Horea Poenar

I'd Rather Be a Pig than a Fascist:

How Ideology Works in Fantasy Films

ABSTRACT
Hollywood fantasy and sci-fi movies from the last two decades unveil a strict and very rigid perception of contemporary public space and of the idea of community. There is a clear ideology at work which produces an aesthetic structure adapted to the new technological forms. In this context the movies of the Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki can be construed as works on the *threshold*: they have to obey Western rules of the genre and of our times and yet they produce a certain supplement that resists being drawn into the same ideological sphere. This unresolved tension has the power to preserve for the genre of fantasy an aesthetic dimension and the hope for a possible reinvention.

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Moving Castles

In Hayao Miyazaki's excellent 2004 fantasy-go-sci-fi film *Hauru no ugoku shiro* (*Howl's Moving Castle*) there are a few details that do not fit the quite rigid structure of a Western film. Although the movie is, at surface, an adaptation of a British novel by Diane Jones (published in 1986), it chooses to go on a different path in an essential aspect, namely the activity of its key character: the wizard. Portrayed as young and capricious, but with a good heart, Howl is most of the time busy dealing with the *dark side* of the (very) human world. He repeatedly leaves his castle through the magic door into what visually seems like a terrifying black hole only to return exhausted and apparently defeated each time. His fight seems very much to be on his own, the other characters being caught in the usual narrative structures and themes of Western fantasy stories: spells that need to be removed, magic applied to insignificant things (and mainly for fun), the absolutely necessary appearance of love which mingles its way according to the same old clichés, etc. Even the evil Witch of the Waste, who at first appears mysterious enough, is abandoned to

being a comic character, harmless and ultimately quite pointless. In other words, the British book is a children book and it works as such from an ideological point of view. However, as the French critic Roland Barthes had already observed in his 1957 book, *Mythologies*[1], children stories are the perfect medium for catching them early into the net of ideology. Just as toys prepare kids for the adult work (boys will accept the idea of war and girls the reality of having children and both will get used to the rules of the market - everything is valued in terms of an exchange), Diane Jones' book is educating its readers in a very conservative way. Everything is the result of a contract, of an exchange. The removal of Sophie's spell (which makes her look old) is possible only through an exchange that removes Calcifer's spell (that keeps it in the position of the fire that fuels the moving castle). Spells, potions and wizardry memorabilia are bought and sold all over the book[2]. More importantly, the happy end is obtained only in a contract that stipulates means the abandonment of the world (which world, of course, is and will not be in turmoil again). Harmony (of the couple and of the world) is possible only when there is no other mingling with the world. This is the strongest ideological point of the book: let the system (capital) work by itself and (only) then will you and everybody else (who deserves it) be happy. Of course, there are people who will lose but they are portrayed as totally getting their due. Diane Jones' book must have made Thatcher's times look bright and proud. One can even imagine the Iron Lady smiling approvingly at this disengaged and palatable view of the world. But she would have had that smile wiped away had she watched Miyazaki's movie.
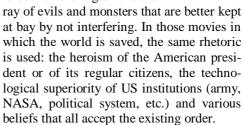
The Japanese director, in tune with his style and his earlier works (starting with his 1984 movie *Kaze no Tani no Naushika* –

Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind), is no stranger to the idea of seeking harmony and healing the world. In the 1984 film it takes the engagement and almost self-sacrifice of the female character to reverse the apocalypse produced by the pre-emptive political attitude of hitting the other because of what it might do to you. The fascist attitude of the Tolmekians in front of what they perceive as the monster-insects of the underground is justified by them in terms of (purity of) race and (necessity of) land. The defeat of the Tolmekians (whose political rhetoric speaks about cleaning the world of the *toxic* jungle) is not accomplished in the name of what would be an old Western turn of the plot: the jungle would prove in fact to be good and not toxic and, once the veil is gone, we would again see good triumph over evil and the simple logic of fantasy would be restored. The jungle *is* toxic and its creatures can be and are very evil, even at times more evil than the Tolmekians themselves. The problem and the core of the film cease to be in the justification of violence in the name of a good cause and the wiping out of what is evil. The problem is this ideology in itself: the violence of fascism and capital is not justified because there exists evil (the terrorist, the corruption, etc.), but it actually produces these evil things. The system produces toxicity, corruption and violence; it is not the other way around (the existence of corruption and terrorism imposing the necessity of a violent and fascist regime). This is what the engagement of Nausicaä makes clear: one has to break free of the ideology in order to make harmony (and community) possible. This breaking-free is not easy to do. Words and rhetoric are not enough, as one realizes quite early in the movie. It implies violence. You can only break free from ideology through a violence that affects yourself and the others. But this is a different kind of violence. One might call it emancipatory, or even revolutionary. We will return to this.

