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Clockwork Cuckoos - Affect and Charming Criminals in the Counterculture

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to provide an insight into the process which guides readers' reception of countercultural literature in the context of post-war Society. In particular, the piece wants to highlight the pivotal role of fictional subversive protagonists in the creation of polarised emotional reactions to their social activities, in accordance with affective theories and Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "Abstract Machine", operating inside a heteroglot social environment.

Focusing on the historical and cultural context of the 1950s and 1960s – on the background of the Cold War and the prominent interest in modern psychiatry, – this thesis analyses instances of affective impact, coming from works of fiction, on different typologies of readers. Moreover, it highlights the significance of this plurality of responses as result of a movement of affect towards emotion, movement whose direction is established by the conscious process of elaboration of external inputs.

By examining Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, this thesis also identifies linguistic devices and narrative techniques employed by the authors in their works to foreground elements related to those socio-political issues relevant to the context of Counterculture; linguistic devices and narrative techniques which allow for a more effective activation of the conscious elaboration of affect.

INTRODUCTION

The lingering presence of the Counterculture, a movement whose identity was shaped by the younger generations of the 1950s and 1960s and subsequently raging during the 1970s, seems to be still present and relevant in the 21st century, after more than fifty years from its establishment and eventual closure. Despite being part of a past that - due to the quick technological developments offered by capitalism - rapidly decreases in relatability, the fascination towards the countercultural movement and the universality of its principles does not seem to fade. That of Counterculture, especially at its beginning, did not resemble an organised movement of opposition but it could be perceived as a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction for certain values coming from the establishment, values which pertained to a mechanistic view in which the individual had to be functional for the economic growth of capitalistic societies based on labour. As the Counterculture became more popular among groups of younger generations across the Western World, some cultural products became relevant as part of its unofficial "manifesto" as they incorporated and expanded the principles guiding this opposing current. Particularly, Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) and Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) became extraordinarily famous at the time for their depiction of contemporary problems through the eye of their silenced, subversive protagonists and their arguably visible invitation to rebuke those aspects of society which favoured the proliferation of the issue.

This work aims at identifying and analysing the affective processes activated and performed by the novel as a producer of meaning and by the reader as its recipient in the specific context of post-war society. Indeed, it will focus on the role of affect, how it intervenes and operates in the creation of an individual response in the subject's interiority despite being influenced by the external environment of history and of culture. The thesis will specifically concentrate on the mode of arrangement - through the

Abstract Machine - of the affective forces activated by the events unfolding during the 1950s and 1960s (the Cold War, the establishment of Late Capitalism and the rise of Youth Culture) and registered by the individual. Affective theories indeed are fundamental to understand the connection between internal and external inputs that participated in creating an environment favourable for the production and the reception of Burgess's and Kesey's novels, two pieces that will eventually become representative of the countercultural generations. Moreover, it will observe which structures and patterns allowed the two pieces of fiction to acquire the relevance afforded to them by their audience as countercultural products. Indeed, observing events characterising the historical and cultural environment in which they were produced and published, the thesis will delineate the relationship between the novels as producers of affectively charged meaning directed towards an affectively engaged audience, in order to recognise which elements concurred to their effectiveness as a medium of social protest and opposition.

The first chapter of the work analyses the historical period that developed after the conclusion of the Second World War, in relation to the aftermath of the conflict, but also in relation to the visible continuation of the ideological opposition that characterised the 20th century and to the efforts that Western powers, especially the United States of America, devoted to the reconstruction of a broken world. Indeed, starting from the 1950s, many European countries, together with America, became subjects of a significant economic growth which also allowed a significant cultural development. It becomes fundamental then to focalise the impact that different aspects of everyday life and of its modifications had on the citizens and the way in which these historical occurrences effected and directed all aspects of the change occurring in the decade of 1950s – which preceded the Counterculture - and that of the 1960s in which the first seeds of this movement of opposition became more and more visible.

The most prominent force guiding the events of the two decades is undoubtedly Late Capitalism as an economic, social and cultural current that favoured a new wave of industrial advancement and economic flourishing from its quick rise during the 1950s to its definitive establishment in the 1980s. The direct and visible consequence of the impact of Capitalism on a global scale was a massification of the culture through "old

and new media" like books, radios and the still developing medium of television, which resulted in a conformity of cultural taste across both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Globalisation of culture then plays a most fundamental role in building an international audience capable to receive and subsequently produce culture based on the same underlining socio-historical background. Jameson (1991) reflects on the dynamic relationship between Late Capitalism as an all-encompassing economic system leading to globalisation and its cultural manifestation and translation in the notion of Postmodernism: recognising such association and the importance of a new idea of Western culture is de facto fundamental to understand the importance of media as part of a cultural production distinctly associated or opposed to the Western ideology of the establishment. The chapter specifically follows two directions which present two different ramifications of Capitalism as the powerful force whose authority and influence appear to shape the Western world in the post-war period: the Cold War and the first visible manifestations of youth counterculture. Both aspects are analysed through the possibility of them to be affectively associated to the notion of threat according to Jameson's (1991) and Massumi's (2021) points of view: if Communism represents an external threat to Western values that needs to be contained, youth culture appears to be a domestic threat to decency in need of correction.

The second chapter focuses on the mechanisms that regulate the circulation of information coming from the context described in the previous chapter towards individual subjectivity, in connection to Massumi's (2002) affect theories. This movement and actualisation of meaning follows specific directions described in accordance with the system of the Abstract Machine as initially theorised by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). The chapter's aim is to understand how certain historical events are absorbed by the individual and how they shape each subject's comprehension of the context and influence their production of meaning, through (inter-)subjectivity. The emotional response resulting from the meaning associated to an experience or a cultural product thus favours the configuration of a precise set of values in the subject, values which can also distance themselves from those of the establishment. As our set of values and ideological position in relation to the dominant class depend on the integration of multiple inputs coming from experience, the Abstract Machine describes how these

sources are absorbed and elaborated by the informational body. The notion of informational body corresponds to the definition of biomediated body posited by Clough (2010), who examines the fundamental connection between the body that developed from the 1950s, whose organisation depended on the information received by the media, and the historical occurrences unfolding across the environment, on a socio-cultural basis. The attention to affect in both a neurological and a philosophical domain of research then appears to confirm that individuals operate in relation to the outside, for they integrate multiple sources of experience, both real and fictional, and register them on multiple levels – conscious and unconscious – to then elaborate them in order to create meaning. Establishing this concept seems to be extremely useful to delineate the importance of entertainment products and specifically of novels as imaginative media reflecting their historical context: as the novel effectively substitutes and expands real experience and engages the audience in its story, fiction plays a fundamental role as propagator of affect and as a milieu which is capable to actively influence the individual's comprehension of experience. Because readers as subjects integrate multiple sources and inputs to form the totality of experience itself, the emotional response elicited by a certain novel represents the reader's privileged choice among the multiplicity of possibilities, aspect which contributes to the reader's adherence to a specific ideological position. Novels such as *A Clockwork Orange* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* then – underlining specific issues of their time and expressing their connection to certain socio-political positions – polarised the reactions of their audience and, when met with sympathy, contributed to the creation of that collective conscience which formed the oppositional movement of the counterculture.

The third chapter observes the foregrounding techniques employed by the novels to effectively engage their audience in their denounce of social injustices, in order to understand the ways in which fiction integrally contributed to the establishment of a countercultural manifesto. Indeed, as written media operating through language to express meaning and propagate affect, novels are structurally different from other text forms in their employment of language to engage their audience. The chapter then analyses the role of language techniques to achieve defamiliarization (Miall & Kuiken, 1994) in the audience, a process which proves effective in distancing readers from modes

of speech used in real life and to which the audience is habituated. Defamiliarization is made possible through the recognition of any historical context as a field in which a plurality of positions, social layers and languages co-exist and communicate, according to Bakhtin's (1981) notion of heteroglossia. As society adopts the mode of experience and communication of the dominant class, forms of expression that aim at distancing themselves from those positions employ different language modalities and techniques in order to impact the habituated audience more effectively.

Particularly, Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* share some visible linguistic patterns and techniques to underline problematic aspects of their historical period. The characterisation of the problematic protagonist inserted in a dysfunctional environment, the use of the internal point of view to describe the impact of institutional violence on the protagonist, together with the will to highlight linguistic variations as valuable modes of expression, are some among the techniques employed by the authors in their fictional pieces. Such processes of foregrounding then become fundamental to denounce unethical responses coming from the establishment to the potential threat that different social groups posed to the capitalistic values of the dominant class.

Overall then, this thesis aims at analysing the position and qualities of countercultural novels and their consolidation of movements of opposition using two popular pieces belonging to the unofficial manifesto of the movement. In the context of the Cold War, of the establishment of Late Capitalism and of the globalised development of affective theories, *A Clockwork Orange* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* became overly popular not only for their inherent message of protest against an insidiously coercive system but also for their effectiveness of their formal qualities in the complex cultural environment of Postmodernism.

1. THREAT, VIOLENCE AND DISCIPLINE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POST-WAR PERIOD

1.1. Postmodernism, Late Capitalism and the Assimilation Of The Threat

The post-war period – starting from the second half of the 1940s – opens a new chapter in history and in culture, as it sees the passage from totalitarianisms, and modernity, to what has been defined as *Postmodernism*. The umbrella term of the Postmodern – appearing as early as the 1940s and consequently becoming popular in the 1950s – has been employed by Jameson in relation to the notion of Late Capitalism. The two concepts appear closely tied as they represent parallel manifestations of those changes which visibly realised in the period that followed the conclusion of the Second World War. Indeed, the decade of the 1950s was characterised by a pervasive economic growth which was more or less directly propelled by American military and financial support benefitting European countries as much as the United States, due to the establishment of liberal democracies in most Western countries. According to Jameson then

> the *cultural* and the *economic*, thereby collapse back into one another and say the same thing, in an eclipse of the distinction between base and superstructure that has itself often struck people as significantly characteristic of post-modernism in the first place. [This] is also to suggest that the base, in the third stage of capitalism, generates its superstructures with a new kind of dynamic (1991, p.xxi, emphasis in the original text).

Jameson continues underlining the two main characteristics of Late Capitalism, "a tendential web of bureaucratic control [and] the interpenetration of government and big business ('state capitalism')" (1991, p.xviii), as a totalising system that however cannot employ forms of open disciplining already recognised, opposed and subsided during the first half of century. Late Capitalism thus aims at a perverse "naturalisation" of certain forms of *organisation* of society and therefore its *control.* According to the author the success of this process is not the result of the modification of a Marxist framework in relation to the previous century but rather of its expansion. The product of this modification is a "purer version of capitalism, [more comprehensive as] precapitalist [elements and groups] have systematically been penetrated, commodified, and assimilated to the dynamics of the system" (Stephanson & Jameson, 1989, p.13). Massumi even defines it in term of vampirism, as capitalism "sucks value from pre-existing formations, but in killing them endows them with an eternal afterlife" (2021, p.303), while assuring the end of communism in the traditional sense. The progressive and inexorable conglobation of the political, the economic and the cultural coming from multiple socio-cultural directions favours a mutual interpenetration of concepts relating to these spheres with an intensity and a degree of occurrence not yet registered in previous historical periods, phenomenon which "seems to obligate you in advance to talk about cultural phenomena at least in business terms if not in those of political economy" (Jameson, 1991, p.xxi).

The dialectical nature of Postmodernism as cultural production belonging to a capitalist framework undoubtedly posits that aesthetic production cannot be detached form economic production of commodity, as cultural products usually manifest and carry values belonging to the ruling class. It can be stated then that as a polarising centre of development - both in economic and in ethical terms – postmodern culture is the outcome of a "global yet American [influence, being] the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world" (Jameson, 1991, p.5).

The most notable effect of the process of "indirect Americanisation" that globalisation really is, then is the explosion and proliferation of a multitude of cultural sources, products and forms of expression made available to a large number and different

varieties of subjects across the Western World. While the process makes an analysis of historical and cultural specificities more difficult, it also provides the means for a "democratisation" of cultural production, reproduction and reception. Indeed Jameson reports that if this "modification in the very nature of the cultural sphere [entails] a loss of the autonomy of culture, [it allows, on the other hand], the experience of culture [to become] accessible to far more people" (1989, p.12). The massification of culture, possible especially in relation to the diffusion of mass media, assured the capillary presence not only of commercial products such as broadcast and movies but also of more subtle methods to transmit information and news and to assure their reproduction. Specifically, the intrinsic nature of mechanical reproduction deeply affected the impact of the source on an audience. Cultural production indeed depends on practices related to a determinate tradition that assures authenticity in relation to the product's function. According to Benjamin however mechanical reproduction removes the cultural product from its context of origin, aspect which affects its pretence for authenticity as well. The natural consequence of this process is that "the total function of [any form of cultural production] is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics" (2006, p.23). In this historical and cultural framework then, modes of production and reproduction of information – would it be of a fictional text or a piece of news – represent one of the numerous techniques through which political ideology of Late Capitalism realises a process of conditioning, whose objective is to indirectly "adjust" and control bodies. The operational modalities respond to Foucault's definition of *society of control,* an "increasingly total system or logic [which progressively negates] the impulses of negation and revolt, not to speak of those of social transformation, [for they] are increasingly perceived as vain and trivial in the face of the model itself" (Jameson, 1991, p.5-6). It is inside this encapsulating system that reproduction of cultural inputs operate as mechanisms of conditioning.

Postmodernism and its inherent characteristics de facto allow the realisation of what Massumi defines "a fundamentally *aesthetic approach to politics*" (2021, p.317, emphasis added) which – according to the author – moves through affect and which also assures that "*the political [will become] directly felt*" (2021, p.317, emphasis in the original text) instead of declared. This occurrence, while indirectly affording the subjects

with a higher degree of perception of experience, given the pervasiveness of information, also renders them more vulnerable to episodes of micro-aggression coming from the outside, especially when the "violent source" is the same system whose policies should protect the subject. Political experience and perception then becomes the result of a plurality of inputs existing inside the force field of postmodernity (Jameson, 1991, p.25), a point of view also shared by Massumi's affective interpretation of the same historical context.

Specifically, the massification of cultural reproduction is responsible for the shift towards an atemporal history that does not account for a traditional chronology of experience, but which instead functions following the temporality of affect, the present of affective perception. Here the subject is always an active, open, recipient of inputs coming from the external context. Jameson indeed remarks that

> this present of the world or material signifier comes before the subject with heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious charge of affect, here described in the negative terms of anxiety and loss of reality, but which one could just as well imagine in the positive terms of euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity (1991, p.27-28).

Affect then enters history as a gateway for a reaction, a response which – Massumi states – "also acts in potential. It operates even when it doesn't pass fully into action" (2021, p.317). Actualisation itself then is not required to legitimise affect, as the latter merely needs to be perceived, in relation to a *potential* enemy. The most obvious manifestation of an "enemy" functioning as a source of affect is identifiable in the notion of *threat*, a potential for violence that makes itself *felt* to more or less willingly involved subjects. Massumi claims that the particularity of a threat as a possible event is that it is "self-causing", insofar as it is the *perception itself* of the threat that makes it real (2010, p.54).

Despite analysing Bush's position on Iraq, Massumi highlights some (interestingly) universal aspects concerning the notion of threat as a phenomenon that

> [even if] not actually real can be felt into being. Threat does have an actual mode of existence: fear, as foreshadowing. Threat has an impending reality in the present. This actual reality is affective. Fear is the anticipatory reality in the present of a threatening future (2010, p.54).

The events concerning the Cold War and the countercultural movements that developed in the same period accurately represented perceived menaces plausibly preceding an escalation of events that could have led to open violence. A realistic possibility, as the aftermath of the latest open conflict was still visible and part of the world's collective memory, especially in relation to the dangers of a nuclear war. Massumi indeed concludes stating that "whether the danger is existent or not, the menace was felt in the form of fear" (2010, p.53-54). Even though the degrees of fear and apprehension are subjective and thus more object of assumption rather than a certainty, it is reasonable to suppose that the events covered by newspapers, broadcasting media and products of entertainment contributed to the creation of a pervasive state of anxiety in the population. Massumi states that "the felt reality of a threat is not dissimilar from a 'gut feeling'" (2010, p.55), which inhabits the subjects and expectedly intrudes into their daily life. Starting from the years immediately after the Second World War, it is possible to recognise the succession of escalating occurrences regarding both domestic and foreign affairs of numerous countries in the Western World. Such events arguably fostered a mounting climate of fear and disorientation in citizens and resulted in an environment that prompted, among other significant events, the publication of Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in 1962. Noticeably, the two publications appeared in the same year in which the world came the closest to the actualisation of an open nuclear conflict between USA and USSR. In spite of the plurality of events not being causally connected, it is reasonable to suppose that the prolonged exposure of the citizens of the Western World to inputs coming from an

insidiously hostile environment might have propelled a cultural production aimed at denouncing and exorcizing anxieties resulting from those contingencies.

1.1.1. The Cold War – Communism as External Threat

The Cold War certainly represented the most pervasive and totalising issue characterising those years: the beginning of the war traditionally corresponds to the day, 5 March 1946, in which Churchill delivered his famous speech "The Sinews of Peace", where the concept of the Iron Curtain was mentioned for the first time. Referring to that period as "anxious and baffling times", Churchill underlines a number of different issues that will characterise the following years as well. Firstly, as Russian and Anglo-American relations had progressively deteriorated in the previous months, the former Prime Minister openly referred to the Communist State as a threat for the Western World and its ethos, a power to be feared had they been as advanced as the United States in scientific research concerning the atomic bomb. Indeed, despite renewing his sympathies for Stalin, Churchill famously mentions that

> a shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victory. Nobody knows what Soviet Russia and its Communist international organisation intends to do in the immediate future, or what are the limits, if any, to their expansive and proselytising tendencies (1946).

He then continued his speech underlining the existence of an Iron Curtain which descended across Europe, and beyond which lie "Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. [All of them now] subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow" (1946).

In both this section of the speech and on the following one, Churchill voiced his concerns and anxieties that were privately shared by governments, but which were also source of speculation among the citizens. Arguably, the public resonance of the "Iron Curtain Speech" both contributed to and most definitely solidified concerns that were already circulating. Indeed, the *New York Times* reports, on March 6, that Churchill "painted a dark picture of post-war Europe, [as] he strongly intimated a parallel between the present position of the Soviet Union with that of Germany in 1935" (Hinton, 1946), a parallel which must not have been lost on the audience. British newspapers commented on the speech as well, with a journalist writing for *The Times* commenting on the potential mistake made by Churchill in "appearing to present Western democracy and Communism and irreconcilable opposites" while criticising Soviet policies.

Reporting Truman's speech as well, the *New York Times* quotes the President of the United States when he made public declarations on the possibility of heading towards "complete destruction" as a result of an open nuclear conflict. The memorability of Churchill's Iron Curtain moreover assured that the term would appear in the titles of numerous articles published in the following years, or would frequently be quoted in broadcast s, factually conserving and carrying its original – and still actual – throughout the entirety of the Cold War.

