported by corporeal aspects, since the movie presents the corpse of an immigrant, who is both excluded and exposed par excellence and the vulnerable body of a lonely woman perceived by the community she belongs to as shameful and impure. Moreover, the woman gives birth to another body, her son's, as vulnerable as hers, who is afterwards marked with a tattoo on the heel. Finally, this complicated corporeal story seems to be meant to lose its tracks in the sand of the oriental desert because this Middle East community, based on such tough rules, cannot accepted to be part of it: "Shame is subjective in the strong sense of bringing into being an entity or an idea through the specific explosion of mind, body, place, and history." (Probyn, 2010, 81) If we follow the action-reaction rule, searching for and recovering this story is a violent game that generates both physical and psychical violence, demonstrating that "no smooth fit between body and world ever exists." (Garland-Thomson, 2011, 594). Moreover, the movie tells the story of a

repeated violence through the voice of several bodies: Nawal's bleeding body right after the birth and the baby's vulnerable body wrested from his mother's arms; the raped body of the same woman; the bodies of the children having their heads shaved; Simon's body, blindfolded, led to the revealing of the truth; the fragile or strong body of Nihad/Abu Tarek/Nihad Harmanni observed in its evolution from the moment of his birth until the moment he becomes a torturer or a mere immigrant; the bodies of the twins, who are immigrants as well, also observed from the moment of their birth until the moment of the meeting with their father-brother. Briefly said, we are talking about bodies that respect the same scheme of the individual permanently out of time in relation with his own history. "The childhood is a knife stuck in the neck that cannot be easily removed⁵", both for the twins and for Nihad/Abu Tarek, therefore the whole personal history is a complete misfit. Not even Nawal Marwan's funeral does not show any sign of fitting, since the woman requires to be buried with her back turned against the world and with her face toward the ground, as a total refuse of anything until a promise will be fulfilled and the thread will be torn. Eventually, the relationship fit-misfit describes a *modus vivendi* and, even more, the body that finds itself in the middle of this dialectic is the proof of the fact that "an embodied engagement with world is in fact life itself." (Garland-Thomson, 2011, 600)

Moreover, the notary Jean Lebel and Nawal's daughter Jeanne are the only ones that seem to perceive, understand and integrate the woman's image as fitting into the world. After all, we could ask ourselves what is the thing that makes Nawal be so misfit both in the world she left and in the world she arrived? The human premise is as clear as it can be: the love she feels for Wahab, for Nihad and for the twins is the most powerful reason, both for violence, for hatred, for the promise in the beginning and for the forgiveness in the end. What is even more interesting is that Nawal seems to be a stranger in all the familial groups she participates to. Nawal is always "absent" (if we use Simon's words) both in her family, in uncle Charbel's family, in her familial relation with the twins or in the family belonging to the leader of the nationalistic group where she teaches French lessons. This explains at the same time the exclusion and the deep experience of an ontological despair expressed through the silence. Losing Wahab, Nihad/Abu-Tarek and the twins makes it impossible for Nawal to reconcile herself entirely with the past, even if she

⁵ "L'enfance est un couteau planté dans la gorge, qu'on ne le retire pas facilement" (My translation)

finds them again (less Wahab). That is the reason why the feminine being experiences throughout the movie a circuit of the violent refusal/violence related to the willing to redeem oneself. The corporeal dimension is even more important as the characters are all related to a secondary form of existence that justifies itself through genetics and blood ties. In this regard it is not by chance that this movie brings together two experiences fundamentally opposed: one is based on love and one is based on violence, supporting this powerful and paradoxical ontology of Eros and Thanatos. Love itself is known to primordially contain violence as a vital component part, if we follow Georges Bataille's formula from his book *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*. Thus, the passion invested in the Other and the destructive energy sometimes related to it determine those who feel it to (re)act. Nawal's love for Wahab and Nihad is twice self-destructive during the movie and only eventually becomes a constructive one, through the promise accomplished by her children Jeanne and Simon. Loving and hating your own torturer at the same time is a strange manner to accomplish that repetitive formula of "being together" ("Nothing is more beautiful than being together"⁶) that Nawal writes in both letters, including an exceeding love and hate feeling that needs to be tempered.