End(s) of the World - Destructive Porn

The Hollywood obsession with the end of the world is a telling phantasm. It is not a coincidence that the number of movies dealing with the apocalypse has grown considerably since the beginning of the nineties. Just as the American society was getting comfortable in the post-Reagan era of ever-growing profits and new financial markets and the cliche of the day was best resumed in Francis Fukuyama's 1992 book *The End of History* which proclaimed enthuseastically the global triumph of neoliberalism and its brand of democracy, that the need for an enemy, a hate-figure or at least a terrifying threat rose almost instantly. *Terminator 2: The Judgment Day* (1991), *Waterworld* (1995), *The Prophecy* series which started in 1995, *12 Monkeys* (1995), *Escape from LA* (1995), *Independence Day* (1996), *Armageddon* (1998), *Deep Impact* (1999), *End of Days* (1999) are just a few examples. After 2000 they have been followed by an entire wave of movies that can be quite fittingly described by the phrase *destructive porn*. They are full of images of global icons destroyed. The end of the world is perceived as a festival of all possible mechanisms of destruction: aliens, viruses, vampires, asteroids, technology, travellers from the future, terrorism, curses, spells, earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions, weapons of mass destruction, etc. In spite of this multitude of ways, the special effects are generally the same and, more important, the ideology at work is the same simple one. To imagine the end of the world is much easier and preferable than to imagine or even talk about the end of the (capitalist) system. In fact the destructive porn builds a protective phantasm. It functions in black-and-white. It suggests to the American and global viewer that any attempt to modify the system (even in cases when this system is perceived as less than perfect, it is still hailed as the best it could be) is bound to bring a whole array of evils and monsters that are better kept at bay by not interfering. In those movies in which the world is saved, the same rhetoric is used: the heroism of the American president or of its regular citizens, the technological superiority of US institutions (army, NASA, political system, etc.) and various beliefs that all accept the existing order.

This abundance of apocalyptic movies comes also at a time when the production of the so-called Hollywood Left receded both in number and quality. The liberal movies made by Hollywood got fewer and fewer or turned into an upside-down way of justifying the system. *Erin Brockovich* (2000), for example, in which a woman fights against an energy corporation, fails ideologically as a movie, because its main message is that corruption is an abnormality of the system which, once corrected, makes harmony once again possible and transforms the character into a national hero. This might have worked in 1976 (in *All the President's Men*), when American journalism was still in touch with its founding principles and the Reagan neoliberal era hadn't begun yet, but it is hardly relevant in the disaster capitalism (in the sense in which Naomi Klein defines it in the essential *The Shock Doctrine* – 2007[3]) era. The 2008 crisis and the global movements against the system have seemingly failed to attract the attention of Hollywood. Instead a Steve Jobs biopic is at work (after the Mark Zuckerberg one) on the same road of sanctifying the figures that legitimize and solidify the system.