Tracing an essential chronology of the events defining the Cold War which also had a discrete public resonance, it is possible to highlight that – starting from 1946 – the threat of Communist expansion and penetration - together with the ever increasing possibility of an open and violent reaction from an already hostile enemy - was a realistic scenario, reiterated through both entertainment media and news sources. Particularly, the first half of the 1950s has been connotated by the birth of the Truman Doctrine but, most of all, the period is commonly referred to as the "Red Scare" in relation to McCarthyism. In February 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy revealed to the public that a letter had been sent to the President of the United States, containing dangerous allegations towards the American government as a model of liberal democracy. McCarthy claimed to possess a list of more than 200 communists who were working in the offices of the government. The media coverage of the episode was extensive, marking the beginning of the Red

Scare, years in which the threat of communist subversive activities possibly mining the democratic foundation of a country was perceived and amplified by the circumstances. As McCarthy's hearings were broadcast on radio and television, Americans were involved in their developments, which spanned four years. Even though McCarthy was eventually censored and gradually marginalised from his position in the Government as the nature of both his allegations and his methods were debunked, the public nature of his investigations allowed them to acquire huge relevance throughout those years. This constituted one of the factors contributing to the potential feeling of collective paranoia and fear regarding the communist threat, as the archives of the *New York Times* prove. The latter indeed reveal an extensive quantity of articles concerning espionage and reactions coming from the Government to contrast subversive activities connected to Communism. Kershaw specifically reports that

> [citizens were effectively] influenced by the information they received from political parties and their leaders, the mass media and social commentators and influential individuals at various levels. Western European governments [as well] were successful for the most part in instilling in the citizens of their countries profound anti-Soviet views and its counterpoint – a belief in the security provided by the United States of America, widely seen as Western Europe's saviour and the guarantee of its future wellbeing (2019).

Indeed more than 120 articles - spanning the decade of the 1950s - openly mention spies and hearings, including details on trials and testimonies on attempted infiltrations. Moreover such morsels of information and their impact on the citizens were fuelled by entertainment, which played an important role in influencing its audience as fictional stories have always represented a popular and influential form of expression and propaganda. Specifically in the 1950s it is possible to witness the "invention" and flourishing of the genre of the spy story, created as part of the Cold War cultural production.

Fletcher recognises that

> spy novels have propagated illusions about the relationship between the USSR
> and America. This kind of thriller literature thrives on conflict; [therefore,] the
> cold war has provided, and still does provide a basic framework for many spy
> stories. As a result, the spy novel has merely reflected, and thereby reinforced,
> popular beliefs and prejudices (1987, p.321).

Notably, the most popular authors of spy novels started to publish between the 1950s
and the 1960s: Ian Fleming's first Bond novel *Casino Royale* appeared in 1953, while
John Le Carré's debut novel *Call for the Dead* was published in 1961. Both authors were
employed in the British secret services and thus familiar with those dynamics
characterising espionage in the opposition between the Eastern and Western blocs.
Particularly, Fleming's rise to notoriety and the success of novels accompanied the
official news and contributed to the establishment of a certain spy culture and a new
level of knowledge surrounding espionage and covert operations, as he was the first
author who, publishing outside the United States, could refer to the CIA openly. Indeed,
even if in the US the CIA was engaging in covert actions aimed at fighting and
neutralising the Soviet threat, its activities were mostly secret. Moran (2014) remarks
that it was exactly this secrecy that allowed popular culture – and specifically the
fictional genre of the spy story – to thrive: its popularisation was the result of an already
underlining interest of the public in certain developments and events characterising their
contemporary historical context but also of the sense of uncertainty they had created.
Cultural production and entertainment then seemed powered and supported by a
collective feeling of uneasiness towards the environment. As Moran underlines,

> popular culture was for a long time the only means by which ordinary citizens,
> *provided they wanted to know*, could ascertain much about the agency. […]
> Although cultural representations of the CIA might not have told audiences what

to think, they surely played a role in informing them what to think about (2014, emphasis in the original text).

The success of the genre provides proof of the audience's keen interest in the activities connected to the events of the Cold War. Also, as Fleming's novels were the first texts directly mentioning covert Anglo-American missions, the popularity of spies in fiction provides meaningful ground to assume that fiction and reality were able to influence each other. Considering this framework and the impact that popular novels and their film adaptations had on the public, it is understandable how the mutual influence between the events unfolding in that period of time and the related cultural production cultivated the audience's anxiety towards the visible threat of Communism throughout the 1950s.

Thus, in the beginning of the 1960s and until 1962 – year in which the world came closest to the nuclear conflict between the US and the USSR – the media attention involving the Russian (and the atomic) threat certainly was not subsided. The events, fuelled and amplified by the public attention of the previous decade, deeply affected Western citizens as they became affectively involved in the occurrences unfolding in their environment. With both sides of the Iron Curtain obviously using the other's moves for propagandistic purposes, the desire of publicity and media coverage of war-related events represented more one of the desired effects of the political conflict instead of being considered "collateral damage". Indeed, it was Premier Khrushchev himself who reported – on 5 March 1960 – that a few days prior an American U-2 spy plane had invaded Russian territory. The increasingly open hostilities shown by Khrushchev as a reaction to the false statements released by President Eisenhower on the issue, resulted in an international incident: the amount and the nature of the articles focusing their attention on the threat was at an all-time high. Indeed, in an article published on the front page of the *New York Times* - dated May 5 – journalist William Jorden reported of officials thinking that Khrushchev "seemed to be giving *advanced warning* that the Allied leaders could expect little softness from him at the Paris meeting" (1960, emphasis added) due to begin in ten days, where both Eisenhower and Khrushchev

eventually appeared to display hostile behaviour towards each other. The front page of the *New York Times* of the day following the Paris meeting (17 May) read "U.S. – Soviet clash disrupts summit talks", suggesting an escalation in the hostility between the countries. Moreover James Reston writes that "on the open record, there was a *crisis of impressive dimensions*. Nikita Khrushchev, Premier of the Soviet Union, had levelled a *charge of 'treachery'* against the President of the United States" (1960, emphasis added). The article also reported Khrushchev's refusal to negotiate any possible private and peaceful resolution for the U-2 plane incident instead deciding to effectively exploit the situation for propaganda. Through its language, the article translated the difficult situation unfolding in those days, in which the two powers appeared to have reached their "boiling point", charging the report with negative connotation that transpired so sharply. Such anxiety and the looming feeling of uncertainty concerning the future, shared by common people, was one of the main points touched by Eisenhower in his 1961 Farewell Address. In the televised speech, the President expressed his hopeful sense of gratitude toward his country and its citizens, remarking however how the future appeared darkened by the threat of the Cold War, which loomed on the entire world and which "[*commanded everyone's] whole attention, [absorbed everyone's] very being*" (1961, emphasis added). President Eisenhower continued underlining that

> the danger [that the conflict] poses promises to be of indefinite duration. To meet it successfully, there is called for, not so much the emotional and transitory sacrifices of crisis, but rather those which enable us to carry forward steadily, surely, and without complaint the burdens of a prolonged and complex struggle-with liberty at stake (1961).

He then also commented on the necessity of a strong military establishment to counteract any potential aggression, a development whose necessity "is felt in every city, in every state house. [As are] its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society" (Eisenhower, 1961). Indeed, the President appeared to acknowledge the heavy toll – both practical and emotional – that

such a long yet never fully realised conflict had had on the lives of the American citizens and of the citizens of the whole Western World as well.

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, the British Intelligence (SIS) was conducting covert activities in collaboration with the United States. British citizens themselves shared some of the anxieties of the United States as some scandals regarding corrupted agents and communist penetration were subjected to public scrutiny and invited the attention of the media: one of the most famous episodes was that of the "Cambridge Five", in which two agents were accused of leaking intelligence information to the Soviet Union, actions that had apparently started during the Second World War and had continued during the Cold War as well. After their escape to the USSR in 1951 – which seemed to function as the unofficial confirmation of their defection – the attention of the media on the episode directly impacted the public opinion, raising speculations on the issue. It was thus the general attention in such matters that propelled Ian Fleming's authorial activity and the domestic success of his novels.

Even though the nature of the environment resulting from the Cold War – especially in the case of private citizens – remains the product of mostly generalised assumptions, it is possible to gain a partial and somehow fragmented insight on people's response to these affectively charged information and cultural products through some testimonies. In *Rollercoaster Europe*, Kershaw reports that

> [a British woman] felt depressed at what the future might hold. She had been reading an article in an American magazine, passed on to her by some friends, which had spoken of war as inevitable after 1951. […] Her reading of newspapers and magazines, listening to the radio and conversations with friends, had shaped and confirmed her clear views on the developing Cold War (2019).

Kershaw also highlights the "sick feeling" that accompanied the woman in her daily activities - she declared in her diary – when news on the beginning of the Korean War

started to appear on the pages of newspapers already filled with updates on the nuclear threat and the political and ideological conflict. In the United Kingdom, many of these fears regarding atomic developments actualised in the first organised form of opposition to the bomb, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), supported by left-wing oppositions, journalists and anti-war activists. Kershaw however states that "the majority of the population did not favour giving up Britain's independent nuclear weapons. The bomb was seen as a safeguard, a deterrent against attack – almost universally considered as most likely to come from the Soviet Union" (2019).

The first two years of the 1960s are most notably considered the period in which the Cold War was at its closest to become an open conflict. In the summer of 1961 newly-elected President Kennedy addresses the nation in a televised speech concerning the "Berlin Crisis". He stated that, despite Khrushchev's threat to abruptly end the pre-existent treaty regulating the access to east and West Berlin, "[the Western forces] will not permit the Communists to drive [them] out of Berlin, either gradually or by force. [The United States] will at all times be ready to talk, if talk will help. But we must also be ready to resist with force, if force is used upon us" (1961). President Kennedy's speech highlighted issues already known and affectively registered by the citizens of the Western world during the previous decade, but it also responded to them providing a sense of firm determination to withstand threats of conflict. Indeed, Dean reports that the appeal appeared extremely powerful, with the effectiveness of its affective rhetoric resulting in an immense level of engagement from citizens (1991, p.540). The author quotes Gelb (1986) when reporting a rapid increase in enlistments and an unbelievable number of supportive calls received by the White House from private citizens after the speech. The Communist threat however did not subside; instead, in August 1961 a barrier between East and West Berlin was constructed. When the temporary barrier became a wall, the entire world interpreted it as a "an ugly and ominous symbol of Europe's division into Western and communist blocs" (McMahon, 2003, p.85), the visible embodiment of the impossibility to reach an immediate and peaceful resolution to the political and social opposition.

Moreover, starting from 1961, the Unites States accelerated their activities in Cuba, aiming to eventually eliminate the "maximum source of danger" that Fidel Castro represented for American political and economic interests. After the failure of two different operation, planned by the CIA, to assassinate Cuba's leader, in 1962 the entire world recognised that the two blocs were extremely close to start a nuclear war against each other. On 14 October 1962, it was reported to the American government that the Soviet Union possessed missile bases in Cuba, as Khrushchev took advantage of the revolution to shorten the distance between the Soviet lines and the United States in case of mutual aggression. McMahon correctly remarks that "psychologically and politically, […] those missiles would have altered the dynamics of the superpower relationship to the disadvantage of the United States" (2003, p.92). On 22 October 1962, Kennedy explained the details of this new crisis in a publicly broadcast speech addressed to the nation and to the entire world referring to the presence of the missile bases as "an *explicit threat* to the peace and security of the Americans" (1962, emphasis added), a threat looming now even more dangerously over the existences of "citizens [already] adjusted to living daily on the Bulls-eye of Soviet missiles" (1962). Despite managing to achieve a solution on the issue that prevented the actualisation of a nuclear war, newspapers reported the mobilisation of troops obviously engaged to back the "direct confrontation with – and challenge to – the power of the Soviet Union" (Lewis, 1962).

For one week, until October 28 – day in which the final negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union finally occurred – information on the events circulated in massive amounts: over 600 articles were published in the that week, covering details and developments regarding the Cuban Missile Crisis, for the situation seemingly appeared to escalate day by day before being settled peacefully. 1962 is thus considered the year in which global citizens saw a rapid concretisation of the threat, while also being the year that concluded the most dangerous phase of the Cold War. The instability of the relationships between the two factions and the increasing volume of media and entertainment attention towards the conflict – whose potential intensity and consequences could surpass those of the Second World War – arguably had a profound impact on the public, shaping an emotional bubble in which citizens attempted to evaluate and rationalise their feelings.

1.1.2. State Violence And Drug Cultures - Counterculture as Domestic Threat

Another issue that came to the surface in the decade of the 1950s and specifically in the United Kingdom was the phenomenon of youth violence and youth criminality perpetrated by gangs of teenagers. Their activities became more prominent after "being sighted on South London streets in 1952 and associated with gratuitous violence by the press" (Nathaus, 2015, p.40). The problem was a strictly domestic one even though some critics suggested that the growing popularity of American culture and lifestyle models in the framework of globalisation represented one of the causes facilitating the rise in youth violence. However, the majority of historians agree on the position that sees youth violence as a

> cultural response to the decline of a traditional working-class culture. [...] As this proletarian parent culture dissolved, Teddy Boys developed an unruly subculture which symbolically articulated a class conflict that had not disappeared in post-war Britain (Nathaus, 2015, p.41).

The attention of the media on the issue then seemed to have propagated and intensified the potential danger of the threat actually represented by these (almost unconsciously) subcultural currents and groups, as part of an environment that was perceived as already precarious and unsafe due to the events of the Cold War. Both Chaney (2004) and Nathaus (2015) observe that the level of the threat that youth gangs posed was mostly resulting from "the irritation of observers who saw established rules and conventions challenged by their social conduct which they perceived as impenetrable and 'troublesome'" (Nathaus, 2015, p.43). Episodes of insubordination and occurrences in which established traditional social norms were openly defied then became the visible markers of a dangerous youth culture, which – as a result – appeared to grow increasingly distant (both socially and emotionally) from the lifestyle characterising the previous generation. Especially when considering forms of entertainment, adult observers interpreted

the particular behaviour of adolescents appeared incomprehensible, inappropriate and sometimes threatening. While young people devised new codes of conduct primarily as [coping] strategies, outsiders who felt challenged perceived them as an expression of aimless rebelliousness (Nathaus, 2015, p.69).

The British youth of the 1950s then embodied all the anxieties that the adult generation was perceiving on both a political and on a social level, due to the rapid developments and shifts favoured by the economic and socio-cultural change and growth favoured by capitalism. This evolution, although extremely positive and welcome, appeared sometimes to challenge a fragile sense of security also in relation to the feeling of uncertainty that the environment provided. In this framework, the violent teenagers of the period mostly appeared to unconsciously embody those contemporary fears that needed to be processed and rationalised by the older generations, rather than being a conscious counter-cultural movement (Nathaus, 2015, p.69). It is then in this background - where the possibility of Communist ethos penetrating the Western world might concretise in subversive and dissenting teenagers – that the domestic threat of youth violence acquired such relevance. This issue is especially addressed in *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), a short novel in which the most challenging opposition to the values of the establishment is personified by the figure of a rioting teenager appropriating and destroying his surroundings. The novel iconic incipit almost functions as a testimony regarding the youth's fruition of public spaces according to their "twisted ethic". Indeed, the Korova Milkbar of the novel is simply a revisitation of models of public spaces already popular in the 1930s but whose fruition in time began to change due to the renovation of their clientele. In particular, as youth culture and its connotations become progressively more recognisable thanks to the to import of the media and the establishment, the presence of youth in those spaces influenced the perception of the public regarding the development of the threat. Indeed, "public space were increasingly occupied by youth while adults and smaller children retreated from them to [their] suburban homes" (Nathaus, 2015, p.56). This "invasion" of youth was not dissimilar to the potential of invasion posed by the external threat of Communist penetration. The two

elements – one foreign and the other domestic – fostered anxieties in the adult generation which grew uncomfortable in its environment and concerned for its safety, as the - once familiar - enemy started to be perceived as "dangerous and in need of regulation" (Nathaus, 2015, p.56).

The reformation of these "hooligans" – as Burgess himself, together with many critics, define these teenagers – in the fictional domain of the novel then simply reflects a desire that in the 1950s and 1960s had become quite diffused among older generations and converted into experiments of aversion therapy. Burgess's novel then is the fictional representation of contemporary anxieties related both to the external threat of Communism - namely the risk of subliminal penetration - and to the domestic threat of youth violence. The particular issue that Burgess desired to underline was the problematic stance of policing and control when applied to the disciplining of social group that are deemed as dangerous and problematic by the establishment, but whose consequence would include a limitation of individual agency and freewill. Especially disgusted by Skinner's experiments on behavioural modification that were starting to be promoted in the United States, Burgess expresses concern over certain methods of condition being used as "tools of rehabilitation" on individuals deemed as subversive, degenerate or inherently useless according to the standard of late capitalistic society. In his introduction to *A Clockwork Orange*, Morrison underlines that with his novel Burgess was able to analyse some of the issues characterising his generation and to "[catch] the anti-mechanistic spirit of the culture, or counterculture, of the sixties, and took its place, somewhat awkwardly, alongside Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* [and other works] attacking the erosion of individual rights by penal and medical institutions" (2000, p.xxii-xxiii). Indeed, Burgess reflected on the more or less actualised and accepted threat of violence not as an issue coming from the bottom of society, but being imposed from above, through a State that "has sanctified violence as a tool of statecraft" (2012, p.256). These considerations on institutional violence can be extended to *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, which became integral part of the "unofficial countercultural manifesto" of those years. Indeed during an interview years later, Kesey himself remarked that the novel was deemed as "anti-American, [for] it's about American terror [and] the inhuman part of American industrialism" (Faggen,

2014). Due also to its autobiographical nature, the novel can be accounted almost as a "case study" on the reality of the issue: indeed, the author's aspiration was to narrate the threat that the capitalistic policing of labour represented for marginalised categories, together with what effects its actualisation - through institutional violence - had on the subjects.

Institutional violence is connected to some fundamental aspects of Late Capitalism as a vampiric system. Indeed, the shift from imposed discipline to the insidious application of methods of policing referring to the ideology and the ethos of the ruling class is possible only as a consequence of the elimination of the distinction between the public and the private sphere. As promoter of such change because more fitting to its propagandistic purposes, the State ceases to be part of the public sphere only, becoming instead "the precondition [itself] for any distinction [between the two]" (Althusser, 2006, p.80) insomuch as private institutions sharing the same ethos (or economic interests) of the ruling class can become the expression of the State itself, functioning as Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) and representing the ideology of the dominant class both in the private and in the public sphere. These apparatuses are based on the notion of a "collective consciousness" that translates a determinate ideology, and which realises itself in a set of values – economic, political and social – that, according to the State, need to be instilled in its subjects rather than laid down from above. As Althusser states that as the Ideological State Apparatuses police the adhere to ideology, "they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic. …] Thus Schools and Churches use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to "discipline" not only their shepherds, but also their flocks. The same is true of the Family" (2006, p.81).