The moments illustrated in the prison of Kfar Ryat express a naturalness/naturalism and an authenticity of the corporeal experiences that reaches the paroxysm, since Nawal's song overlapped over the screams of a tortured woman resume, actually, her own ontological experience. Without a doubt, the scream and the song represent at the same time a corporeal response, a rebellious attitude and a manner of liberating itself that can be easily interpreted as misfit in the prison's environment. Singing is the only possible revolt of a rejected body, thrown away on the edge of life, incapable of ensuring its own corporeal integrity. Actually, the need for such compensation seems to be the only way of action, of corporal resistance in front of the violence/rape: "Misfitting (...) ignites a vivid recognition of our fleshliness and the contingencies of human embodiment." (Garland-Thomson, 2011, 597-598)

The resistance of the pregnant woman's body is also easily remarkable, a body that seems to have gained its own autonomy in relation to the individual willing. Always misfit and vulnerable, this body is assaulted both with love (caressed at the beginning) and violence (hit with the fists in the prison), bearing/carrying

⁶ "Rien n'est plus beau que d'être esemble" (My translation)

further its almost implacable destiny. The moment of the birth in the prison reveals a body shackled in its own condition, whose reason is annihilated in favour of laws and natural rights. Nawal gives a new dramatic and sharp meaning to affects like the shame and pride of being yourself, because she endures as a martyr the penalty for having (re)acted, for violence and vengeance, but for the atypical discourse she formulates in the prison as well (proved by her appellation “la femme qui chante” – “the singing woman”). As Lawrence said, “Shame enlarges the man” (Probyn, 2010, 81), but “in making the man larger, shame does not necessarily make him easier to understand or more likable.” (Probyn, 2010, 81) The focus set on Nawal’s handcuffs, as well as on the bloody hand of the nurse requires a spatial and temporal history understood as a personal memory of the body that is related more to the life than to the discourse. Thus, the body becomes a way of enacting the inside history, remembering the phrase Rosemarie Garland-Thomson took from Caroline Walker Bynum, “shape carries story”:

“Bynum’s concept of shape carrying story introduces temporality into encounters between body and world, in a narrative that by definition connects moments in space into a coherent form we call story. The idea that shape carries story suggests, then, that material bodies are not only in the spaces of the world but that they are entwined with temporality as well.”(Garland-Thomson, 2011, 596)

Moreover, the movie tells the story of a brutal ritual of life and death, related to the weird, almost hazardous mathematics of the human existence, but also to the hereditary law of action generating reaction, of the violence generating vengeance through violence. Consequently, this story is illustrated by Nawal’s suffering body in a hospital bed, whispering to Jean Lebel the testament, by the body of the young twins Simon and Jeanne who re-picture their own birth when they swim in the pool, by the body of those who murder and of those who are murdered as well. Even the cruelty of Nihad/Abu-Tarek originates from a brutal feeling related to the claiming of the love stolen from him through the unnatural absence of his own mother.

“Losing the track” is eventually a misfit symptom as well, but also a corporeal manifestation. What we lose is actually the track of a body, the track of a gesture that is corporeal as well, the track of a document as a discursive proof of the corporeal existence, that is why it is so difficult to accept that there can be a history

also for a missing body that we do not see or do not know anything about. The father/brother Jeanne and Simon are searching for his misfit because of an incoherent personal history which is related to a body lost every time he has to change his identity. This is the reason for this continuous reconstruction that recreates his body every time as a new birth. After all, this is the only character that has three names for three different identities throughout the movie, each one with a different logical explanation: Nihad, Abu-Tarek and Nihad Harmanni. These names' function is to reinvent a memory that has always been suffering of amnesia in order to wipe off the shame of being outside the tradition, the shame of being a child without visible parents, the shame of being a pitiless torturer and, last but not least, the shame of being the rapist of his own mother:

“Shame in Deleuze’s description comes from a complex disposition: it combines the inherent and the lived experience of social structures – the biology and biography of a person.(...) “Shame arises from a collision of bodies, ideas, histories and place.” (Probyn, 2010, 81-82)

Thus, the son-father Nihad/Abu-Tarek is an obvious model of misfit since he is characterised as both an “animal” and as a “machine”, being on both Christians’ and refugees’ side, just as his mother. From this point of view, he represents an almost mechanical movement towards the instinctive side, which has apparently nothing to do with the affective side. And after all, “shame is intrinsic to both humanity and inhumanity.” (Probyn, 2010, 82)

However, the final meeting, which is as neutral as the space where it takes place, has no mark of visible conflict, but it seems instead an ended questioning of the past. As it is proved by the last scene of the movie, the son-father Nihad, who stays in front of his mother’s tomb, is both the past (the father) and the present (the brother/the son), just as Nawal was, and keeps this mark of the misfit as an essential condition. After all, *Incendies* is not just a story about the “shape [that] carries story” (as Caroline Walker Bynum said), but much more. In this regard, if the corporeal memory becomes an essential way of being in the world, then we could transform Bynum’s words and conclude that in Villeneuve’s movie, not only the shape, but the “body [itself] carries history”.

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