What Does the Spectator Become

Serge Daney, the famous French critic that was at the head of *Cahiers du Cinema* in the seventies, noticed in 1991[4] that Hollywood movies were beginning to be almost exclusively created for an 8 year-old spectator. In itself, this is not a fault, considered Daney, as long as they also offer a way into maturity, one that would be more than just preparing kids for accepting the adult world. But it wasn't and it certainly is not the case. The spectator has increasingly been turned into a passive one, ever since Walter Benjamin observed[5] in the 30s how Hollywood (what we would now call *coded* Hollywood, referring to the introduction of the famous *Don'ts and Be Careful* rules[6]) was running against the democratization of cinema that happened in the Soviet films of the 20s. Directors such as Sergei Eisenstein or Dziga Vertov had transformed the (relatively) new technology not only into an art in itself (with its own autonomy and process of thinking), but also an art that was changing the political structure of the visible and through this the identity and behaviour of the spectator. Facing images that were accepting the right of everyone to be part of the visible, the spectator was more active through understanding and accepting the idea of equality for all. American cinema reacted by re-introducing the *aura* of the work of art. The image ceased to be democratic (only stars would have the right to be of interest to the discourse of the visible) and the spectator was once again kept at bay. From this point, s/he has only been given things and that meant mainly that he was sold a way of life, fashion, objects, etc.

In the case of fantasies and sci-fi movies, the spectator was led carefully in the construction of what the same Walter Benjamin would call a phantasmagory[7]. An image and a fictional universe in which the impact of the social and political context, the strangeness of new technologies and the understanding of history mix with a certain aesthetic and magic quality. Just as the new architecture of the *passages* in the Paris of the 19th century was received within a dream-structure, each epoch produces similar responses in fantasy or sci-fi. For instance, the difference between late 60s and late 70s can be exposed through the analysis, on the one side, of Stanley Kubrick's *2001. A Space Odyssey* and, on the other side, George Lucas' *Star Wars*. The hypnotic effect and the visual and cinematic exploration of the first is in touch with the Western world traversed by radical beliefs in better communities and the new conceptual universe that was about to be created by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari[8] as a *schizo* way out of capitalism, while the second one mirrors perfectly the starting decervelation of the new generation through simplistic narratives and the about-to-start reign of conservatism.
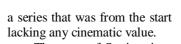
The last two decades of Hollywood have seen, in the domain of fantasy and sci-fi, an increasing turn towards the narrative structures and the visual grammar of video games. This works even more towards simplifying the universe of films, reducing the art of cinema to a presentation in front of an 8 year-old and accomplishing the rigidization of the spectator into the passive stance. The evolution can be seen by following the gradual simplification of Peter Jackson's films from *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001) to *The Hobbit 2. The Desolation of Smaug* (2013). Two images will suffice. In the first film at one point the group descends into the mines of Moria and the whole sequence up until the (apparent) Gandalf's death and the exit of the others is wonderfully balanced. The director explores different angles of the camera, different

rhythms of the image and editing and uses the music with a certain finesse that could be (and probably was) his signature. The last seconds of the sequence are probably the best. Gandalf falls into the darkness, the fight still continues but all we see are arrows that miss their targets, and the camera is concerned with the creation of a feeling of mourning (inside the narrative and into the viewer). Through this technique the spectator reacts to the image of an *other* that is no longer a character, but a human being. It is not only the *katharsis* at work, but the capacity of cinema to follow of following (or better, to be) the movement of the real, as we will see is the case, when we return to this, in the trials in the dark world beyond the magic door of Howl in Miyazaki's movie. The moment they get out of the mountain, the camera meets them from an upward position in a steady but quite fast and semicircular move that, by this technique, manages to turn the story one step further: from passive to active mourning. In other words, from lament to the work that has to be done (also) in the name of the (now) absent one. Brilliant cinema, as good as it can get in a fantasy movie at the start of the new millennium. By contrast, the scenes underground in the 2013 movie are a total disaster. What has happened in the meantime is the imposition of the grammar of video games (already at work in scenes from the second and third movie of the first trilogy). The image is now a visual surface with no depths at all. Characters act and react like small puppets required to reach higher levels of a game through a limited set of gestures and moves. Their interaction with the environment is absolutely minimal. Even the falling rocks, moving walls, flows of lava are nothing but elements that lack any capacity to create the feeling of danger and that can be avoided and conquered through easily understandable and always explained reactions. In fact there is no image anymore, but this surface

in front of which the spectator seems to watch a grotesque spectacle of himself playing a PC game. Obviously an ideological dimension is at work here: the game from the movie will be sold this way even quicker, because the positions are already established and respected, while in the case of *The Fellowhip...* the spectator was bound to discover a certain distance, an incongruity between the film and the game. No such thing now. One flows slowly into the other. Being ruled by the other. The spectator *plays* the movie and the game in the same way. This is the way in which Hollywood understands an *active* spectator.