Two aspects connected to the functioning of these Ideological State Apparatuses in the framework of Late Capitalism become fundamental: individuals, in order to belong to society, need to be productive and functional to its growth. Moreover, the balance of a society is based on the adherence to a set of values that undoubtedly cannot differ from that of the ruling class, otherwise it will be labelled indecent and threating to the collective decency. In *Madness and Civilisation,* Foucault remarks that "the asylum

becomes […] an instrument of moral uniformity and of social denunciation. The problem is to impose, in a universal form, a morality that will prevail from within upon those who are strangers to it" (1988, p.259). He then continues stating that "indigence, laziness, vice, and madness mingled in an equal guilt within unreason; [hence] madness belonged to social failure" (1988, p.259). It is against the mechanistic background of Late Capitalism, that madness can be framed. In a system where the binary opposition between labour and idleness represents the discriminant for determining the intrinsic value of the individual, it becomes clear that the reason why behaviours allowing people to be "of little social weight, being hardly capable of acting like a full-fledged person at all" (Goffman, 1991, p.152) - according to the standard imposed by the middle class - were considered unacceptable and in need to be rehabilitated. Similarly to Foucault (1988), Goffman too specifies that "perception of [madness] is based on culturally derived and socially engrained stereotypes as to the significance of symptoms. […] Interestingly, subcultures in American society apparently differ in the amount of ready imagery and encouragement they supply for such self-views" (1991, p.132). Indeed, subcultures and specifically countercultural movements were particularly dissatisfied with the mechanistic view perpetrated by the Western governments during the post-war period. These movements wanted to achieve a certain degree of "deprogramming" from the education received from the institutions and the media, in order to pursue an alternative lifestyle, less centred on the capitalistic cult of labour. Countercultural group specifically denounced the hypocrisy of the State and its abusive interests, together with the use of unstable and unethical methods of conditioning. Indeed, during the 1950s many American citizens – included Ken Kesey – were recruited to participate in "government-sponsored experiments with psychedelics [which instead] became a parable of the government's attempt and failure to use science and technology to control the world" (Faggen, 2002, p.xiii). The government was also sponsoring experiments evaluating the effects of antipsychotic drugs in order to approve them for commercialisation (Farber, 2013, p.21); the popularisation of such drugs however happened despite the efforts of the pharmaceutical industry to regulate their circulation, so much so that peyote, mescaline and LSD were "appropriated" for recreational uses by the younger generations belonging to the subculture. Ken Kesey himself was named the "Acid Christ" for his leadership of the countercultural group of the Merry Pranksters

and as the almost messianic author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, a piece whose purpose was to denounce forms of legitimised violence and coercive methods of conditioning. Another prominent figure in the countercultural landscape of the United States was Timothy Leary, who promoted LSD as a "psychedelic sacrament that would lead individuals to a higher consciousness" (Farber, 2013, p.22). As Farber highlights, LSD "through its reality-bending properties challenged people to rethink social norms and life patterns [and invited people to consider it] as a life-enhancing, spiritual-inclining tool [which] productive, happy people should use LSD to evolve" (2013, p.23). The promotion of such use of psychedelic drugs obviously did not conform to the purpose of behavioural control and conformity as intended by the government. It was instead aimed at what Wolfe in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* defines as "lunatic thinking": the search for oneself and one own's individual experience in a deep connection with the external environment, aspects that later characterised later countercultural movements as well; these groups were interested in embarking on an "experience"[1] which – opposing traditional values – appeared to have spiritual connotations to it. Rossinow states that "drawing on the religious language of love and life, influenced by the Civil Rights movement's concept of the 'beloved community', [they] developed a humanistic ideal of the complete personality and the authentic society" (2002, p.110). This "search for authenticity" promoted in countercultural devotees a stark refusal to adhere to contemporary society's traditional, mechanistic values, in order to create a new ethos that appeared in opposition to the late capitalistic bourgeois ideology of labour of the time, so that eventually "the world [seemed to be] simply and sheerly divided into 'the aware', those who had had the experience of being vessels of the divine, and a great mass of 'the unaware', 'the unmusical', 'the unattuned'" (Wolfe, 1989, p.119). Wolfe's book functions as a testimony and a manifesto of such search: following the Prankster in their activities, he comments that during their road trips across the United States they would meet people on the streets who looked at them with "consternation and vague befuddling resentment, [as] the bus [altered] *the usual order of things*" (1989, p.66, emphasis added). People belonging to these countercultural groups were perceived as

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[1] See Wolfe, T., (1989) [1968]. *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. London, UK: Black Swan Books, p.45.

"madmen" for those same reasons already recognised by Foucault, who indeed states that

> madness was perceived through a condemnation of idleness and in a social immanence guaranteed by the community of labour. This community acquired an ethical power of segregation, which permitted it to eject, as into another world, all forms of social uselessness. It was in this other world, encircled by the sacred powers of labour, that madness would assume the status we now attribute to it. [The madman then is defined as such] because he crosses the frontiers of bourgeois order of his own accord, and alienates himself outside the sacred limits of its ethic (1988, p.58).

The madman then is a threat to "normality", to decency and to order and, for this reason, he needs to be constrained into order again, through the application of a degree of violence equal to the degree of threat which he represents: Massumi indeed highlights that "command takes over at the point at which the normal rebinarizes with the 'abnormal', 'deviant', and 'dysfunctional'. That point is [always] under constant renegotiation" (2021, p.309). Institutional violence then becomes a "response" to a threat that requires disciplining and control, while confinement is presented purely as one of the methods through which institutions respond to the threat of unreason and of scandal. The two notions are thus closely related because of their attachment to moral evil, which needs to be secluded – in order to eliminate the source of shame - and controlled to ensure moral purity and decency (Foucault, 1988, p.66-67).

The operation of Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses in the framework of Late Capitalism are consistent with Foucault's definition of societies of control, for they operate as policing establishments enforcing ideology through discipline. These societies are responsible for casting into oblivion and confinement all those individuals that – due to their refusal to conform to the capitalistic vampiric ideology – can be considered sources of evil, idleness and moral degeneracy and subversiveness according to the State.

2. BIOPOLITICS, AFFECT AND ENGAGEMENT
THROUGH THE ABSTRACT MACHINE

2.1. Affect and Biopolitics in the Society of Control

Post-war society sees a transition from disciplinary forms of social control visible in totalitarianisms to forms of postmodern biopolitical manifestations of power utilised in the so-called societies of control. In a transition from the massification of social phenomena to a newly found attention towards the *individual* and its potentialities in the production and in the control of labour, political scientists "[started to examine] politics as a social and biological phenomenon, considering both biological variables and environmental influences in their research" (Liesen, Walsh, 2012, p.4). This concept is most notably employed by Foucault – starting from the 1970s - to describe

> a type of power that presupposed a closely meshed grid of material coercions rather than the physical existence of a sovereign, and it therefore defined a new economy of power based upon the principle that there had to be an increase both in the subjugated forces and in the force and efficacy of that which subjugated them (2004, p.36).

Foucault, as Liesen and Walsh highlight, "adopts the term to point to particular phenomena in modernity, to point to a new, [polymorphous] expression of the historical confluence of power and knowledge" (2012, p.5), stating also that it is possible to identify biopolitics as

> [designated] strategies of power which are pervasive in modern society, [where] political power becomes a positive force - not merely prohibiting, disciplining

and punishing but aggressively moulding, shaping and forming human behaviour, personalities and desire (2012, p.5).

According to Foucault's position, biopolitics represents the socio-economic manifestation of biopower, which operates in society with the aim to manipulate and control the existence and life of the human body both on an individual level and on a social scale. Biopower then charges the body of machinic connotations, in relation both to its biological capabilities and to the processes that need to be integrated inside governmental practices to assure its efficiency inside a determinate environment (Foucault, 1978, p.141).

Parisi and Terranova indeed recognise that "the shift from a disciplined body to a controlled body is a historical event entangled in the difference between the modern and the postmodern formations, [even though] traces of the disciplinary society [appear as] still operational" (2000). The primary difference between the two concepts however is represented by the inherent insidiousness of power manifestations, for biopower allows to exert controlling practices in different spheres of social, political and economic fields but also in popular culture. Indeed, in postmodern society "command functions are not dismantled, but rather released; [because disseminated and varied, they come] to be even more finely distributed" (Parisi & Terranova, 2000) and thus able to target the individual on every layer of their identity. Clough expands Foucault's vision of biopolitics also remarking that

the biopolitics of the biomediated body [is] a political economy, [for it] is the break into biology or "life itself", by carving out various populations in order to estimate the value of their capacities for life, or more precisely, their capacities to provide life for capital (2010, p.222).

Clough's notion of biomediated body then relates to the political and economic domains of the society of control, for the latter is a "historically specific mode of organisation of material forces, invested by capital into being" (2010, p.207) that becomes prominent in

the shift from discipline to biological control through biopower. In this historical context, the body specifically appears to be

> reinforced and given strength by the disciplinary society, [as discipline allows it to become] abstracted and organised so that it can be trained: trained to reproduction […] and trained to work, [becoming] subjected to the exploitation of its labour force (Parisi & Terranova, 2000).

Open to external influences coming from the cultural and political environment in which it is immersed, the body is represented as informational and consequentially capable of self-organisation: indeed, the biomediated body "exposes how technologies, such as biomedia and new media, attach to and expand the informational substrate of bodily matter and matter generally, [subsequentially] expanding what the biological body can do" (Clough, 2010, p.208). The biomediated informational body as posited by Clough is then capable to rearrange its position, its responses and as a consequence its mode of existence according to the specific sets of information unconsciously absorbed from the external environment, specifically through biomedia. This process, reports Clough referencing Thacker (2004), can be defined as "a technical reconditioning of biology, a technological framing that enables biology to perform in novel ways beyond itself, while remaining biological" (2010, p.214). According to Thacker (2005), the unique characteristic of the biomediated, informational body is that its biological laws still constitute the very principles guiding absorption (p.201): biology then can be assimilated to the "internal technology" of the biomediated body, whose informational status allows nonetheless an open communication with external inputs coming from the society of control.

Automatic processes of absorption of information in the socio-cultural context of postmodernity then occur through bodily affect. Massumi (2002) defines affect in terms of potential, as force and intensity (p.14): it is an "autonomic bodily reaction occurring in the brain but outside consciousness" (p.29), an operation which involves the biological substrate of the body. It is through it that information and experience are

registered and archived, half a second before being subjected to conscious elaboration and transformation into what are conventionally defined named emotions (p.27). In "Requiem for Our Prospective Death", Massumi specifically remarks that

> the legitimation of state violence [in the society of control] would now operate preferentially on an affective register, through the mass media. Both moral reasoning and critical thinking would fall out, in favour of the mutual amplification of empathy-based aggressiveness and government policy, [a phenomenon] hinged on an affective circulation centring on a vague eventuality blurring the difference between politics and crime, past and future, protest and social degeneracy (2021, p.291).

Reprising Jameson's statement concerning how the immense dilation of the cultural sphere has rendered culture a veritable "second nature" (1991, p.ix-x) incorporating all the domains of the real, from politics to economy, Massumi comments that the mass media represent the most effective mechanism for insidious, indirect "propaganda". Indeed, they "do anything but mediate. They directly instill and effectively circulate politically and morally operative affect" (2021, p.294). Both the social and the cultural dimensions then "act" on the individual through affective sequences; these sequences are subsequently registered by the biomediated body and archived as bodily memory. The pre-conscious registering of external inputs by the body results in a continuous renegotiation and adaptation of the biological substrate of the individual itself in relation to the environment, particularly those aspects considered as functional and appropriate or as deviant and subversive by normative society. Indeed,

> [as] human behaviour is the product of an integration, within the brain and central nervous system of each individual, of [biologically and] historically selected information transmitted by language and cultural symbols [learned through experience]; individuals and societies *can and do evolve new patterns of behaviour* (Masters, 1989, p. 135, emphasis added).

Human behaviour is then an external response to those stimuli absorbed from the historical context in which the individual is immersed, as bodies have the "powers to affect and be affected […], in a word, powers of existence, [which are] irreducibly relational [and] in attunement with the affordances of the outside" (Massumi, 2021, p.315-316). Thus, political and cultural information is not directly perceived but *felt*, through affect operating as a force in the realm of the potential and an intensity responsible for the accumulation of external information to then be activated and transformed. Massumi also remarks that with affect what is *felt as real* actually becomes part of reality even though it does not manifest itself concretely, but it still belongs to the not yet realised reality of the potential future occurrence, of the virtual. This is a consequence of affect being capable to absorb stimuli connected to the looming threat of control in postmodern society, through an "affective reality of a past future, truly felt" (Massumi, 2010, p.54) that does not need to account for the reality of the present.

Affect - as intensity and movement from one state to another - then becomes fundamental in the understanding of the "cultural" and the "natural" as spheres connected in a continuum, "in mutual movement into and through each other, [in] a dynamic unity of reciprocal variation" (Massumi, 2002, p.11). In relation to the subtle incursion of culture in the biological mechanism of the subject, Massumi also states that "there seems to be a growing feeling within media, literary, and art theory that affect is central to an understanding of our information- and image-based late capitalist culture" (Massumi, 2002, p.27). The concept had already been defined in terms of assemblages by Guattari (1995), who recognised that art, music, educational and other institutions become equally fundamental for this subject/society relationship during postmodernity, as immediate, unmediated gateways for affect (Bertelsen & Murphie, 2010, p.155).

As Clough states, postmodernity introduces a different mode of reception and producing of cultural meaning through a "circuit from affect to emotion, […] attached to a circulation of images meant to simulate desire already satisfied, demand already met, as *capital extracts value from affect*" (2010, p.220-221, emphasis added). It is for this reason that - in relation to the pervasiveness and the unrealised potentiality of affect as infinitely possible patterns of relationship - the concept of emotion appears to be more

defined, univocal and "subtractive", as it reduces complexity, being a derivation, an actualisation of the limitlessness of affect's virtuality (Clough, 2010, p.209), for it constitutes the result of conscious elaboration of affect.

Named emotion then represents the emergence of a visible and "qualified, [semantically and semiotically formed] intensity" (Massumi, 2002, p.28), which can also be considered linear, for it moves following a specific direction through a singular vector situated on the plane of unrealised potentiality offered by affect and bodily memory. In "The Archive of Experience" Massumi draws from Benjamin's notion of *nonsensous similarity* and expands its connotations, demonstrating its connection to affective reception and the arousal of feeling. The author recognises this similarity as inherently consisting of movements and relationships between elements and appearing as "tied to the senses but lacking sense content. It can nevertheless be '*directly perceived*', but only '*in feeling*'" (Massumi, 2003, p.142, emphasis in the original text). Moreover, he emphasises that "nonsensuous similarity can not only be acted out, but it can be *archived*, 'most completely' in language" (Massumi, 2003, p.142, emphasis in the original text), a process which resembles affective actualisation in qualified emotion. It is indeed possible to attach a distinct "sociolinguistic meaning" (Massumi, 2002, p.31) to each qualified named emotion, visible also through the physical state externalised by the body. Differently from affect, whose pre-conscious status does not allow clear definition, linguistic expression's role is central: language is a form of actualisation that both qualifies and propagates affect but also limits its possibilities. Affect is thus contextualised according to the directions of the Abstract Machine[2], a system that – through affect - relates the subject's individuality to the specific historical context of normative society and its forms of underground dissidence.

On the (subversive) potentialities of affect in the society of control, Anderson indeed underlines the existence of "a productive paradox in which affect is a paradigmatic object of forms of vital or life power in the political formation named as 'control' but is, simultaneously and without contradiction, the best if not only hope against it" (2010, p.166). Indeed, the potentially endless directions in which affect is able to move are not

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[2] For a more detailed explanation, see "The Inner Working of the Abstract Machine" below.

established only in accordance with the external context of one's own cultural background, but most of all depend on individual subjectivity.

2.2. Affective Mimicry, Embodied Simulation and the Role of Imagination

Individual subjectivity is constituted by the combination of those parameters activated and used by each person when one's own acquired principles come into contact with experience. However, due to the openness of the biomediated informational body described by affective theories it is possible to talk of *inter*subjectivity, for in the context of the society of control the individual is open to the turbulence and changes of the outside as it never was before.

Intersubjectivity can be activated not only in relation to the real, but most prominently and effectively in the realm of aesthetic experience through different artistic forms, for arts' role is precisely

> [to make] visible the invisible, [to make] perceptible the imperceptible. [Art has] a magical, an aesthetic, function of transformation. Art is less involved in making sense of the world and more involved in exploring the possibilities of being, of becoming, in the world. Less involved in knowledge and more involved in experience, in pushing forward the boundaries of what can be experienced (O' Sullivan, 2001, p.130).

This concept appears to ascribe to a common position on the modes of affective reception regarding artworks in the context of postmodern society. Felski openly recognises the privileged role reserved to artistic experience in affective theories: in *Hooked: Art and Attachment* she defines art as "a dynamic and agitated force field of action and transformation" (2020, p.64), whose aesthetic properties are the precise reason for heightened emotional responses in perceivers. Massumi instead comments

that "*art*, verbal or nonverbal, may be considered the conscious archival manipulation of local signs toward the creative activation of virtual form" (2003, p.150, emphasis in the original text).

This process of activation called *mimetic communication* is amodal, as it is the result of a combination between different inputs and affect acquired through sensory perception. This activation concerns "information from each of the senses, [which is then] compared with memories of previous experience in each modality before being combined" (Gibbs, 2010, p.200). Such information is then object of unconscious archival or conscious elaboration, through language. Mimetic communication as intended by Gibbs recognises the primary roles of affect and of the inherent biological qualities belonging to the informational body in the achievement of emotional convergence between individuals. Specifically, Gibbs underlines that mimetic communication can be perceived as

> a *contagious process* that takes place transversally across a topology connecting heterogeneous networks of media and conversation, statements and images, and bodies and things. These mimetic connections are a result of contagious processes in which affect plays a central part (2010, p.187, emphasis added).

Mimesis obviously represents a mainly visual typology of communication even if, both in the real world and in the arts, it can be cross-modal and synesthetic, thus extending to other senses as well. It is due to its flexibility then, that mimetic communication can be regarded as the primary and most effective "mode of apprehension utilized by the body, by social technologies" (Gibbs, 2010, p.202) and by the media. Moreover, the consideration of affect as "intricately involved in the human autonomic system and engaging an energetic dimension that impels or inhibits the body's capacities for action" (Gibbs, 2010, p.188) underlines the neurological connection between affect and mirror neurons in relation to affective mimicry. Indeed, Freedberg and Gallese state that the discovery of this typology of neurons "illuminates the neural underpinnings of the frequent but hitherto unexplained feeling of physical reaction, often in apparent imitation of the actions represented within a work of art" (2007, p.199). Mirror neurons

become extremely important in the framework of affect theory because their operation is responsible for the individual ability (in primates and in humans as well) to activate processes of mirroring in witnesses when they are simply observing the occurrence of purposeful actions in another subject.

The activation of the same areas of relevancy in the brain in both the agent and in the observer of the same action supports the claim that first-person and third-person experience share common ground: indeed, individuals witnessing outside events are able to cognitively evaluate social stimuli coming from the outside and elaborate them according to the same principles of first-person experience, as if directly engaged in the same action or situation. Freedberg and Gallese refer to this process as *embodied simulation*,

> a functional, [pre-rational] mechanism through which the actions, emotions or sensations we see activate our own internal representations of the body states that are associated with these social stimuli, as if we were engaged in a similar action or experiencing a similar emotion or sensation (2007, p.198).

In *The Empathic Screen: Cinema and Neuroscience*, Gallese also comments that the concept of embodied simulation also represent a fundamental contribution to theories regarding intersubjectivity (Gallese & Guerra, 2020, p.1). Indeed, the discovery of mirror neurons redefines the concept of agency as active participation of a subject in an action, for it recognises third-person experience as equivalent to first-person involvement and postulates that simple "'motor cognition' [can be considered] a cardinal element for the appearance of human intersubjectivity" (Gallese & Guerra, 2020, p.4).

Neurological studies afferent to mirror neurons also demonstrate that the intensity of the impulse detected in the areas accounting for embodies simulation does not different when test is conducted observing art pieces and any form of aesthetic experience instead of real life occurrences. Two results inferred from the research appear particularly relevant in connection to affect as well. Freedberg and Gallese observed that, reacting to images, one of the possible responses in the observer appeared to be a "feeling of *bodily*

engagement with the gestures, movements and intentions of others" (2007, p.201, emphasis added), result which seems to correspond to the notion of affective mimicry. Bodily engagement in terms of affective mimicry or embodied simulation towards aesthetic experience then explains the cognitive but also affective nature of the abstract machine, as it is related both to the pre-conscious nature of the information registered by the informational body and to the neurological functions of the subject in elaborating experience. Moreover the authors recognised the ability of the subjects to "[*identify*] the emotions of observed others" (Freedberg & Gallese, 2007, p.201, emphasis added) in a process defined *enteroception* pertaining to the domain of affective neuroscience[3]. Indeed,

> certain cerebral regions involved in the subjective experiences [and emotions] activate when we recognize them in other people. […] These [mirror] mechanisms allow us to recognize others as similar to ourselves and therefore make possible a first level of non-linguistic interpersonal communication and comprehension through the creation of an 'intentional consonance' (Gallese & Guerra, 2020, p.4-5).