The Valley of the Wind

Is there a place left, in this universe of cinema, for an *emancipated* spectator? Words should be used with great care. First of all, the emancipating of the spectator is not done through a message contained in the text (or form of the work of art, in this instance the image). Films that carry a message, whether openly or indirectly, are as far from the idea of emancipation as possible. This is obviously the case of propaganda films, and Leni Riefenstahl[9] comes to mind, but also a whole set of American movies from the Cold War period and afterwards (many of the apocalyptic movies being included here). It is also the case of many fantasy or sci-fi movies. *The Chronicles of Narnia* suffers from the strong Christian message and that transforms the book-series and the movies into little more than ornamentations on a theme. The episodes from *Star Wars* shot shortly after 2000 can barely hide their so-called leftish message against the Bush policies: the whole arising conflict between the Republic and the future Emperor is written in the language of American political discourse and this is another flaw of

a series that was from the start lacking any cinematic value.

The case of Soviet cinema in the 20s (but also the later works of Agnes Varda, Chris Marker, Mikhail Kalatozov and so on) is different. Although a message is present, this is the result of filmic invention and exploration and not the other way around. Soviet art during the first decade after the Revolution (before the beginning of the totalitarian and censorship period) is of paramount importance because its engagement in the name of political and social causes is done through aesthetic means and not vice-versa. In other words, stylistic revolutions produce social and political results. Eisenstein's theories of montage, Dziga Vertov's definition of cinema as *kino-pravda*, Dovzhenko's new ways of constructing images produce the democratization of the visible that started in literature with the stylistic revolution of Flaubert. At surface and for the superficial viewer, Soviet films are ideological. In truth they are much less than Hollywood cinema has ever been, because the American process has been the opposing one: images, editing and in general filmic mechanisms are the result of an ideological view of the world, not the other way around.

There is also the case of what we may call a *softer* mode of message-movies. This would be the case of transforming (or creating from the start) movies into literature. If a film is created as or can be reduced to a literary poetics, a narrative or a set of symbols, its ability to emancipate the viewer through filmic means is severely reduced. There is of course an entire Western tradition of thought based on the presumption that the spectator doesn't know how to look. Plato's myth of the cavern is probably the originary point and with it the corollary of the need of someone to guide the viewer, to help him or her out of the web of illusions. Images have been subjected to this double

movement ever since: the understanding of their illusory dimension and the extraction of their truth, this extraction making necessary all kinds of literary procedures of interpretation. But all of this happens inside a limited understanding of image.
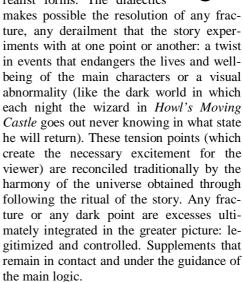
In reality, as Jacques Rancière puts it[10], there is no opposition between watching and acting. Emancipation begins when we realize that watching is also an action that confirms or redistributes the positions or the relation between what can be said, what can be seen and what can be done. Being a spectator is not by definition a passive position and certainly literature and the theory of literature have discovered that ever since the hermeneutic debates of the 19th century. Art touches on politics when it suspends the direct relation between the producing of an image and the effect that it is supposed to create, when it deconstructs and makes this interval obvious, this *écart* between several ways of framing the real, this activity being the one that creates and defines the common objects and the public space. In the case of images, emancipation is possible by following, understanding and interrogating the relation between images, their play and the way in which they relate the visible with the intelligible.

By turning the style of movies into that of PC games, we do get another type of image that is based on a different relation and one that tries to create a different viewer. By its alluring interactivity (the viewer *plays* the movie and controls the movements of the characters because he or she is familiar with their limited set of gestures), this image veils its lack of surprise. There is no longer any exploration possible and no interrogation either. The old lesson of Jean-Luc Godard[11] (there should always remain the possibility of two images) is thus lost. Unless points of tension, symptoms that defy the dominant visual or/ and narrative logic survive. And here we must return to Miyazaki's movies.

The language of images is not, strictly speaking, a language. Rather, it is an intersection between diverging dimensions that concern the visible, the sound, the silences and the narrative. As such, its force is not to be found where all the tensions are resolved (usually in a monovocal discourse) but where they remain and create points of intensity. The image-time was defined by Gilles Deleuze[12] in similar terms: a single present is in fact traversed by different peaks and sheets of time and, in the resulting crystals of time, the viewer is able to access elements of perception that are otherwise unattainable.

A symptom shows that something escapes the main logic of a discourse or a work of art. In the case of *Howl's Moving Castles*, the main logic comes from the book of the British author and, as we have noticed at the beginning of this text, it is deeply ideological. The movie however seems often at odds with this logic and although it follows it at the end, a tension remains unresolved. The sudden resolution, the harmony at the end of the movie and especially the idea that the dark conflict that was traversing the whole story has now ended and there is no other danger in sight seem forced.

First and foremost, the *happy-end* is the utopian resolution of each possible fantasy. It is part of the code of the genre and without it a discussion about the narrative and literary form of a certain work would have to take place. Being such an important element in the structure of the genre, the *happy-end* makes necessary an artificial universe that the entire fiction has to build and protect. This *building* and *protecting* is done through a constant dialectics between the visible and the story. The artificiality of the action is demanded by its imposed ending, this rigid frame that is already at work in the horizon of expectation of the spectator. To reaffirm it, the story needs to be coupled with a visually artificial universe, clearly detached from realist forms. The dialectics makes possible the resolution of any fracture, any derailment that the story experiments with at one point or another: a twist in events that endangers the lives and well-being of the main characters or a visual abnormality (like the dark world in which each night the wizard in *Howl's Moving Castle* goes out never knowing in what state he will return). These tension points (which create the necessary excitement for the viewer) are reconciled traditionally by the harmony of the universe obtained through following the ritual of the story. Any fracture or any dark point are excesses ultimately integrated in the greater picture: legitimized and controlled. Supplements that remain in contact and under the guidance of the main logic.

However when fiction intersects the so-called *real* fiction that is society, the pure performance of fantasy is derailed. The supplement escapes, breaks free from the main logic. It remains uncontrollable, irrational and thus a tension without resolution. The *dark* dimension in Miyazaki's movie is such a case. From a narrative point of view, very little is revealed, which is contrary to the traditional necessity of the genre, namely the more disturbing is an element of the action, the higher the need to recapture it in the narrative, to find its place in the general harmony. What we know is just that the conflict is of a paramount level of violence, that both (human) sides are equally to blame and that, bereft of the possibility to find a good cause, one is rendered incapable in front of the general explosion of violence. Visually, however, these scenes are powerful. Miyazaki's signature use of technology coupled with monstrosity, his elegant drawing strokes and use of colour make these short parts in the movie not only a counterbalance to the lively colours and funny

elements that happen in the rest of it, but a constant threat and a dominant atmosphere throughout the movie, including its end. Thus *fantasy* is unbalanced and remains so. And because of this derailment, we are entitled to use the term *political* to describe these scenes.

The images have the ability to express the tension that traverses the common experience, the public space. They contain and make visible the lack of certitude in any gesture seeking justice, in any action trying to bring together, in a totalizing narrative, the sparse elements of the world and of the community. They are political not in the sense of carrying a message or in assuring the circulation of things in tune with a certain ideology. These would be two definitions of politics that are not at work here or anywhere in Miyazaki's movies, namely politics understood as the dogma of one party or another, on the one side, and politics as circulation, as police, as order, on the other side. In a recent text[13], Jacques Rancière explains the relation of cinema with politics. There are, in his view, two possibilities: the political elements that the story contains, borrows from or traverses into reality (for example in *Porco Rosso*, Miyazaki's 1992 movie) and the political strategy of the text itself. This second possibility names the way in which the political forms are reinvented through different manners of art. Politics is not something that precedes art, but the result of its aesthetic inventions and creativity. One can recall here Rancière's key analyses[14] of how Flaubert, through stylistic invention and exploration, obtained political effects in the real world, much more important than those searched by an enrolled and militant art. The same can be said about Soviet cinema in the 20s and its democratization of the visible through visual exploration and not the message carried at surface.