This observation on enteroception and intentional consonance shows the empirical working of the abstract machine in the transformation of affect in qualified named emotion while also highlighting how this process can be activated by artworks or fictional media as effectively as by real events. Gallese and Guerra expand on the concept, underlining that the only notable difference in the process of activation between real-life events and experience in the aesthetic domain is connected to the obviously contemplative status of the latter:

> when the action is observed or imagined, its performance is inhibited. In this case the motor cortical circuits are activated, although not completely (certain

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[3] See note 7, page 4 in Gallese & Guerra (2020).

components remain dormant) and not with the same intensity; hence the action is only simulated and not performed (2020, p.4).

The scientific explanation of this phenomenon is connected to what the authors define as a "decoupling" of the action experienced by the subject, resulting from the immobility of the observer. This aspect would inhibit certain alerting mechanisms that humans would otherwise integrate and activate when engaging with events happening in the real world (Gallese and Guerra, 2020, p.42).

Studies on mirror neurons and on embodied simulation were conducted considering responses to visual stimuli, real or simulated in the aesthetic domain; literature on language-based media instead appears to be not as prominent. Nonetheless, on possible processes of embodied simulation referred to written media, Gallese and Guerra remark that

> mental states or processes are embodied insofar as they are represented in corporeal form. An action or a motor intention can be represented in either corporeal or linguistic form. We do not know if and to what extent the linguistic representation is totally separated/separable from corporeal representation; however, empirical data seem to point to it not being so (2020, p.9).

The descriptive and creational power of language, together with its involvement in the cognitive process of imaging, would then contribute to the creation of an imaginative visuality and corporality of the stimuli even when the latter are received through language. These flows of mental images would thus activate the same neurological processes triggered by visual media or real occurrences, highlighting that different modalities of reception of these stimuli produce the *same illusion of corporeality* and consequently result in the similar degrees of neurological and affective engagement in the subject. Subsequently, it is possible to state that those same resources applied by the

subject to comprehend and elaborate external experience are responsible for the organisation of each individual's imaginative constructs.

Literary fiction as a genre is based on an elaborately constructed rendering of and on real events inside the subject's imaginative experience. At the same time however, fictional pieces exist also as a subject itself, as a "progressive mediated and artificial externalization of the representational corporeal formats that originally evolved to facilitate our contacts with the real physical world" (Gallese & Guerra, 2020, p.38) in relation to their context. It is specifically for this double nature of fiction that language as its expression constitutes an effective means to facilitate imaging and imagining. As processes of visualisation and creation respectively, imaging and imagining rely on the fact that situations and events represented are not necessarily meant to reflect the world as it is, but are constructed to generate readers' involvement towards the piece on a deeper level (Taylor, 1981, p.206). Indeed, imagination not only contributes to affirm already established real-life knowledge, but it also appears to expand it beyond the ordinary boundaries of conscious memory and experience.

Indeed, as the creation of a mental image - or of a visual narration – is based on information acquired from experience but also on stimuli that were registered and archived through unconscious bodily memory and reactivated by embodied simulation, it is possible to state that imagination possesses the same biological and affective component already analysed for direct observation. Imagination is thus comparable to direct experience, as Taylor remarks:

> to have a mental image is to have (perhaps in an attenuated form) a kind of experience which is primarily associated with some form of direct causal contact with the world (a paradigm is visual perception) and which, in the act of imaging, can be *voluntarily* evoked in a way which reproduces to a greater or lesser degree the *quality* of such primary experience. To conjure an image is to evoke a *quasi*experience (Taylor, 1981, p.212-213, emphasis added).

Novels more than other forms of fictional media represent quasiexperience, not only for the extensive context and story they provide but also because readers' immersion is voluntary: readers *deliberately* enter a fictional world to experience it in its full potentiality as an effective substitute of reality. Readers (re-)enact and assess situations in the storyworld, exploring consequential implications through the power of imagination, but also relying on the power of affective knowledge and embodied simulation, all elements that converge in readers' evaluation of fictional characters and stories. Taylor confirms the primary role of affect especially in readers' assessment of a character's nature and role in the story, for it provides insights into situations and behaviours otherwise impossible to replicate in real life. He states that

> affective knowledge - that is, knowledge of our personal emotional states and dispositions, as well as those of others - can also be gained through imagination, insofar as the latter is a means whereby we can assess our likely emotional responses to absent situations, and whereby we gauge the feelings of others who are in situations we have not experienced (1981, p.220).

It is thus the privileged outlook afforded by aesthetic experience and especially by fiction that allows the biomediated informational body to re-organise itself even more easily, both affectively and cognitively: "reading fiction produces new affect states in us, which change not only our body chemistry, but also our attitudes and ideas as we shape from narrative a structure of meaning" (Gibbs, 2010, p.193).

Readers' involvement as a result of quasiexperience, affective mimicry and embodied simulation appear to be different definitions and modalities of what can be more broadly defined as *engagement* towards a piece of fiction, which functions as primary and fundamental condition for affective activation and operates according to recognisable mechanisms – the so-called structure of sympathy.

2.3. Engagement and the Structure of Sympathy

In *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema*, Smith further expands what previously reported on engagement and its relationship with imagination: he considers "engaging with fiction [as] a species of imaginative activity" (2004, p.74) that indeed enriches our quasi experience. The author also recognises the essential role assumed by "focalisation" - the point of view assumed by the text - in dictating the nature and the quality of the audience's response: in the case of literary fiction, readers' perception is guided and influenced by the narrative choices made by the author of the novel. It is thus reasonable to assume the text itself, when integrated to the reader's subjectivity and a specific cultural context represent an element central to the analysis of affective processes and consequential emotional responses.

When analysing the audience's response to a text, Smith explains that the subject tends to simulate characters' actions and reactions mediating between a position of agency proper of the character and the contemplative stance of an audience member – similarly to what Freedberg and Gallese noticed for embodied simulation. Smith argues that this phenomenon is different than "putting oneself in someone else's shoes", even though the two are close in nature (2004, p.103): embodied simulation seems to be a response connected to sympathy and *acentral imagining*, which does not necessarily require complete sharing of beliefs and goals to be activated (Smith, 2004, p.96). Specifically focusing on character's engagement, Smith underlines that the audience is only required to be aware of the narrative situation and comprehend its unfolding to actually initiate any process of acentral imagining leading to a personal emotional reaction; this reaction can be different from that of the characters but still being *appropriate* because based on each individual's intersubjectivity. The ensemble of these mechanisms represent what Smith calls the *structure of sympathy*, categories used to describe the different phases and characteristics of readers' engagement resulting in "simulations and mimicking of the emotional states of characters [-] constantly filled out, modified, sometimes overturned by our cognitive construction of the narrative" (2004, p.103). The text itself constitutes the initiating force for sympathy as it is the ultimate organiser, which generates the three fundamental components of this structure: recognition, alignment,

and allegiance (Smith, 2004, p.75). These elements, despite being arbitrary categorisations of an otherwise continuous flow of sensations, are nonetheless extremely useful in the analysis of the fleeting and dynamic phenomenon of affective actualisation into qualified emotion.

Affective knowledge and bodily memory are integrated in a process that sees the interpolation of consciously and unconsciously registered information activated through the action of reading, imagining, experiencing and whose result is eventual *recognition*. Specifically, the focus of recognition is on the construction of a complex character through an inductive process that allows the reader to elaborate stimuli provided by the text in addition to the information already registered by the body trough real experience. As accounted by Felski, characters indeed differ from real individuals in that they "are portmanteau creatures, assembled out of disparate materials drawn from fiction and life. [They] are *incorporated*" (2019, p.90, emphasis in the original text). Recognition in aesthetic experiences thus differs from similar situations happening in real life contexts: in fiction recognition leads to a heightened level of awareness towards situations and especially characters, in an experience of "*coming to know*: of being struck by some kind of insight or realization" (Felski, 2019, p.101).

This insightful experience is the result of observable techniques and structures employed by authors in the construction of the narration to achieve a form of *alignment*. These formal devices deployed in the creation of a text - called also foregrounding techniques - are elements which facilitate readers' engagement and consequential character evaluation, providing the target audience with easier access to the characters and the fictional situation and inviting an appropriate response. The nature of this response however - as already established with recognition - does not necessarily correspond to what the text suggests or invites, due to the complexity of intersubjective relations and the multiplicity of potential directions available for affective movement on its pre-conscious plane of virtuality.

The desired result of processes of alignment is the eventual creation of readers' *allegiance*, a more or less congruent and sympathetic moral evaluation of the character by an audience (Smith, 2004, p.75). This specific typology of evaluation appears to

incorporate both automatic processes of elaboration and forms of conscious (personal, political and ethical judgement) ones and it has, as recognised by Smith as well, both affective and cognitive dimensions (2004, p.84). The direction corresponding to the actualisation of affect into named emotion in the passage from recognition to allegiance is the outcome of an emotional and ethic *orientation* of the reader's abstract machine in relation to the text (both characters and situational context) and to the intention of its author.

Smith underlines that the entire process leading to awareness and expansion of the reader's knowledge does not necessarily include feeling "for" the character – a connotation usually attached to empathy. Indeed, Smith emphasises that for allegiance to occur in the reader, the latter merely needs "to believe that [they have] some basis for evaluation, […] beliefs about what traits comprise the character in question" (Smith, 2004, p.85), in order to create a sensation of feeling "with"[4] the characters. Sympathetic feeling then constitutes the final aim of the passage from unrealised potential perception and sensation to qualified emotion through affect. The direction of this movement depends on the composition and orientation of the abstract machine, the system responsible for the propagation of feeling between a text as source and its audience as its recipient.

2.4. The Inner Working of the Abstract Machine

The structure of sympathy is fundamentally constituted by those procedures resulting from active participation in the fruition of a text, due to the reader's immersion in events and situations happening in media. Indeed, both Felski (2020) and Smith (2004) stress the relevance of engagement for affective activation, as this system of responses happens to realise both *in* and *through* the text and *in* the reader. This system appears to work in accordance with Massumi's interpretation of the abstract machine, a construct initially proposed by Deleuze and Guattari. This apparatus's operations are based on relational

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[4] See Felski (2019), p.105.

forces between elements (stimuli, sensations, registered information) which are "immersed in a changing state of things" (Massumi, 1992, p.5) that corresponds to the totality of occurrences performed in the environment (both in the real world and in the environment described in the fictional piece). According to Deleuze and Guattari, the notion of abstract machine involves

> the manner in which human beings (or other 'matters') are caught up within, or are a part of, [interpretational] processes. [In *A Thousand Plateaus*] however, the term shifts to signify the manner in which 'machines' can be considered in an ontological sense, [showing that] human beings are [...] part abstract-machine (Young, Genosko & Watson, 2013, p.17).

Practically, the abstract machine proves to be a useful tool not only to unravel the dynamics of affective absorption and propagation, but also to analyse the nature of the relationship between subjectivity and environment, in the interpretation of reality. In the biomediated body, interpretation corresponds to the conscious assignation of a univocal meaning to an emotional occurrence and to the emergence of a signification chosen from the multiple possibilities offered by pre-conscious affective reception and unconsciously registered stimuli. This activity of interpretation then is a dynamic mechanism happening in the body and consisting in a biological and cognitive re-organisation of inputs. The "making sense" of an encounter happening in a specific environment thus results from the emergence of one privileged vector among the field of interacting ones (the plane of consistency).

Massumi comments that meaning is a "becoming other", which for Deleuze and Guattari means to initiate a "process of translation[5] [that] involves a fundamental redundancy: what occurred once in [matter, the body] is now repeated in thought. What occurred once

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[5] Massumi considers translation as "repetition with a difference" (1992, p.16), a (non)relation, as meaning constitutes the actualisation of an input already encountered and registered by substance through affect (repetition), but now integrated with consciousness and eventually qualified (difference).

as thought is repeated in written or spoken words" (1992, p.14). In describing the mechanism of the machine, Massumi reports that its diagram is

> dynamic interrelation of relations. [...] The diagram combines a past and the future of that past, but it skips over its own genesis – the present of the content – expression encounter constitutive of thought (the unthought of thought). (1992, p. 16)

Such "present of the content" is exactly the unrealised potentiality on the plane of consistency offered by affect. As direct experience and perception form the past of thought and conscious elaboration forms the future of that past, the "void" that – escaping qualification – subsequently allows transformative movement is precisely affect, or "flows of deterritorialization that transform the respective indexes into absolute values" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.70). In the structure of the machine, affect is responsible for the activation of the system itself in relation to a possible occurrence, an event with which the organism engages – either as source producing affect (a text) or as recipient (reader). This present state of the abstract machine however exists solely in the realm of the virtual and unrealised, for the machine inherently possesses "different simultaneous states accounting for the complexity of what takes place on the plane of consistency" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.71).

On the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari recognise that the movement of the abstract machine towards qualification is not casual, but formed by "biunivocal relationships between segments of content and segments of expression" (1987, p.71), which represent the realised, actualised passage starting from affect and moving towards a consciously elaborated emotional response (named emotion). This vector is the result of a procedure where – through conscious elaboration - the operating of the abstract machine directs the information forming the plane of consistency towards one of the possible emotional responses – specifically the one considered as the most appropriate by the subject.

Central to the movement of the machine then is the *subject*: if single affective relations assure the movement from the plane of virtuality to that of "the actual", it is

intersubjectivity that effectively determinates the direction of the vector pointing towards its consciously elaborated potentiality – the subject's emotional response. Massumi indeed comments that the subject is

in the interactions *between* people. Which is not to say it is simply interpersonal [or] socioeconomic: it is in the raw materials at the basis of that technology and in the genes that define the physical and intellectual potential of the human body. […] The subject is a transpersonal abstract machine, a set of strategies operating in nature and spread throughout the social field (1992, p.26, emphasis in the original text).

The direction in which affect moves is *power*, the "privileged" way that emerges among the multiplicity of possibilities, the many "lines of causality proliferating in the fractal void" (Massumi, 1992, p.28) and afforded by the plane of consistency. The system directs power in accordance with the biological and social information – contextual "clues" – folded in and registered by the body through experience with the external environment and then propagated through language (Massumi, 2002, p.30). Indeed, according to Massumi, context is the

nondiscursive network of forces within which particular speaking bodies are positioned and which ordains what those bodies say-do and thus where-how they subsequently go, […] the direction in which a speech-driven body is impelled (1992, p.30).

Due to affect being an inherently pre-qualified intensity that "includes social elements but mixes them with elements belonging to other levels of functioning and combines them according to different logic" (Massumi, 2002, p.30), it is necessary to highlight the formal nature of its relationship with intersubjectivity. The "trace of past actions, […] of their contexts, conserved in the brain and in the flesh, […], repeated, autonomically

reactivated but not accomplished" (2002, p.30) that Massumi recognise as the foundation of affective propagation and actualisation are exactly the elements constituting intersubjectivity, elements which form the plane of consistency of the abstract machine.

In the constitution of the machine (fig.1), it is possible to recognise two axes forming the plane of consistency and converging in a central area, the void that is affect. The axes can thus be divided into four semiaxes, each one representing part of the past and the future of affective incipience: the domains of reality in which affect is activated by the individual – both as a mode of production and propagation and as a mode of reception of information[6]. These semiaxes - coupled two by two - represent the opposite but closely related sources of affect.

The axis of experience is constituted by historical context and individual subjectivity. The former incorporates the information that the subject gathers through encounters with the context, the external socio-cultural environment with which the biomediated body engages. On the other hand, the latter is the entirety of constructions that both biologically and neurologically form the individual: the DNA as a matrix, individual upbringing and education are a few examples. Subjectivity is personal and distinctive; it also mediates and regulates the way in which the subject interacts with the outside. For this reason it is possible to recognise different and even opposite emotional responses even in subjects that are immersed in the same historical context and exposed to the same sources of affect, as it is the case for society of control and counterculture.

The second axis is that of memory: on this line it is possible to find bodily memory and conscious memory. Bodily memory refers to the capacity of the biomediated body to unconsciously receive and absorb stimuli from the outside subsequently archiving them on a biological, surface level. Bodily memory does not allow targeted retrieval, as this memory is constituted by an accumulation of sensations coming from perception, but it has "no content" as it is not elaborated (Massumi, 2002, p.15). Conscious memory instead concerns information received and processed to be stored in the archive of long-

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[6] Affect can be considered bidirectional as its linearity accounts for the plane of the virtual only. Each individual's abstract machine is then able to absorb *and* produce elaborated information.

term memory, information which can be deliberately retrieved through different the models of association available to the subject.
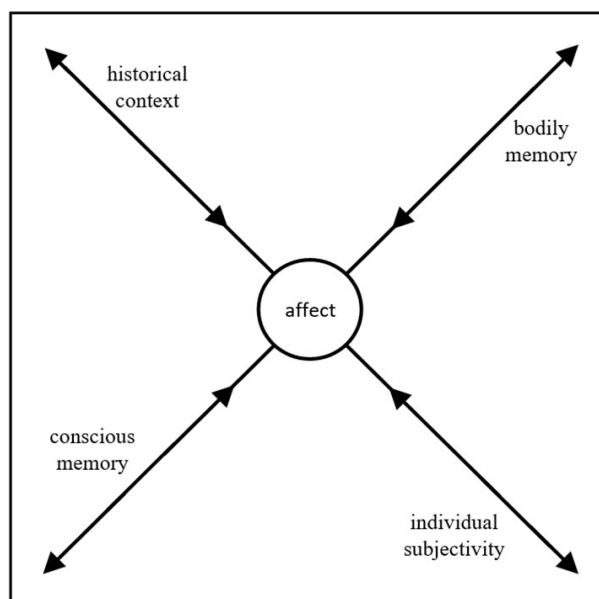

Figure 1: Abstract Machine

The combination and interpolation of these aspects, experienced in the case of an occurrence and coupled with the either conscious or unconscious retrieval of past events through affect itself is precisely what directs affective incipience, actually generating the vector which realises itself in the plane of possibilities. Affective actualisation into qualified emotion has been defined by Massumi as the appearance of "mutually exclusive pathways of action and expression, all but one of which will be inhibited, prevented from actualizing themselves completely" (2002, p.30). The remaining "significant" vector that completely actualises affect through conscious elaboration is the emotion that the subject considers as an appropriate response to the source, realised and apt not only to qualification but also to reproduction in linguistic terms.

Each medium – artwork, broadcast or novel – is supplied with an abstract machine as well, as media forms utilise specific devices, modes of expression and related techniques to propagate affect and activate affective incipience towards their audience, in a process of activation that involves both abstract machines - that of the medium (for novels, the text) as source and that of the audience (readers) as recipient. Specifically, novels' abstract machines are the result of their world building and characters' construction – together with the interactions between the two – inherent to the genre. Moreover, novels use language as their affective medium, together with foregrounding techniques employed by authors to emphasize issue that invite the activation of the reader's abstract machine and allow the subsequent qualification of affect into emotion. Fiction then provides authors with means to create a piece that is functional in itself, but it also serves as the sublimation of their necessities and as realisation of their author's abstract machine as well. Because of all the qualities of genre then, novels are indeed the most efficient device to amplify real life experience as they invite affective engagement and emotional qualification of said experience in readers.

Emotional qualification of affect in a reader however does not always coincide with complete allegiance (fig.2) towards a novel and its character(s). Due to the direction of the vector being determined by the axes of experience and memory forming the abstract machine, the predominant named emotion identified by the reader is the result of processes of elaboration that depend on each subject's background and its dynamic relationship with the novel's situations and context. Felski describes different possibilities of incomplete allegiance (fig.3) regarding them as "singular forms of assessment of character and situation, [instances of] partial, qualified or ambivalent [allegiance]" (2019, p.96) depending on the degree of distancing from the desired form. In the particular context of counterculture, different forms of allegiance are rendered even more difficult by the qualities assigned to the protagonists and the storyworlds of novels such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *A Clockwork Orange*, pieces that defined their historical period, as they sought to expose determinate social and political issues through opinions and narrative choices deliberately developed to elicit polarised reactions in the audience.

Formally, the different degree of allegiance triggered by a text in the reader is connected to the position of the two abstract machines in relation to each other. The mutual orientation of the two mechanisms appears to fulfil a fundamental role in the arousal of an appropriate emotional response in the reader: to establish the coherent "continuum of feeling" between text and reader that is complete allegiance, the four semiaxes of the text's machine and the semiaxes of the reader's machine need to be in a congruous position, with their sides, projections and vector of qualification coinciding. The correspondence of the two machines allows their complete articulation and realisation, resulting in the reader's complete allegiance and recognition towards a text and its message – a status in which the reader seems to "feel *with*" the characters in the novel (Felski, 2019, p.104-105).
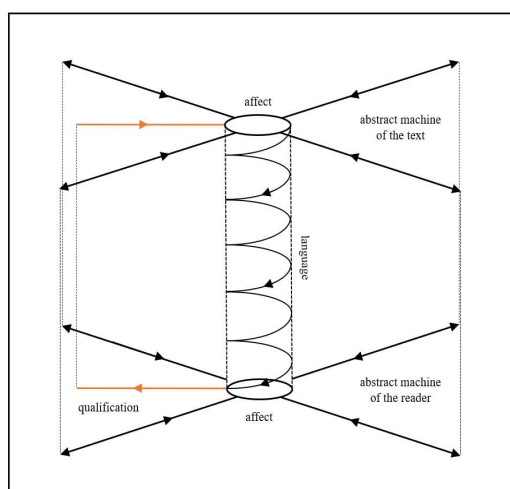
Figure 2: Abstract Machine
- Complete Allegiance -
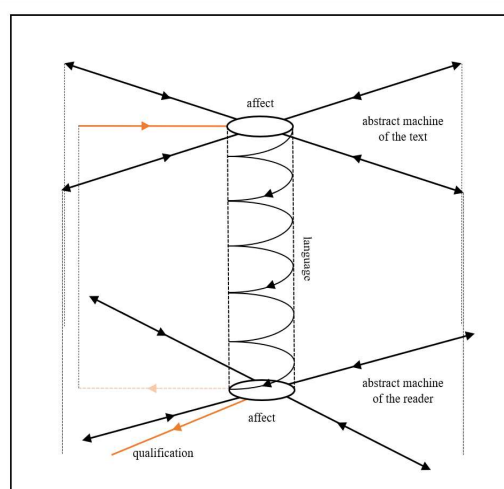
Figure 3: Abstract Machine
- Incomplete Allegiance -

Emotional resonance and allegiance however do not seem to automatically include instances of empathic response (feeling *for*), as the variety of forms, stances and techniques in media - together with different manifestations of individual intersubjectivity – do not allow such generalisation in terms of readers' response. It can

however be assumed that complete allegiance represents the most favourable position where to start considering possible instances of empathic occurrences in readers, as it is inherently in the nature and power of fiction to emotionally engage individuals, inviting them to experience expanded versions of their ordinariness.

2.5. Affect and Degrees of Emotion, Humanity and Degrees of Empathy

In *Empathy and the Novel*, Keen reports extensively on the result of studies and research she conducted on the phenomenon of empathy and theories related to it. According to the book's Preface, Keen appears to structure her study on the hypothesis that novel reading is an ever-empathy-eliciting activity in itself: "there is no question that readers feel empathy with fictional characters and other aspects of fictional worlds" (Keen, 2007, vii), statement which seems to allude to the category of readers in its entirety. However these theories are at present still undergoing investigation and confirmation, with experiment on neurological activity connecting novel reading to emotional reactions and empathy being conducted due to the attention on the topic. It is still possible then to express some doubts on the spontaneous occurrence of empathy, due to the plurality of possible interpretations, although her observations and considerations remain of great value even when considering solely the automatism between affective activation and its subsequent emotional response as conscious elaboration.

Moreover, Keen herself states that she wanted to *test* her "idea that fiction deactivates readers' suspicions and opens the way to easier empathy" (2007, p.29), following a theory common among critics but whose literature - especially concerning empirical verification – is still limited. Indeed, the response she received by students appears mixed, also in the light of the variety of texts (e-mail, ballpoint pen letter, excerpt from a fictional work) the author chose to submit. The three texts she selected belonged to different genres, but all of them contained an easily detectable emotional appeal to the reader; Keen however reports that the responses were evidently varied and although the

fictional passage, the third text, "seemed most true and elicited the strongest feelings, [empathic] response was *uncommon*" (2007, p.30, emphasis added). On some occasions it seems that the author herself recognises that the conscious emotional response in readers and ensuing occurrence of empathy cannot always be considered automatic, and indeed the use of the expression "emotional response" occurs frequently throughout the text[7].

In chapter 3 the author states that she "describes and liberally quotes what other readers have told me about their experiences of narrative empathy", using this set of information to conduct an empirical research, mainly in order to formulate "working hypotheses about the qualities of novels that evoke empathy in readers" (2007, p.65). This introduction to the third chapter of *Empathy and the Novel* highlights that the author has chosen to study readers who indeed declare to *have experienced* empathic reactions to certain narratives, making them the totality of the sample. This choice, if useful to effectively register recurring characteristics of fictional works that might lead to empathy, excludes *a priori* a possible exploration of the emotional response in readers that did not register any empathic response. The latter are obviously recognised (p.73), but the focus of the study not being centred on the nature of the alternative emotional responses to fiction, Keen does not provide further information on it apart from possible reasons for this manifested "resistance to empathising". Arguably, it is possible to state that Keen in this section more confidently assumes an uninterrupted transition between affect, emotional response and empathy as a common occurrence specifically because she puts it as an initial postulate for her research.

This consideration for empathic individuals invites a reflection on empathy as an intrinsically human characteristic, a 'privileged way of feeling'. In "Who Has Empathy" (2007, p.3-35), Suzanne Keen explores the biological and social implications of empathy, opening the section with a statement that she considers undisputable: "humans

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[7] Emotional response and empathic response seem to be used as equivalents.

feel empathy. We aren't the only animals to do so, but empathy seems so basic a human trait that lacking it can be seen as a sign of inhumanity". (2007, p.6)

In accordance with theories common in the domain of popular culture, empathy here is considered an intrinsically human trait that allows the human species (and biologically also primates) to distinguish itself from all the other representatives of the animal kingdom. It seems actually possible to proceed even further in this argument, stating that empathy has become the discriminant for humanity itself: "lacking feeling rarely benefits the individual in popular representations", affirms Keen then also adding that "characters exhibiting no empathy seem like monsters or machines" (Keen, 2007, p.9), as they display odd behaviours compared to their peers.

Ability, desire or even spontaneous inclination to get involved in someone else's emotional status then seems fundamental to appear human and, in a sense, to feel included in a social system as such. Indeed, in the text the heavy presence in popular culture of novels whose characters are in need of understanding is highlighted. Also, noting the promotion of empathy as an almost instinctive tendency, Keen observes the cultural anxiety around the subject. Indeed, she remarks that "humans empathize naturally, but perhaps we don't empathize with the right individuals automatically" (2007, p.11).

The previous statement posits the existence of *right* subjects with whom individuals are invited and expected to empathise. By contrast, instances where lack of empathy with the right subjects or closeness with *wrong* ones are deemed unethical and monstrous. This binarity of right and wrong characters might lead to dangerous consequences for readers: some people might become aware of the unpopularity of their interpretation of fictional events when compared to ethical boundaries set by other members of a group, making them feel different or even excluded from a group of their peers. Characters labelled as morally right or wrong then can lead readers to ask themselves if there is something right or wrong with them as well. This emotional alienation, once perceived, might inhibit further spontaneous responses to a text, triggering instead a more conscious effort to 'fit in' thanks to a rationalised processing of their feelings but according to

premises which might appear to be more 'ethically appropriate' by the reader, mainly because shared by more people.

To adhere to widely common and accepted positions of what is ethically appropriate or not represents the normality, however on some occasions it might limit people's freedom of individual expression, as the latter can be subjected to external judgement. Popular culture struggles to admit that some characteristics of an individual's personality and upbringing might make it more difficult for them to grasp determinate cues offered by a text, as one of the observations in Keen's empirical research admittedly emphasize. She lists "readers' individual dispositions, aspects of their identity, their age and experiences, their location in a remote culture or historical period, their knowledge, their fluency in genres and conventions" among the reasons why "narrative empathy cannot be expected invariably to work" (2007, p.72). The phrasing however seems to suggest that this registered "variation in response" opposes a flow of feelings towards empathy that is otherwise expected to be uninterrupted. Regardless, as seen above, the author's interest differs from that of exploring possible ranges of emotional responses without empathy as their final outcome.

In the recognition of elements eliciting the readers' reaction, particular attention is dedicated to generational differences in comprehension and re-elaboration of fictional events and narratives structures. Reasoning that "generational changes of taste in character types and situations" constitute one of the motives, Keen observes that often an empathic response of one's own might well not be shared by other readers, even (especially) one's children, despite the popularity of some particular texts" (2007, p.73). The main concept then is that "the capacity of a particular novel to invoke readers' empathy may change over time (and some texts may only activate the empathy of their first, immediate audience)" (Keen, 2007, p.73). Although Keen's attention focuses on readers' empathic response, it is still possible to accept her analysis limiting it to the established relation between affect and emotional response, without proceeding further to include empathy. Indeed, the author herself obviously recognises that the socio-

historical phenomena to which each subject has been exposed concur in the formation of an emotional conscience that operates in the background and that guides the interpretation of a text. Such observations naturally elicit questions on the ability of a novel written in a different historical period to evoke an emotional response appropriate to the different context in which it eventually happens to be read. It is then necessary to accept that novels existing and functioning in relation to their social background might not be considered as "acceptable" by other categories of readers (future readers being one) and that affective involvement and emotional response are likely to be different. Moreover, such remark demonstrates that it is obviously of primary importance for social and literary critiques to be "attuned to historical and social contexts in the period of reception" (Keen, 2007, p.81), specifically when making comparative analyses in relation to the original years of production and diffusion of the text.

Establishing an aspect of cultural and contextual relativity then is extremely important to understand the role of foregrounding in novels and the reasons why focusing on cultural authorial needs specific to the limited context of counterculture for which they were originally functional. This socio-political context, the background in which the intention of the authors and their narrative choices were realised, needs to be brought in a position of relevance. Narrative techniques of foregrounding used in popular text contributed to make subversive behaviour frequently witnessed more justifiable: it is due to these characteristics that an obvious passage affect – feeling – empathy should not be assumed.

When looking at this context, it is fundamental to understand that, in a time when televisions and other forms of visual media were still developing, novels were the most popular form of both entertainment and social denounce available. Realist and dystopic novels, like *A Clockwork Orange* were carrier of social meanings and because of this historically relevant: indeed, they were employed as an effective medium to raise awareness and focus the attention of larger groups of people on issues that otherwise could have remained voiceless, at least outside the narrow circle of those personally affected by them. In "Clockwork Marmalade" - a piece originally published in the *Listener* in 1972 following the book renewed success after Kubrick's film adaptation -

Burgess himself remarks that Alex appears to have "no word to say in the running of his community or the managing of the state: he is, to the state, a mere object, something 'out there' like the Moon" (Burgess, 2012, p.247): Alex is then considered a difficult, or at best irrelevant, subject to the eyes of the government. In the light of this premise then it can be argued that what Burgess and Kesey as authors of the counterculture wanted to transmit is a 'sublimated' testimony of a determinate type of person, a "new voice with a particular kind of sensitivity; specifically, one in which we could hear the toll taken on the human psyche by the conditions of the urban poor in post-war England" (Solinger, 2021, p.72). This voice is the result of the complex environment of the counterculture and who seemingly disappeared after the 80s, following a failed process of resistance.

Because both *A Clockwork Orange* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* were novels bringing to the light issues that belonged to a minority of people deemed as 'problematic' by the ruling class, the range of emotional responses were unsurprisingly varied, especially towards *A Clockwork Orange*. For this reason, empathy cannot be considered the *expected* outcome, but instead one among the various possibilities. It is then reasonable to think that both authors were well aware of this possibility. It is even presumable that such a polarised outcome following the publication of their work could be seen as deliberate, written expression of a need that stemmed from direct observation of their surroundings.

Explaining the motives and the inspiration behind his book, in "Clockwork Marmalade" Burgess also reports that during the late 1950s gangs of violent youth terrorised British cities so relentlessly that some influent theoreticians had proposed forced aversion therapy as a solution (Burgess, 2012, p. 247). Burgess, on this occasion, comments that "many heads nodded at this proposal. […] Heads still nod at it" (2012, p. 247), underlining the general consensus over such methods, a consensus that in fifteen years was apparently as strong and legitimate as before. The novels then aim to create a protagonist who simply mirrors individuals well known, both in manners and social-political positions, to the government and the general public. Agents of chaos not dissimilar from McMurphy or Alex that needed to be controlled and isolated as they were violent and destructive. Following a traditional binary opposition between right

and wrong, the protagonists are - both in the novels and the social environment they are actually meant to describe - an image of traditional evil that the State wants to "rehabilitate" in order for them to be reinserted in society as functioning individuals. For this reason, both Alex and McMurphy are not fertile ground for empathy: both the authors of the two novels and their readers recognise the problematic nature of the events unfolding in the stories. The two protagonists act malevolently and viciously in opposition to a set of moral values defined as "traditional", values which however remain valid even in different social and historical contexts, like the present one. Also, both Kesey and Burgess – with the latter openly admitting it[8] – elaborated on the fact that the details and insights provided on the account of the protagonists do not make them object of any form of empathy.

The pursue of personal interest is the main aspect that does not allow the figure of the problematic protagonist to benefit from any form of empathy, as the narration deliberately does not provide possible justifications for the characters' wrongdoing but instead weighs on the enjoyment of their subversive behaviour, offering proofs of a negative tendency in their protagonists. The attribution to the characters of qualities possibly leading to empathy is introduced solely after the problematic behaviour of the protagonist is "compensated" if not surpassed by the legalised forms of torture carried out by the System. This sudden change of status, which seizes the protagonist of his (negative) individual agency allows the character to be now considered a victim of the circumstances rather than a perpetrator.

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[8] Burgess expanded on more than one occasion that the choice of making Alex the embodiment of pure viciousness was deliberate, referring to his main character as openly *evil* (Burgess, 2012, p. 248).

3. HETEROGLOSSIA, EMOTION-EMPATHY
AND LITERARY FICTION

3.1. Affect, Emotional Response and Empathy in Novels

The realisation of the Abstract Machine as described in the previous section involves subjects responsible for the transmission and reception of a plurality of messages. Among the plurality offered by different media, fictional stories have always been considered among the most effective – if not privileged - instruments to convey socio-political positions on contemporary issues, thanks to their transposition into the more detached aesthetic domain.

Indeed as observed, it usually is "readers' perception of a text's fictionality [that] plays a role in the subsequent empathic[9] response, by releasing them from the obligations of self-protection" (Keen, 2007, p.88), meaning that the readers abandon their mechanisms of self-conservation occurring in everyday life thanks to the details provided in the exploded and detailed context of a world constructed specifically to sublimate the conditions existing in the real world and expand their description and subsequent impact on readers who tend to enter more naturally into situations unfolding in an expanded, more consciously constructed fictional world.

In this case - as already observed - imagination is set to play a fundamental mediatory role: indeed, the 'aesthetic distance' that fictionality grants the reader assures a higher

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[9] The validity of the automatism in the passage from emotional response to empathy is a given for Keen, whose interest mainly focuses on the possible connection between empathy and altruism (see Keen, 2007, Preface, p.vii).

level of interest, a more prominent affecting power and an amplified ability to elaborate the events and their consequences.

Another element which has been proven relevant in the emergence of such amplification of consciousness is the attitude of individuals towards fiction, as readers' stances are not merely contemplative and passive, but tend in fact to be more participatory (Jauss, 1982, pp. 31-32, 96). This "interplay of forces" (Jauss, 1982, p.31) – where the reader's historical experience and individual subjectivity intersects those same categories as presented in the fictional world or embodied by the protagonist - results in an individual framework of narrative situations and characters which integrates the reader's personal experiences, memories and individual judgement with the conditions and reflections offered through the fictional piece. Jauss compares such state to what has been traditionally described as *catharsis*, an "aesthetic experience [where] the beholder can be affected by what is portrayed, he may identify with the acting persons, give rein to his own aroused passions, and feel pleasurably relieved by their release" (1982, p.23). Burgess (2012) himself reveals that one of the intentions behind the writing of *A Clockwork Orange* was to depict violence more symbolically than realistically, as a way to lead readers to catharsis (p.247). In the minds of authors as well then, works of fiction have always represented a safe and easily accessible instrument to evaluate possibilities and events in ways which are impossible in the real world because of the ethical impositions of morality and society. Fiction allows comparisons between readers and characters, between real social issues and their fictional equivalent through a higher degree of involvement, which consequentially leads also to an easier affective activation and emotional response in the reader.

In drawing some conclusions on the subject of literary reading, Miall indeed reflects on the power, specific of fiction, to take readers beyond the imaginative and linguistic limits of their reality, where events and interactions are usually analysed according to functional processes (*schemata*), too familiar to be re-elaborated rationally and thus subject to unconscious assimilation.

He instead recognises that:

> literary reading provides one vehicle for going beyond the customary, familiar world, and for reconceiving our role within it. *Through literary reading we dehabituate, that is, we are enabled to contemplate alternative models for being in the world.* Such reading […] is an 'offline' way of experimenting with emotions or experiences that might have dangerous or unpleasant consequences in the real world, gaining insight into their implications (2000, p.50, emphasis added).

Such definition of dehabituation as posed by Miall seems to be constituted by two different but profoundly connected concepts. On one hand, the cathartic occurrence can be considered a result of the piece's aesthetic nature which allows the readers' deeper involvement and understanding of the circumstances. On the other hand, dehabituation is a phenomenon specifically pertains to the practice of literary reading, as the numerous techniques characteristics of fictional production are deliberately chosen and employed to generate a removal from the usual, unconscious processing of real-life events, forcing the reader to take unfamiliar paths of analysis and elaboration.

3.2. Foregrounding and Defamiliarization

The concept of the "unfamiliar" in novels is usually achieved through the employment of stylistic, semantic or narrative techniques and constructions that allow the author to highlight and emphasize issues otherwise considered peripheral by the establishment and its set of values, issues that would otherwise be left in the background by other media. Novels are used to effectively divert the point of view of the reader in a new direction; such process is denominated *foregrounding*. Despite occasionally recognising

its employment and functionality in ordinary language, essayist prose or composed speeches, the term more commonly refers to what is defined as "literary style", a specific selection of narrative and linguistic procedures observable in fictional works. These patterns are systematically implemented in literary texts with the aim to "present meanings with an intricacy and complexity that ordinary language does not normally allow." (Miall & Kuiken, 1994, p.390).