Because of this presence of politics, in this understanding of the word, the spectator is no longer permitted to be a passive one. Or, to put it differently, in order to get back to the comfort of passivity, he or she is required to make the effort of dealing with the supplement of tension that the movie leaves unsolved in spite of the *happy-end*. A possibility of emancipation exists and therein lies the hope of Miyazaki's movies (and not in its closed and almost conservative narrative).

Porco Rosso

The story of the 1992 movie relates to *real* politics in two ways. First, there is the portrayal of the world between the two World Wars with the rising of fascism in Italy. Then, there is the Balkan conflict of the 90s which started during the making of the film and directly influenced Miyazaki. Thus this can be considered the Japanese director's most political film in the first meaning of the word defined by Rancière in the manner mentioned above. It may also be so from the perspective of the second meaning of the word. The movie revolves around the character of former World War I fighter-pilot Marco Pagot, now known to the world as Porco Rosso, due to his sudden metamorphosis into an anthropomorphic pig. This transformation is never totally explained in the movie. At one point, during a confession made in the second part of the movie, he recalls a night during the war in which a strange experience and a sudden detachment from the fight itself (he blacks out, then he sees entire bands of planes, enemy or not, being drawn into the horizon, images similar to the invasion of the skies in *Howl's Moving Castles*, only this time there is no darkness in this sublime procedure towards death, but a lot of light) resulted in his transformation. The film is careful not to let

any easy symbolism take hold of the viewer. No traditional explanations suffice. There are no spells or curses to detect and undo and although at the end a reversed transformation seems to have taken place, the framing of the shot keeps the head of Porco out of our view and we are only left to interpret the reaction of one of the characters. Porco's own explanation doesn't reveal too much: he thinks that his detachment from the fight (his fleeing) resulted in a punishment. In this case the possible reversal at the end could be a kind of atonement (more than the result of the kiss from the girl) obtained through his engagement all throughout the movie both against bounty-seeking pirates and fascist military. Once again, the conflicts are not in black-and-white. Porco, a flawed character, finds himself in the middle of a conflict in which it is very difficult to discern the good from the evil. In this direction, Miyazaki once again takes a stand against superficial understandings of the world.

There is however another hint in the movie that we have to consider. At one point Porco makes a direct statement about himself in terms of a choice. He puts it bluntly: "I'd much rather be a pig than a fascist". Given the complex universe of the movie, its dialectics between the visual and the story, this statement is much more than an aside line of dialogue. Especially when we take into consideration the unbalanced character of the film from a genre-defining point of view. It could be a fantasy if the line leading from the metamorphosis to the (apparent) restoration to normality through the kiss of the girl would be followed strictly and would constantly be under the focus of the film. It is not, even though this line of development is not blocked. It could be a historical movie, interested in the portrayal of a certain political and social context, but the bizarreness of its main character being an anthropomorphic pig makes this framing

superficial. One must however remember here that the story is inspired from a previous manga, written and drawn by Miyazaki, which repositions the rules of Western animation stories. This difference between Miyazaki's ideas and Western (mainly US) definitions was visible from early on. The US version of *Nausicaa...* was heavily cut and the complexity of the film was reduced to a simple story for kids. In other words, it was re-inscribed within the ideological frames acceptable to the US industry from the 80s (traversed by the Reagan conservatism and the Cold War hysteria that came with it). The Japanese director was so upset that from that moment on he introduced a specific clause in contracts with international distributors that forbade them to make any changes. One of the "side-effects" of this was that Miyazaki's works did not fit into existing and acceptable frames and so a film like *Porco Rosso* had to be received as a film inventing its own genre. At this point we can return to Rancière's second definition of the political: reinvention through the different manners and mechanisms of art. It is clearly this that the film is doing, especially for the Western viewer, seduced more and more into the passive stance of an 8 year-old PC gamer (and PC here could also stand for political correctness – that is to say, as Alain Badiou[15] would put it: keeping politics out of it, which is exactly the definition of ideology).