The most prominent effect of this process of foregrounding is to achieve *defamiliarization*[10] in the readers, a concept postulated by Shklovsky as a technique which allows "to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged" (1965, p.12). Defamiliarization and prolonged perception are profoundly linked, as Keen (2007) remarks when she reports that according to the expects, "slow and careful reading" (p.86) represent the ideal type, as it facilitate readers' immersion. The intense nature of this exposure to a narrative results both into a longer period of time of reading and an observable presence of affective intensity as a precursor of emotional elaboration.

Indeed, as reported by Miall and Kuiken (1994, p.391), all previous literature on the historical interpretations of defamiliarization links this process to arousal of feeling, with Shklovsky noting that specifical techniques employed in the construction of the narrative "emphasize the emotional effect of an expression" (1965, p.9). In fact, in their article on the connection between foregrounding and affect, Miall and Kuiken (1994) report that "evidence from studies of event-related potentials indicates that reading foregrounded text accentuates activity in cortical areas specialized for affect" (p.393). In investigating the possible "relationship between the defamiliarizing effects of foregrounding and the emergence of feeling" (p.393) then, they recognise the activation of cerebral functions related to affect, a pre-cognitive intensity precursory of feeling (Massumi, 2002, p.29).

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[10] *Ostranenie*, which literally translates as 'making strange'. For a complete definition of the concept, see the definition of *ostranenie* provided by Buchanan, I., Payne, M. & Barbera, J.R. (eds.) (2010) [1996]. *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory 2nd Edition*. New Jersey, USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

As Massumi (2002, p.31) states, feeling represents the conscious registration of affect operated by the organism, as intensity acquires a qualified meaning. This cognitive process of interpretation initiated is described by Miall and Kuiken (1994, p.392) as "refamiliarization": an operation moved by feeling, which allows the assimilation of the events and the context deployed in the story in a newer, more comprehensive way for the reader. Indeed, the result of refamiliarization is the product of a constructive process in the form of a "mental model from the presented discourse" (Brewer & Lichtenstein, 1982, p.476) which integrates new segments of foregrounded information to the reader's pre-existent individual subjectivity, as "through imagery and emotion, a literary text engages with the reader's own experience" helping them to "reconfigure it and understand it in a new light" (Miall, 2000, p.50)[11], similarly to the observation on catharsis made by Jauss.

The implied outcome of refamiliarization is a rediscovered physiological awareness and an intense emotional understanding of the highlighted events, elements, players of the story. Most of all this knowledge allows the reader to explore and re-elaborate on a deeper level the author's urge to create a piece relating to the contemporary socio-historical and individual context. Arguably, foregrounding, defamiliarization and refamiliarization do not automatically lead the reader to identify with the fictional character or the situation, but the stages of this process may prove useful: indeed they provide the reader with a heightened level of consciousness regarding the mechanisms at work inside the fictional domain (predominantly, and in real life, possibly) and inside the creative domain of authorship.

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[11] Miall and Kuiken (1994) rightfully connect the occurring of affective activation to emergence of feeling, which triggers an emotional response. In Miall (2000), the author reports that emotion is the element responsible for empathic projection, which is one of the "principal features responsible for reader's engagement" (p.50). The direct connection between affect, emotion and empathy may be debated. Empathy is commonly intertwined with the notion of victim (see Hoffman, 2000, p.87), while anti-heroes are not initially perceived as such (see *A Clockwork Orange* as "gleeful evil" according to Amis, 2012, viii).

3.3. Counterculture, Historical Discontinuity and Heteroglossia

In order to better understand the necessities to which the two novels are functional, it is fundamental to step outside the traditional diachronic point of view on novels necessarily belonging to a longer "traditional" timeline, to focus on a horizontal, synchronic analysis of the events inside their historical context, the elements, the kind of players and human types specifically enclosed in that period. This opposition to the notion of history as a continuity is not new as a concept, as it was already seen with Michel Foucault, who refers to historical periods as transformative struggles of two sides, as the dominant current is – quite obviously - always contested by a minoritarian ideology that transgresses impositions. Foucault's position is the latest contribution – chronologically – belonging to a long-established tradition of thinkers that refused to analyse literary prose in its relation to repetitive and calcified "traditional" elements, techniques and devices responding to historical issues representative of the ruling class. Indeed, according to Bakhtin (1981), concentrating on the more evident similarities would be dangerous and counterproductive, as it further establishes and solidifies literature as a medium of social indoctrination, used to effectively legitimate values associated to the dominant class (p.263).

Bakhtin accords a singular position to the novelistic genre, placing them between the artistic genres and the rhetorical one, actually highlighting and providing an explanation on the debate regarding novels as media of ethical indoctrination. In *Discourse in the Novel,* Bakhtin (1981) reports and comments on Shpet's considerations on the status of the novelistic genres as a rhetorical form, denying it any significance in the aesthetic domain. According to Shpet the novel, because of its categorisation as part of rhetoric, is simply another form of moral propaganda.

Bakhtin on the other hand believes that novels occupy a space between rhetoric and artistic prose, for they can be considered works having different degrees of aesthetic value. Fictional works indeed are the result of creative efforts, and they employ linguistic structures that can be ascribed to poetic discourse, even though it is not "one that does

not fit within the frame provided by the concept of poetic discourse as it now exists" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.269). Bakhtin recognises the uniqueness of the novelistic genre as a dialogue with both rhetoric and aesthetic. This reflection becomes fundamental when considering the impact that the choice of a specific genre may have in the parameters later considered for its critical analysis.

Shpet's strict division concerning literary genres and their qualities seems to coincide with popular positions of historians and social critics, who tend to include more easily in the literary tradition media reflecting a widely established historical conscience, as seen above. This phenomenon concerns also the formal domain of stylistics and linguistics, as language, especially in rhetoric, as always been considered a unitarian system whose purpose was to be the means of expression for processes of historical becoming. However, Bakhtin (1981) remarks that postulating language unitarity only "gives expression to forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of socio-political and cultural centralization" p.271), very much in accordance with Shpet's point of view. Instead, as Bakhtin sees it, the linguistic system is layered and stratified in heteroglot languages that are "socio-ideological: languages of social groups, 'professional' and 'generic' languages, languages of generations and so forth" (1981, p.272). Language is then an expanded (and expanding), heteroglot system of differentiated signs and words saturated with ideological meaning. Each layer is univocally connected to the specific group that it represents: speech diversity then is one of the forms in which social diversity is realised and become visible. This phenomenon of linguistic heteroglossia as intended by Bakhtin is part of those centrifugal forces that come to the surface and oppose those attempt of socio-historical and linguistic unification and centralisation (Bakhtin, 1981, p.272). Heteroglot languages then are both estranged and assimilated in its socio-historical landscape, as "every utterance participates in the 'unitary language' (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces)". Following in Bakhtin theorisation of heteroglossia then it is possible to assume that grammatical and semantic constructions, discourse-forming structures and any

particular practice associated to one or more language(s) in the heteroglot system are all elements specifical to the unique socio-historical context in which they develop and come to fruition, for language constitutes the most pervasive form of expression available to represent relevant social struggles.

As Bakhtin then accepts the coexistence of multiple languages sharing sets of rules to make each layer still in the framework of accepted social and linguistic norms, he also appears to demonstrate the existence of a seemingly opposing point of view on the subject. Indeed, the stratified structure of language postulated by Bakhtin allows the concurrence of multiple forms of heteroglot languages inhabiting the same social landscape, due to the fact that they simply represent the "co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions [...] between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies and so forth" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.291).

Being one of the most effective means of linguistic expression, fictional works become fundamental tools as foil mirroring the social and linguistic co-existence of position in real life in the form of heteroglossia: language being absorbed almost unconsciously, novels sublimate the essence of individual voices and collective social struggles. Indeed, although "all languages of heteroglossia [...] are specific points of view on the world" they seem to

> co-exist in the consciousness of real people – first and foremost, in the creative consciousness of people who write novels. As such, these languages live a real life, they struggle and evolve in an environment of social heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981, p.291-292).

It becomes thus evident that novels are both the result and one of the sources of heteroglossia. As a genre, literary fiction typically incorporates separate foregrounding techniques that employ multiple layers of heteroglot languages to bring to the surface separate individual issues. However, as much as heteroglossia as a phenomenon

inherently refers to one language, one social system, this ensemble of techniques participates nonetheless in the unitarity of the fictional work, supporting "the process whereby the unified meaning of the whole is structured and revealed" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.262).

As indeed the principles employed in literary criticism are historically specific, because uniquely related to the historical context in which they are immersed, they become functional solely for the description of the issues attached to them. Following Bakhtin's heteroglossia then, it is possible to understand why techniques that in relation to other historical periods might have been employed by authors to produce an empathic response remain valid when analysed according to the particular, univocal relationship they share with the conditions postulated by another historical context or a specific authorial necessity (Bakhtin, 1981, p.272). This social opposition - or historical dialogisation – becomes evident during the counterculture period. Heteroglossia and subsequent dialogisation are phenomena which are due to the potentialities attributed to discourse used in novels: determinate choices of words fulfil certain linguistic needs in the aesthetic domain but correspond to social positions which pertain to readers real lives. This combination, as Miall & Kuiken's work shows, is the source of affective activation consequential emotional response, a refamiliarizing process in the context of heteroglossia integrating information belonging both to fictional works and to the real world.

3.4. Language and Context – Heteroglossia in the Abstract Machine

Regarding the implications of heteroglossia, Bakhtin states that "no living word relates to its object in a *singular* way" (emphasis in the original text), for "there exist an environment of alien words about the same object […] that is often difficult to penetrate" (1981, p.276). He also proceeds explaining that "it is precisely in the process of living

interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualised and given stylistic shape" (1981, p.276).

The critic then demonstrates how in the multiplicity of meanings belonging to a certain term, its univocality (the exact meaning it acquires) can be determined only when the singular word is associated to the (social) environment in which it is immersed. This immediate, fairly simple statement however leads to two fundamental reflections whose implications are far more pervasive. First, the context of counter-culture being limited and historically unique, critics and readers need to interpret works of fiction employing "singular words", only in relation to that period and its paradigms. This naturally leads to new and different positions in literary criticism, interpretations that possibly don't ascribe to the previously established tradition, being the result of a phenomenon of historical discontinuity. Bakhtin also recognises the established connection between historical period and consciousness as a product of its influence:

> the living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue (1981, p.276).

And then again, focusing on the particular status of the single word, he states that

> the word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile (1981, p.276).

Indeed another, more important implication highlighted by Bakhtin's position is that the environment in which words are immersed and come to use is quite obviously the same environment in which the individual develops. Each person's individual background then - both on a personal and on a social level - provides distinctive patterns, useful to interpret certain "linguistic cues" received from the surroundings, through media or other subjects (intended as producers of meaning).

The interrelation between singular word in the plain of multiple meanings and each person's consciousness reduces the number of possibilities and combinations to the singular one deemed in line with the subject's perception of reality. This process is what triggers the affective reaction and what causes the movement from affect to emotional response, according to the specific direction of the abstract machine.

Heteroglossia as both a linguistic and social phenomenon then provides justification to why a determinate genre – or sub-genre, in the case of certain novels during counterculture – might not be "appealing" to all tastes, because considered immoral or unethical for certain groups of society. Indeed, it can be stated that it is because of heteroglossia that specific narrative techniques, and linguistic choices foregrounded in novels straying from the collective historical conscience do not activate the same emotional response in different subjects, as each reader processes the events according to different principles. Heteroglossia can indeed be accounted as one of the directly responsible factors in the functioning of the abstract machine.

Deleuze and Guattari's position in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* provides further insight on the specific relationship tying Bakhtin's heteroglot language(s), the informational body and the notion of abstract machine, as the authors state that

> the language-function is the transmission of order-words, and order-words relate to assemblages, just as assemblages relate to the incorporeal transformations constituting the variables of the function. Linguistics is nothing without a

pragmatics (semiotic or political) to define the effectuation of the condition of possibility of language and the usage of linguistic elements (1987, p. 85).

Although the authors accept that language can, on some occasions, be informational and communicational, there is, in the use of language as a medium of expression, an internal relationship between statement and act (aspects defining the informational and communicational functions respectively) which is not one of identity. This relationship, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) state, is rather one of *redundancy*, term which is defined as "the degree of efficiency of message transmission" (Young, Genosko & Watson, 2013, p. 250). Human language is subjected to abundant redundancy because languages have their inherent internal structures that allows subject to express themselves, but especially because language is not a unified system, but a dynamic one. Indeed, as Bakhtin had posited, language consists of a layered structure which is constantly subjected to dialogisation thanks to multiple socio-ideological positions, points of view. The notion of heteroglossia as a result of dialogisation can be assimilated to the concept of redundancy – and its different types - that Deleuze and Guattari recognise and associate to any particular *assemblage*[12] they are referring to.

Linguistic redundancy, as much as Bakhtin's heteroglossia, is intended by Guattari as a social phenomenon due to the fact that "every society reproduces standardised contexts within which every word spoken echoes those spoken in all the others. Every word is laden with the implicit presupposition of what 'one' says-thinks-does in such a circumstance" (Massumi, 1992, p.33). Redundancy then connects the body - an organism capable of receiving inputs and producing meaning through language - to the "outside", to influences generated when external inputs coming from the environment, inputs which embed with new, plural connotations the intrinsic meaning of words. Deleuze and Guattari also elaborate on the fact that redundancy "has two forms, frequency and resonance: the first concerns the signifiance of information, the second

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[12] For a comprehensive definition of *assemblage* see Young, E.B., Genosko, G. & Watson, J. (2013). *The Deleuze and Guattari Dictionary*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., pages 34-37.

concerns the subjectivity of communication" (1987, p. 79). Because of their inherent qualities "it becomes apparent that information and communication, and even signifiance and subjectification, are subordinate to redundancy" (1987, p. 79). Language then becomes the medium for conveying not objective but subjectified *order-words* – units of expression formed by a word or a statement in relation to its act, immersed in connotations defined by its social, external environment. The authors identify that

> the notion of collective assemblage of enunciation takes on primary importance since it is what must account for the social character. We can no doubt define the collective assemblage as the redundant complex of the act and the statement that necessarily accomplishes it (1987, p. 80).

Moreover, they theorise that "these acts seem to be defined as the set of all incorporeal transformations current in a given society and attributed to the 'bodies' of that society" (1987, p.80), bodies which constitute the fundamental units of the assemblage. The latter are in continuous transformation according to the *circumstances*, both external and internal (defined by Massumi as "conscious thoughts and intentions", 1992, p.28), aspect which once again demonstrates how individuals receive sets of information from their environment and re-elaborate them according to personal principles and individual categories before engaging in any form of expression. In *A Thousand Plateaus* then, Deleuze and Guattari recognise that these subjective variables, categories guiding personal forms of enunciation, allow to "*establish a relation between language and the outside, but precisely because they are immanent to language*" (p.82, emphasis in the original text). Moreover, crediting Voloshinov and Bakhtin for opening otherwise strict linguistic categories to that "extra-something" that is context, the writers remark that is the nature of the order-word itself, with its "instantaneousness [and] immediacy, [that] gives it a power of variation in relation to the bodies to which the transformation is attributed" (1987, p. 82).

Massumi expands commenting that the same sequence of words then:

> can be reiterated in a way that does not repeat the same incorporeal transformation. The same words, two entirely different meanings. Or, to use Foucault's terminology, two entirely different 'statements'. What makes them different is not of a grammatical or logical nature. On those level they are identical. The determining factor is most immediately the state of things within which the words are spoken (1992, p.29).

Further down he also affirms that

> what becomes of a meaning encounter, as we have seen, is attributable to its unique and contingent 'context', the nondiscursive network of forces within which particular speaking bodies are positioned and which ordains what those bodies say-do and thus where-how they subsequently go. 'Context' is an infinitely complex concertation of forces, the logical unity of which can only be conceived as one of movement. Impulsion is a general function of language. […] Language by essence includes extraverbal factors.

> 'Context' is what has been identified here as 'vertical content': a dynamic formation whose encounter with expression effects a transformation guided by an abstract machine and culminating in a statement (1992, p.30-31).

If Deleuze and Guattari (1987), together with Massumi (1992), structurally show the internal mechanisms of heteroglossia in its double relation to context and the individual, Bakhtin (1981) in *Discourse in the Novel* states that this phenomenon can be appreciated in its full intensity solely when attached to the domain of fiction and particularly to the genre of the novel:

the word, breaking through to its own meaning and its own expression across an environment full of alien words and variously evaluating accents, harmonizing with some of the elements in this environment and striking a dissonance with others, is able, in this dialogized process, to shape its own stylistic profile and tone.

Such is the image in artistic prose and the image of novelistic prose in particular.

[In the novel the unmediated intention of a word is impossibly naïve, so that] under authentic novelistic conditions, takes on the nature of an internal polemic and is consequently dialogized.

[…]

Such a dialogized image […] can fully unfold, achieve full complexity and depth and at the same time artistic closure, only under the conditions present in the genre of the novel (1981, p.277-278).

Fiction indeed expands the intensity, the stylistic profile of the layer of the heteroglot language it employs through the use of appropriate techniques of foregrounding: novels reveal themselves as effective media of linguistic expression and transmission because of the chosen order-words, which authors deliberately decide to utilise, transferring them in the expanded fictional domain of narrative. Heteroglossia and defamiliarization then are phenomena evident to authors, who – as argued above – appear to be fully aware of the multiplicity of possible readers' emotional responses to their work, a multiplicity that corresponds to the plurality of positions (afforded to the abstract machine), languages and connotations allowed by order-words and heteroglossia itself (Fowler, 1979, p.267).

Bakhtin highlights this observation, also elaborating on the singular position occupied by the figure of the prose writer:

for the writer of artistic prose, on the contrary, the object reveals first of all precisely the socially heteroglot multiplicity of its names, definitions and value

judgments. Instead of the virginal fullness and inexhaustibility of the object itself, the prose writer confronts a multitude of routes, roads and paths that have been laid down in the object by social consciousness. Along with the internal contradictions inside the object itself, the. prose writer witnesses as well the unfolding of social heteroglossia surrounding the object. [...] For the prose writer, the object is a focal point for heteroglot voices among which his own voice must also sound. […] The prose artist elevates the social heteroglossia surrounding objects into an image that has finished contours, an image completely shot through with dialogized overtones; he creates artistically calculated nuances on all the fundamental voices and tones of this heteroglossia (1981, p.278-279).

Following Bakhtin's heteroglossia then, it becomes obvious that countercultural authors isolated in their works aspects which they deemed relevant for the heteroglot environment and language in which the pieces operate, employing the latter to bring to the surface issues which mirror the problematic realities they observed in their social and historical context. *A Clockwork Orange* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* then function as formal instruments affectively charged with countercultural meaning operating in this environment through their linguistic and foregrounding techniques.