No explanation is given for why the pig is red. Obviously there are certain elements that could lead towards the communist scenario. One of them is the planned sequel to the movie that Miyazaki has has in mind for a while, known so far under the title *Porco Rosso: The Last Sortie*, in which the character returns as an old pilot during the Spanish Civil War, obviously on the side of the Reds, continuing his life-long fight against fascism. However we should

not forget that the 1992 film was created during a period in which the idea of communism was suffering aggressive attacks from many sides and Porco himself is far from fitting into the simplified figure of a leftist. More likely his *redness* is more a form of melancholy for the idea of a better world, but in an era that looks to be beyond all hopes on a grand scale, beyond all historical narratives capable of integrating and ordering the world. The movie is in touch with two periods of similar melancholic power: the Balkans of the post-World War I period and the same area in the early 90s. As such the main interest of the movie is more in relation to what remains human (and of humanity and humanism) when all ideologies fail and their end is not at all the harmony of a post-history Fukuyama-kind-of world (this proves to be the strongest ideology, the most powerful fantasy at work), but the re-surface of violence and fascism in its many complex forms. In this aspect (and in many others) Miyazaki's movie is very much a movie of our times. Porco is also in touch, up to a point at least, with the wizard character in the later movie. They are both melancholic characters and Howl is even closer to a melancholy related with an apocalyptic atmosphere, like in Lars von Trier's 2010 *Melancholia*, another movie about the end of the world that is completely at odds with the usual Hollywood hullabaloo that leads nowhere.

Through this melancholy the two characters escape the grasp of ideology that is so firmly gripped on the current state of the genre. The movies in which these two characters (Porco and Howl) act are more in the position of works on the threshold, balanced between the necessary compromise with the Western narrative and visual structures, and the possibility of leading, in parts, away from them like Deleuzian lines of flight. This is not a marginal position, but a key

one. In a way (and from the perspective of our search for the emancipated spectator) they are not leading to hope. They *are* this hope.

Notes

[1] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Éditions du Seuil, 1957.
[2] The world is in Kantian terms unethical. No gesture is made out of pure generosity, apart from these forays of the main character into the darkness, a darkness that proves to have no other nightmarish character, apart from the fact that it is produced and sustained by humans.
[3] Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Knopf Canada, 2007.
[4] The explanation appears in an interview given to Regis Debray for the French television on the 4th of May, 1991: *Serge Daney: itinéraire d'un cinéfils*. For more on the same theme, see Serge Daney, *L'exercice a été profitable, Monsieur*, P.O.L., 1993.
[5] There are several places in which Benjamin refers to this, but it is better presented in his famous *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* from 1936, available in several English translations.
[6] Also known as the Hays code, after the name of Hollywood's chief censor at the time, it was adopted in 1930 and started being aggressively enforced from 1934. In 1968 it was replaced by a different code.
[7] The concept is fundamental for the understanding of Benjamin's monumental and unfinished project *Das Passagen-Werk* published posthumously much later in German at Suhrkampf in 1983.
[8] Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *L'Anti-Oedipe*, Les Editions de Minuit, 1972.
[9] We are obviously referring here to her 1935 movie *Triumph des Willens*, that glorifies the Third Reich.

[10] Jacques Rancière, *Le spectateur émancipé*, La fabrique, 2008.

[11] Exposed for the first time in his 1956 essay *Montage, mon beau souci* published in no. 65 of *Cahiers du cinéma*.

[12] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 2, L'Image-temps*, Les Editions du Minuit, Paris, 1985.

[13] Jacques Rancière, *Les écarts du cinéma*, Paris, La Fabrique, 2011.

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