3.5. Narrative Choices and Foregrounding Techniques in Use

A Clockwork Orange and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest,* as novels but particularly as countercultural products, couple the power of fiction as a specific genre to that of certain narrative strategies deliberately put to use in order to highlight relevant historical issues. Among the totality of procedures chosen by Burgess and Kesey in their novels, particular attention will be focused on those techniques which were either noticeably recognisable in both novels, or different applications of similar techniques than can thus be considered one the expansion - or the adaption - of the other in a similar narrative

context. Foregrounding techniques can be perceived as visible stylistic devices responding to the authors' necessity to "choose a language" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.295) among the numerous possibilities offered by heteroglossia: novels represent an activation of the consciousness on a cognitive and linguistic level, following a specific and deliberate direction, for it "moves and occupy a position for itself within [heteroglossia], it chooses, in other words, a 'language'" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.295). Indeed, characters are the embodiment and voicing of socio-ideological points of view, and "physical" representatives of one of the social, and linguistic, layers of heteroglossia, as "even in the novel, heteroglossia is by and large always personified, incarnated in individual human figures, with disagreements and oppositions individualised" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 326). Moreover, according to Bakhtin they serve "to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way", with the author also explaining that:

> such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author (1981, p.324).

Bakhtin's declared support towards characters embodying one layer of heteroglossia becomes then fundamental to understand the centrality accorded by Burgess and Kesey to the internalisation of point of view in their story. Particularly, Bakhtin's notion of *speaking person* offers an interesting insight on the relation between a voiced character and their readers.

3.5.1. Bakhtin's Speaking Person

Bakhtin states that in novels more than in other literary genres:

> heteroglossia enters the [artistic domain] in person and assumes material form within it in the images of *speaking persons*, or it determines, as a dialogizing background, the special resonance of novelistic discourse (1981, p. 332, emphasis added).

Also, the speaking person described in the novel is a speaking human being that does not "live" in the story world by and for themselves, while at the same time not being a mere reproduction. Indeed, the speaking person is "an *artistical representation* represented by means of (authorial) discourse" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.332).

Thus, in creating such characters, authors allow an individual created according to the needs of a group in a precise socio-historical context to enter the novel "bringing with them their own unique ideological discourse, their own language" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.332). The significance of a novel then can be determined in terms of resonance of that "collective fate" portrayed in the narration, namely the level of wider social significance it assumes in its context of fruition. The degree of social significance then represents the direct consequence of the "character's discourse" and its related ideology, which become evident also in connection to those foregrounding mechanisms used to present the events - both on a linguistic and on a technical level.

Indeed, one of Bakhtin's fundamental points in the definition of the speaking person is that:

> [they are] an *ideologue*, and [their] words are always *ideologemes*. A particular language in a novel is always a particular way of viewing the world, one that

strives for a social significance. It is precisely as ideologemes that discourse becomes the object of representation in the novel (1891, p. 333).

Bakhtin follows in his reflection stating that obviously how the speaking person acts is "essential in order to expose – as well as to test – his ideological position (1981, p.334)." This ideological position is naturally open to possible contestation and opposition, for characters, as much as individual in real life, act according to personal belief systems that share their space with a multitude of other moral codes inside an heteroglot environment.

The concept of speaking person then is closely related to that of the character as the novel's narrator: indeed, the use of an internal point of view, a narration in the first person, helps amplify the impact of the character's own belief system, which is bound to get progressively more central and affirmed in comparison to all the "others", the latter destined to be lateralised. In the specific context of counterculture this technique allows the reversal of the two contrasting positions, as subversive and unorthodox belief systems that would normally be silenced now emerge, taking the central stage.

Moreover, the refusal to allow a third person to narrate the events appears to also serve other purposes, such as preventing the reader to unequivocally identify the external narrative voice with that of the author. The latter can thus detach themselves more easily, not only from the acts described in the story world but also from possible implications going beyond fictionality and entering the domain of real life.

The avoidance of that factuality of narration and objectivity of judgement - traditionally ascribed to the external point of view of a third person narration - prevents the quick, as much as premature, formulation of personal judgement in readers. The possibility to let characters "sound" then becomes fundamental "to represent an alien ideological world adequately, [also through] the special discourse peculiar to it" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 335).

The connection between the character as an ideologue and first person narration is thus especially relevant, as the use of the internal point of view allows the speaking person to express themselves through "typical aspects of the language [that] are selected as

characteristic of or symbolically crucial to the language itself" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.336). Indeed, according to Bakhtin, this use of language in novels offers means to "departure from the empirical reality" (p.336): foregrounding techniques responding to real authorial needs indeed become the character's personal way of perceiving, re-elaborating and narrating their portion of reality inside heteroglossia. The piece thus becomes an expanded artistic representation of fictionality, while still maintaining social significance in the heteroglot environment in which it belongs in real life.

3.5.2. First Person Narration

The unique quality connected to first person narration is that the technique offers an enriching, expanded testimony: in this instance, the speaking person is either the protagonist of the events unfolding in the story world or a witness to such events. In both cases, the primary aspect in analysis is that the use of the internal point of view as a foregrounding technique expands mere factuality with direct experience. Experience is indeed much more impactful and effective in eliciting an emotional response in readers, thanks to qualities inherent to the first person technique, as it seemingly allows a quicker identification with a certain fictional character.

Keen indeed speaks of *character identification* as well, clarifying that the phenomenon is "not a narrative technique (it occurs in the reader, not in the text), but a consequence of reading that may be precipitated by the use of particular techniques of characterization" (2007, p. 93). She also underlines that readers' personal involvement depends on the use of these techniques.

First person narration is then a device that assures the realisation of what Broadman – referring to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*'s emotional tone - defines as an "at least temporary community of value, [which allows] McMurphy's destruction to be experienced as both plausible and significant" (2012, p.55).

In the novel, Chief Bromden functions as speaking person: it is indeed on him who falls the responsibility to narrate the events bound to become so symbolic. In the words of Bromden himself he needs to "finally tell about all this, about the hospital, and her, and the guys — and about McMurphy. [Something] too horrible to have really happened, this is too awful to be the truth" (Kesey, 2002, p.8).

In the creation of his story, Kesey was aware of the importance of assigning symbolic value to his characters and to the events in order to achieve wider social significance, so that McMurphy's mythical tale could become a possible manifesto for a determinate social issue. Specifically for this reason Bromden declares that his words, his story, tells "the truth even if it didn't happen" (Kesey, 2002, p.8).

Boardman - despite recognising Bromden's immense effort - rightfully argues that "there should be no confusion over just who this story is 'about'. For all of the Chief 's importance and vividness as a narrator, he is still part of the 'telling' and not the 'essence'" (2007, p.57). What Bromden's role as speaking person undoubtedly allows though, is for readers to have access to the otherwise forbidden institutions of mental hospitals. The recollection of events indeed successfully transports the reader beyond the factuality of medical reports and news filtering through public media. In relation to the issue, Vitkus notices that – also because disillusioned and silenced by society - the Chief's vision "has turned inward, and it is to this insight that the reader has access through the Chief's narration" (1994, p.68). Vitkus continues stating that:

> the Chief communicates with the reader by translating his past madness into present narrative. This narration of madness, with its hallucination, anachrony, and illogic, offers an alternative, critical perspective on the way that American society functions (1994, p.68).

The statement reprises Bakhtin's reflection on the representational power of the heteroglot language when personified in the fictional speaking person. The author indeed states that:

> departures from the empirical reality of the represented language may under these circumstances be highly significant, not only in the sense of their being biased choices or exaggerations of certain aspects peculiar to the given language, but even in the sense that they are a free creation of new elements (1981, p.336).

These "elements" are precisely those foregrounded units of meaning which allow the reader to effortlessly understand Bromden's and McMurphy's individual agencies and their evolution throughout the story, but also the relationship that develops between the two characters (Ryan, 2012, p.43).

Boardman also states that the answer to questions regarding the value of Chief Bromden's role as speaking person is that they precisely "tell McMurphy's story as powerfully as possible. At any point in the novel, our fear or happiness for the Chief results almost entirely from how he views McMurphy" (2007, p.63).

This observation on Kesey's authorial choice effectively highlights McMurphy's agency and influence, that "sense of communal value" that the hospital inmates rediscover after the protagonist's arrival and that appears to extend to the readers as well. Bromden then is the "humble narrator" of a tale that might have been less heroic and salvific if narrated from the heights of McMurphy's "anti-heroic" ego.

The most interesting of "humble narrators" however remains Alex, the criminal and charming protagonist of Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*. In the novel, Alex is both protagonist and speaking person - as he likes to remind the reader on seventeen different occasions – the electrifying storyteller of his own subversive activities.

As already observed, Burgess recognised the voicelessness of people belonging to Alex's class and especially to his generation, considered by the state as "mere objects", passive and insignificant. In an unpublished interview, the author admitted that his Alex is an individual who is someway trying "to leave his mark; [he is] attempting to show that he exists and that he has the ability to affect things" (Burgess, 2012, p.217).

Moreover, in the Introduction to the 2000 edition of the novel, Morrison notes that "Burgess was of the Devil's party without knowing it" (Morrison, 2000, p.ix) when he decided to grant Alex total freedom: freedom of choice, freedom of action and freedom of expression. He also states that letting Alex "tell his own tale, rather than keeping him at safe distance is one of Burgess triumphs" (Morrison, 2000, p.xii). Indeed, even more evidently than in Kesey's novel, in *A Clockwork Orange* Alex's experience is presented as raw, unfiltered and as vicious as ever.

Alex's "humble" narrating voice renders him the most subversive and unreliable of narrators, whilst gifting to him a persuasive force that allowed his character to become so iconic: since the beginning, he stresses the friendship and brotherhood bounding him and his audience, while he "insinuates and allies himself with his readers [so effortlessly] that we end up sharing every laugh ('haw haw haw') and cry ('boohooohoo')" (Morrison, 2000, p.xii). Readers then are absorbed in a narration which can be seen as the personal re-elaboration of events originating from an extremely controversial, problematic protagonist and speaking person. Alex's persuasiveness certainly appears destructive to the readers, nonetheless he succeeds into "talking them into it", effectively destroying any degree of distance and barrier of decency between reader and character. Although in real life these barriers would prevent quick identification and the occurrence of an emotional response in the audience, the use in fiction of a first person narration as foregrounding mechanism assures a deeper reader's involvement.

The problematic implications connected to effective readers' identification with Alex were noticed by reviewers and critics when *A Clockwork Orange* was published in 1962: the novel, especially its devious main character and persuasive voice, were received with mixed reactions. Indeed, Kingsley Amis defined the novel a curious example of

"cheerful horror which many British readers, adventurous or not, will not be up to stomaching" (Amis, 2012, p.234), despite still responding enthusiastically to the story. Author Malcolm Bradbury on the other hand appeared more sceptical towards the possible success of the short novel. In his review however he managed to capture the essence of Alex's (Burgess-infused) message: he writes that not only "the story is told by one of the hooligans, [but we readers] get no distance from him and in the latter part of the book we are clearly expected to be sympathising with him" (Bradbury, 2012, p.236). The review, published in May 1962, perfectly grasps the immense power of the internal point of view as a mode of narration, especially when associated to fascinating but problematic characters like Alex.

3.5.3. The Figure of the Problematic Protagonist

The figure of the problematic protagonist is central to the context of counterculture. This character is often defined as "anti-hero", although the term, when analysed, appears of difficult application for characters such as McMurphy or Alex, protagonists of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *A Clockwork Orange,* respectively. According to the definition provided by the Cambridge Dictionary, an *anti-hero* is "the central character in a play, book, or film who does not have traditionally heroic qualities, and is admired instead for what society generally considers to be a weakness of their character"[13]. The term anti-hero then refers to a "morally grey" character who nonetheless appears to follow a personal code upon which he acts, even though he cannot be included among the traditional "good characters".

The decision to define McMurphy and Alex as *problematic protagonists* thus stems from their immediate appearance as selfish and irredeemable characters, for when not confronted by figures representing power and authority, they possess characteristics and

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[13] See the definition provided by the Cambridge Dictionary, from <u>ANTIHERO - Cambridge Dictionary</u>

qualities more often associated to villains: criminal, self-absorbed and devious individuals, moved mainly by self-interest and individual entertainment.

The right for these individuals to exist and thrive for their own sake is precisely what Alex remarks after a confrontation with his Post-Corrective Adviser, P.R. Deltoid:

> But, brothers, this biting of their toenails over what is the cause of badness is what turns me into a fine laughing malchick (boy[14]). They don't go into what is the cause of goodness, so why of the other shop? If lewdies (people) are good that's because they like it, and I wouldn't ever interfere with their pleasures, and so of the other shop. And I was patronising the other shop. More, badness is of the self, the one, the you or me on our oddy knockies (on your own, alone), and that self is made by old Bog or God and is his great pride and radosty (joy) (Burgess, 2000, p.30).

Burgess recognises Alex's status as an agent of chaos: indeed, as much as the primary cause of goodness appears not to be usually questioned, Alex reveals that his code of conduct strays from the impositions of Western society for motivations that apparently do not venture beyond a "just because" style of reasoning.

Badness is then an inherent quality of character, an aspect which shapes his identity. It is thus a *choice*, precluded from him only when he unknowingly consents to undergo Reclamation Treatment to avoid serving his sentence. In "Clockwork Marmalade", Burgess indeed comments that "Alex is not misguided, he is evil and vicious, perhaps impossibly so, but his viciousness is his own thing, embarked in full awareness" (2012, p. 212-213). Indeed, on many occasions, the author was very vocal in defence of Alex and his disruptiveness, stating that "destruction is a means of creation. […] That's negative creation" (2012, p.217). Admittedly, what Alex creates seems to be mere chaos,

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[14] English translations of Nadsat terms are provided in parentheses, following the glossary provided by: Burgess, A., (2012) [1962]. *A Clockwork Orange: Restored Edition*. London, UK: Penguin Books Ltd.

as consequence of the excessive freedom granted to him, the latter representing a visible challenge to any form of societal regulation.

In this social context – as both *A Clockwork Orange* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* highlight – the opposition is less between good and bad, while instead focusing more on the notion of rational as opposed to irrational, according to a certain set of values with Burgess commenting that "*A Clockwork Orange* ultimately demonstrates the pendulum theory – how one extreme purges the other" (2012, p.220).

Violence then for Alex is purposeful, for it is a means to establish his own identity and existence in his social environment. Burgess's declared indulgence "in excess, in caricature [was functional to] the purpose of making violence more symbolic than realistic" (2012, p. 214), to reveal Alex's full destructive agency, both to other characters and to the readers. For this reason, the novel's entire first section is dedicated to the unapologetic description of different forms and acts of violence. Linguistically, Alex indulges in the use of eccentric and exaggerated vocabulary of perverse enjoyment: "real beautiful" and the Nadsat adjectives "choodessny" (wonderful) and "zammechat" (remarkable) are employed to describe Alex's excitement after a beating and a rape. The Nadsat expression "horrorshow" - one of the most recurring adjectives in Alex's account – encapsulates the connection between enjoyment and perversity, imprinted on the narrator's mind both on a conscious level and on a linguistic one.

In the novel, Alex's excessive agency then flows "real beautiful" like the trails of blood and chaos he leaves behind him for his (and his friends') personal entertainment. His actions are not those of an anti-hero: Alex cannot possibly be appealing to readers for his "unconventional qualities" or his weakness of character, as he appears to be unstoppable and irredeemable.

The charm of *A Clockwork Orange* and especially of his infamous protagonist however can be recognised only analysing the novel's connection its original historical context. The motives behind the centrality of the problematic protagonist during the

counterculture can be identified in the conflict of values between classes, conflict which became evident in the transitional period between the 1960s and the 1970s more than before. As the post-war world struggled to find its stability, socio-political and generational tensions were brought to the surface. Indeed, Burgess's decision to craft a novel around the increasing phenomenon of youth crime and attempts of state intervention on the issue sparked from instances of street violence becoming routinely reported by the media in England.

During the late 1950s, gangs of teenagers, "restless and naughty, dissatisfied with the post-war world, violent and destructive" (Burgess, 2012, p.212) were among the numerous groups of anti-social aggression. Burgess was inspired by these subversive young people, called Teddy Boys, for the creation of his main character: indeed, in the story world of *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex behaves similarly to these teenagers. The author himself admitted that his wife had been the victim of a violent attack that left her in poor health: this occurrence is reprised in the novel, where the wife of writer F. Alexander – Burgess's fictional alter-ego - is beaten and raped leaving her in critical conditions that will later lead to her premature death.

Apparently, the "fictionalisation of the episode in the novel was a catharsis for Burgess" (Morrison, 2000, p.xiv) but also the perfect occasion to focus the attention of the public on a social issue that was bound to become gradually more relevant in the following years as well.

Moreover, Burgess was not indifferent to institutionalised forms of violence, forms of "clean and focused violence coming from the State" (Amis, 2012, p. 11), remarking that Alex's Reclamation Treatment as displayed by the novel was inspired by proposals of "easy courses in conditioning, some kind of aversion therapy which should make [criminals] associate the act of violence with discomfort, nausea, or even intimations of mortality" (Burgess, 2012, p.212), especially in association with films or music. Examples of such treatments administered to criminals or minorities were already being reported by newspapers: in a 1972 review of the book, Christopher Ricks comments that ten years prior "a liberally wishful newspaper like the London *Observer* could regale its readers with regular accounts of how a homosexual was being 'cured' by emetics and films." (2012, p.237).

Throughout the novel the alleged "modernity" of these methodologies is underlined on many occasions. Indeed, while the "Chief Chasso" (the Captain of Police Forces) condemns jailtime as an example of "outmoded penological theories [in favour of treatments administered on] a purely curative basis, to kill the criminal reflex" (Burgess, 2000, p.69), the opposite point of view is voice by the Prison Chaplain and by F. Alexander. When referring to goodness as "something chosen", the Chaplain stresses that the loss of agency through the privation of the right to choose is a form of dehumanisation: the treatments' results produce "a little machine capable only of good, through marginal conditioning" (2000, p.113-115).

Clean and legitimised forms of purging, that extracted from subjects "the will of whoever [the government] sees fit" (Burgess, 2000, p. 118), represented a widely relevant social issue in the Western world. Indeed, in the same year on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, Ken Kesey published *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, a novel which was bound to become part of the counterculture "manifesto", opposing institutionalised violence and unethical patients' treatment in psychiatric hospitals.

The author was able to identify "social evil with institutional constraints which hinder individuality, [and] he proceeded to set a microcosmic revolution in motion" (Knapp, 2007, p.45): the piece became a not-so-symbolic critique of American society in the 1950s and 1960s and specifically a meditation on the boundaries between sanity and insanity, rehabilitation and control, perpetrated on subjects who simply "fail to conform to the norms of an oppressive society" (Vitkus, 1994, p.69). Indeed, once again it is *difference*, not mental illness, the cause of confinement.

Psychiatry then became an "instrument of social purification masquerading as science, [where] therapy meant learning the moral codes of a particular society" (Faggen, 2005, p.x). Faggen also observes that, as recognised both by Goffman (1991) and by Foucault (1988), mental hospitals consisted in rehabilitative structures "built on a power dynamic in which patients were abased as a way not of curing mental illness but of asserting the power and authority of the psychiatric and mental health professionals" (2005, p.x). The

consequential imbalance of power between the medical staff and the patients was functional to passive-aggressively enforce systems leading to compliance, in fact to "force the internal soul to fit someone else's idea of the ideal environment" (Faggen, 2005, p.xi).

Discipline, control and manipulation become means to produce *docile bodies*: "convincing the disillusioned that they possess aberrant behaviour that needs to be cured, [those in power] seek to subjugate them" (Abootalebi, 2017, p.3), essentially to make them weak, insignificant and therefore innocuous and malleable.

Malleability is a central aspect in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*: indeed, McMurphy is the only patient that did not enter the structure voluntarily. In the novel, Harding – one of the inmates – directly addresses McMurphy explaining that – willingly or not - they already represent docile bodies:

> "Mr. McMurphy … my friend … I'm not a chicken, I'm a rabbit. The doctor is a rabbit. Cheswick there is a rabbit. Billy Bibbit is a rabbit. All of us in here are rabbits of varying ages and degrees, hippity-hopping through our Walt Disney world. Oh, don't misunderstand me, we're not in here because we are rabbits — we'd be rabbits wherever we were — we're all in here because we can't adjust to our rabbithood. We need a good strong wolf like the nurse to teach us our place."
>
> "Man, you're talkin' like a fool. You mean to tell me that you're gonna sit back and let some old blue-haired woman talk you into being a rabbit?"
>
> "Not talk me into it, no. I was born a rabbit. Just look at me. I simply need the nurse to make me *happy* with my role."
>
> "You're no damned rabbit!" […] "You're talking like a crazy ma—"
>
> "Like a crazy man? How astute."

> "Damn it, Harding, I didn't mean it like that. You ain't crazy that way. I mean —
> hell, I been surprised how sane you guys all are. As near as I can tell you're not
> any crazier than the average asshole on the street—"
>
> (Kesey, 2005, p.57-58, emphasis in the original text)

The patients, rather than mentally ill, appear disabled and deficient of those characteristics which allow them to be considered useful in a productive society, as they are "unable to meet the conditions of normality that were imposed upon them in a wider social setting" (Ryan, 2012, p.45).

In the novel it is again Harding that functions as the embodiment of these opinions, as he seems extremely self-aware of his status of alienated individual inside his social environment:

> For myself? Guilt. Shame. Fear. Self-belittlement. I discovered at an early age
> that I was—shall we be kind and say different? It's a better, more general word
> than the other one. I indulged in certain practices that our society regards as
> shameful. And I got sick. It wasn't the practices, I don't think, it was the feeling
> that the great, deadly, pointing forefinger of society was pointing at me—and the
> great voice of millions chanting, 'Shame. Shame. Shame.' It's society's way of
> dealing with someone different.
>
> (Kesey, 2005, p.265)

Conscious of their uselessness, the patients consider themselves impotent – with the sexual connotation of the term not being lost in the novel – and therefore disposable: indeed, "to escape this social rejection, they voluntarily subject themselves to the care of Nurse Ratched, and grant her absolute power in the process of reconstructing their social identities" (Ryan, 2012, p.45).

McMurphy on the other hand enters this world of rabbits as a wolf, as he represents the self-determined man canonised by the Beat Generation. He is also another embodiment of the figure of the problematic protagonist as - throughout the first half of the novel - he acts mainly out of self-interest. His admission into the ward is itself part of a plan to escape the terms of his incarceration (in *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex accepts to undergo the Ludovico Treatment for the same reason): McMurphy "performed violent acts for the sole purpose of getting away from the work farm and into the comparative luxury of this hospital, [which makes him a] shrewd con man, and not mentally ill at all" (Kesey, 2005, p.133).

Moreover, not dissimilarly to Alex, McMurphy is not only a con-man addicted to gambling but, also a criminal with a history of insubordination, street brawls and fights, and arrested multiple times for assault, battery and rape. Also, his medical report labels him a psychopath because, he says, "I fight and fuh— […], I am he put it *over*zealous in my sexual relations" (Kesey, 2005, p.42).

The main character in Kesey's novel then is a problematic protagonist and a challenge for the State because he as well, like Alex, benefits from his excessive freedom and agency, with his "marked disregard for discipline and authority" (p.134) and his label of "potentially assaultive", according to Nurse Ratched.

McMurphy's status is that of a man bigger than life, a self-proclaimed "bull goose loony" who consistently defies authority, gambling (on his life as well) on the possible outcomes of his behaviour as a way to maintain his independence and his agency. His game is eventually revealed, allowing Nurse Ratched to enforce her jurisdiction: McMurphy undergoes lobotomy, a psychiatric practice which transforms McMurphy in another docile body. In the narration, Bromden reports that the Nurse suggests taking such action "before it's too late to help the patient, [given their] history of past successes eliminating aggressive tendencies in certain hostile cases" (Kesey, 2005, p.252), because McMurphy was metaphorically growing bigger and bigger, progressively more disruptive and defiant.

Through lobotomy, the System – embodied by Nurse Ratched – succeeds in depriving McMurphy of his humanity, of his freedom and of his agency, making him a Vegetable, someone with "no action from the neck down whatsoever, not much from the neck up [too]" (Kesey, 2005, p.29). This operation, a form of institutionalised violence and personal violation is used, Bromden tells the reader, "as an example of what can happen if you buck the system" (p.278) and it is the aspect which causes the reversal of roles between oppressor and oppressed, making of McMurphy another victim of the modern age.

On the issue, Vitkus appropriately comments that "if society itself is crazy, false, unjust - then the voice of madness becomes the voice of sanity, and the binary of reason-unreason is subverted. […] Madness [then is] a construct that serves the hegemonic ideology of American capitalism" (1994, p.65). Indeed, this binary opposition in very often subverted in the novel, most notably when Bromden shares with McMurphy his observations on the oppressive nature of the System, the "Combine":

> "I been talking crazy, ain't I?"
>
> "Yeah, Chief" — he rolled over in his bed — "you been talkin' crazy."
>
> "It wasn't what I wanted to say. I can't say it all. It don't make sense."
>
> "I didn't say it didn't make sense, Chief, I just said it was talkin' crazy."
>
> (Kesey, 2005, p.190)

Destined to destruction because "the thing he was fighting, you couldn't whip it for good" (Kesey, 2005, p.273), McMurphy then becomes the symbol of an entire generation, a martyr in the eyes of the other patients, a legendary figure celebrated for his decision to lose his personality after having infused his inmates with what Fick describes as "imaginative energy" (2007, p.145) and individual agency.

McMurphy, emptied of his internal soul through the operation and rendered docile, is now "civilised" and "cured" when he is in fact disciplined and silenced. Solinger reflects on the process of silencing stating that:

> the characters all go unheard unless they adapt, of their own volition or otherwise, and are transformed into something other than they are; marginal figures have their internal narratives revised and are made to submit, or else. Lacking the ability to manage their immediate environments and being, or being *seen* as, a threat to the dominant culture, the individual becomes targeted as a site of ideological regulation. Control, [is then applied] over the sounds in their own immediate environment or over their own narratives (2021, p.61, emphasis in the original text).

Indeed, both Alex and McMurphy are deprived of their own essences – the first through behavioural conditioning, the second through lobotomy – and their means of personal and social expression, rendered docile and voiceless, as Solinger comments: "raised to the level of 'societal danger', such [typology of individual] offers the state a pretext to intervene and administer not only the voices but also the bodies that house them" (2021, p.58).

Changes in behaviour are thus observable both on a physical and on a linguistic level, as the two protagonists are perceived by the system as problematic and "infective", as pollutants threatening moral purity. Decency (encapsulated in the values of the capitalistic middle class) then needs to be protected from both the vicious actions of these problematic individuals and from their obscene and subversive means of expression.

3.5.4. The Refusal of Standard Language and Counterideology

On a linguistic perspective, both novels appear to foreground styles, modes and layers of language that distance them from the standardised middlebrow system. This phenomenon can be seen as the most evident example of Bakhtin's linguistic heteroglossia in the domain of fiction in relation to the countercultural context, as representatives of oppressed classes find themselves linguistically silenced.

To impose a margin of individual self-determination then Kesey and Burgess deliberately decided to include linguistic choices that deviate from standardised language, employing unconventional constructs to oppose attempts of alienation coming from the dominant class.

The first, most immediate aspect of differentiation, observable in both novels starting from their titles, is the use of linguistic structures and vocabulary ascribable to colloquiality and informality: for their pieces, both authors chose titles owing to the established oral tradition.

In a few critical essays, Burgess comments on the inspiration behind *A Clockwork Orange*: the saying is "a venerable Cockney expression applied to anything queer […]. Nothing, in fact, could be queerer than a clockwork orange" (2012, p.221). Heard for the first time in a London pub in 1945, the novelist also writes that:

> the phrase intrigued me with its unlikely fusion of demotic and surrealistic. For nearly twenty years I wanted to use it as the title of something. During those twenty years I heard it several times more – in Underground stations, in pubs, in television plays – but always from aged Cockneys, never from the young. It was a traditional trope, and it asked to entitle a work which combined a concern with tradition and a bizarre technique (2012, p.211).

Burgess voices his concerns and his inspiration for both novel and title inside the narration. In the tragic first meeting between Alexander and Burgess's fictional alter-ego F. Alexander, the two find a second to talk about Alexander's novel as Alex notices a stack of documents with an odd title:

> A CLOCKWORK ORANGE – and I said, 'That's a fair gloopy title. Who ever heard of a clockwork orange?' Then I read a malenky (little) bit out loud in a sort of very high type preaching goloss (voice): '– The attempt to impose upon man, a creature of growth and capable of sweetness, to ooze juicily at the last round the bearded lips of God, to attempt to impose, I say, laws and conditions appropriate to a mechanical creation, against this I raise my sword-pen (Burgess, 2000, p.18).

This expression is so odd that Alex, almost "brainwashed" by its "mindless mnemonic power" (Goh, 2000, p.274), uses it to – ironically enough – describe himself after realising that the Ludovico Treatment had proven successful, and he had been indeed "civilised". Comparing himself to a being without humanity he says:

> 'Am I like just some animal or dog?' […] 'Am I just to be like a clockwork orange?' I didn't know what made me use those slovos (words), brothers, which just came like without asking into my gulliver (head). (Burgess, 2000, p.94)

Burgess's influences visibly include multiple languages and multiple registers, aspect which underlines his keen interest for structures, uses and impacts of languages on thought, interest culminating in the creation of Nadsat. It also highlights his willingness and disposition to accept the familiarity of oral tradition as valid, worthy of attention and consideration.

Familiarity and colloquiality are key terms to approach the title of Kesey's novel as well. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* originates from a line taken from a longer nursery rhyme, linking the title to the domains of orality and infancy: indeed it was Bromden's grandmother that would recite it to him when he was a child.

The rhyme can be effectively employed as a title because of the colloquial meaning of cuckoo, which refers to a "crazy person"; also, the metaphor remains valid when considering the asylum as the "nest" and McMurphy as the "one" who appears to quite obviously fly over it.

The use of the rhyme as the novel's title however assumes an even deeper meaning, especially when analysed in relation to the text, where it is explicitly mentioned. The tale indeed recites: "one flew east, one flew west, one flew over the cuckoo's nest … O-U-T spells out… goose swoops down and plucks *you* out" (Kesey, 2005, p.246). Baurecht underlines that the *goose* swooping down on the nest is "McMurphy, of course, [as he] is the 'bull goose loony' who plucks the men (victims) out" (2007, p.87).

The rhyme then is proleptic of the events unfolding in the novel, from McMurphy's arrival in the ward to Bromden's final escape - perpetrated following McMurphy's own directions - in which the Chief actually manages to leave the "nest". Tying together present condition and past memories, the title encapsulates the impact of oral tradition in the narrator and thus in the novel itself.

As a narrative technique the employment of orality by the speaking person not only establishes a closer relation between narrator and reader, but it also translates the narratological functions of the speaking person in a more effective and immediate way. Indeed, Alex frequently employs interjections ("like") and onomatopoeia to mediate his relationship with reality in his own linguistic terms (Solinger, 2021, p.73) but also to present such events to his readers with a familiarity otherwise impossible to achieve in a written text.

This same immediacy is an aspect which characterises Kesey's novel as well.

Hicks notices that the author

> places emphasis on Chief Bromden's *narration* of events, on the oral qualities of his tale. Kesey is more concerned here with capturing the semiliterate qualities of Bromden's speech, with creating an idiolect replete with intentionally awkward and agrammatical constructions, phonetic spellings, and dropped verbs (2007, p.72, emphasis in the original text).

Once again, the focus is on the character's interpretation of the events and the individual means used to consciously elaborate the sets of information coming from the outside. Semino & Swindlehurst identify that this "phenomenon in which the language of a text projects a characteristic world view, a particular way of perceiving and making sense of the world [takes the name of] mindstyle". (1996, p.143)

Indeed, reading *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the audience is able to identify linguistic patterns that reveal Bromden's individual process of elaboration and expression of his world view. The result of such process of foregrounding is a heightened perception in the readers of the character's "striking, idiosyncratic, or deviant understanding of the world" (Semino & Swindlehurst, 1996, p.145). As suggested by the two critics then,

> from the very beginning of the novel, Bromden's language, non-standard in a way that convincingly creates the sense of his interior monologue, produces the impression of a mind that works oddly, that tends to perceive things in an unusual way: the impression, in other words, of a distinct and identifiable mindstyle (Semino & Swindlehurst, 1996, p.150).

Especially relevant also for its imaginative value, the figure of metaphor features primarily in the Chief's mindstyle, as a tool for the character to process the threating and

the unfamiliar: associations to *machinery* appear very frequently when referring both to society as a macrocosm and the psychiatric ward as its microcosm. The most striking example of this use of metaphor in the novel is undoubtedly connected to the term *Combine*: the Chief's definition of the Combine as a "huge organization that aims to adjust the Outside as well as the Inside" (Kesey, 2005, p. 25), is not encyclopaedic but rather the result of his own observation and mental elaboration, making it an heteroglot deviation from standard language.

Indeed, "the Combine is clearly an imaginative construct that describes the dominant social order in America during the 1950s, [order which is] slowly but surely turning society into a dehumanized, homogenized culture in which each person is 'a functioning, adjusted component'" (Vitkus, 1994, p,65).

"Adjustment" then becomes a key term as well, especially because Bromden regards patients as "machines with flaws inside that can't be repaired" (Kesey, 2005, p.14): the term connects the operating of psychiatric structures - and their mission to make individuals functional and useful in their social environment – to the tweaking of a machine to correct it, to make it work better. Bromden's use of the term Combine is an expansion of its encyclopaedic definition, following a process of association: the System, with the ward at its centre, is "described as a vast system of machines and robots, engaged in a process of converting human flesh, imagination, and individuality to a machine-world of freedomless conformity" (Vitkus, 1994, p.73).

It is not coincidental then to find machine descriptions and metaphors predominantly in the first half of the narration, before McMurphy's salvific appearance in the ward. As the narrator himself explains, the patients of the mental hospital appear to live in survival mode, "pecking at each other" in an effort to show compliance with the authority to ultimately feel safe.

About this behaviour, Ryan also observes that:

> Bromden's feigned deafness is an internalisation of the expectations of a wider society. Therefore, he behaves in a reflexive manner, existing in a cultural liminal

space, resisting the signifying practices of both Nurse Ratched and the patients.
[…]

It can be also argued that this develops into a reflexive position of a 'resistance
from' the signifying practices of Nurse Ratched, [accomplished] using methods
that are similar to those of his father when he is confronted by an overwhelming
force (2012, p.49).

Indeed, he also reports that in his flashbacks, "Bromden's father [appears to use]
linguistic difference as a tool of resistance when government officials tried to buy the
falls from the tribe" (Ryan, 2012, p.41). This method is mirrored, years later, by the
Chief himself, who – after being silenced and considered invisible by the State - now
applies forms of *linguistic deference*, if not difference, to resist social conformity and
alienation.

The most extreme and extensive case of linguistic deviation from the standard system is
however that of *anti-language*. Anti-language can be perceived as a "disturbance" by
groups excluded from the jargon, as they find it impossible to elaborate a set of
information through a linguistic means. This linguistic disturbance is considered
dangerous for it accompanies and translates criminal acts and behaviour. Indeed,
reflecting on Alex's activities and their recollection, Solinger notices that "there is
something more fearsome about the peculiar language Alex uses to describe the events
[…] and the relish with which he delivers its unusual tones and constructions, than the
events themselves" (2021, p.57). Then he also adds, quoting Farmer (2003), that the
events are "actually enhanced and made more affective by the dialect and linguistic
techniques employed" (p.57). It is not surprising then to notice that in a review of the
book, Amis recognised that "the speech not only gives the book its curious flavour, but
also *fits in with its prevailing mood*" (2012, p.234, emphasis added).

Language as noise thus becomes source of social regulation, as it carries ideological
meanings and it signals "the sounds of others (and the Other) as something to be feared,

colonized, and quarantined" (Solinger, 2021, p.60). Indeed, in *A Clockwork Orange,* Alex's language represents his most powerful and effective tool of both self-determination and of resistance to authority.

Anti-languages are by definition "the special argots of thieves, prison inmates and other sub-cultures which exist in an antagonistic relationship with the norm society" (Fowler, 1979, p.259), and therefore they belong to the polyphonic structure of Bakhtin's social heteroglossia. More importantly, the socio-cultural significance of an anti-language is not limited to its potential to embrace and express different positions on otherwise ignored issues, but to create new and original cognitive parameters and mental structures to comprehend and elaborate sets of information coming from the outside, free from the influence of standard linguistic constructions.

In "Anti-language in Fiction", Fowler reprises Halliday's considerations on anti-language as the means of expression of groups belonging to "anti-societies" and subcultures, whose aim is to openly antagonise and negate both the language and the ideology of the ruling class. Indeed, he states that "they facilitate an alternative social and conceptual reality for their speakers. There is a Whorfian argument here: the anti-language creates an anti-worldview" (1979, p.263). Moreover - Fowler (1979) specifies - anti-language "as a technique in fiction seems to be a technique of representation" (p.274), for it does not provide insights on *any* alternative point of view to the norm, but it rather aims to represent "the alternative [which] is most fruitfully seen as provoked by, and a *creative* critique of, the norm" (p.267). The inherent distance between the world views and the consequential distance of related linguistic transformations are those qualities that allow anti-languages to constitute – when employed in fictional works – the most efficient medium of linguistic foregrounding. Anti-languages indeed represent the most complex and extreme case of processes and techniques employed to achieve de-familiarisation (and successive re-familiarisation) in the framework of Bakhtin's dialogisation and heteroglossia.

Burgess, writer but also linguist, was deeply interested in the metamorphic nature of language: he was extremely aware of the multiplicity of representational possibilities in the figure of a heinously charming speaking person, but also of the effectiveness of narrating the events using a unique, artificial anti-language, specifically shaped on the main character. Fowler indeed highlights that "the novelist who chooses to depict a deviant hero or minor characters knows that their voices, and the worldviews which they project, are going to be perceived as alien, as objects for inspection rather than subjects for sympathy" (1979, p.267); this reflection is indeed consistent with the purposes declared by Burgess for the creation of the novel itself and the use of his characteristic slang of Nadsat. The notion of anti-language was already recognised in Bakhtin's production as *alien discourse*, a form used to transmit another's words to include others – in the case of fiction, readers - as participants of a discourse that would normally be marginal(ised) from the norm. Indeed, Bakhtin states that

> the tendency to assimilate others' discourse takes on an even deeper and more basic significance in an individual's ideological becoming, in the most fundamental sense, [as it] strives rather to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behaviour (1981, p.342).

In relation to Bakhtin's statement on the presence and the potential of alien discourse in novels, Fowler elaborates on the notion, commenting that anti-language can essentially be considered the employment of a more complex and structured form of alien discourse, specifically of the *internally persuasive* type:

> the theory of anti-language adds to [Bakhtin's] observations the possibility that a foreign lexis may be used systematically and with a consistent semantic import, rather than as an occasional foregrounded intervention in the surface texture of a work (1979, p.265).

Indeed, Bakhtin's considerations on internally persuasive discourse are consistent with the characteristics which define anti-language, particularly its cognitive implications, as

> [alien] discourse is of decisive significance in the evolution of an individual consciousness: consciousness awakens to independent ideological life precisely in a world of alien discourses surrounding it. […] Internally persuasive discourse […] is, as it is affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with "one's own word." In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else's. (1981, p.345)

It is precisely this hybridity of discourse and this employment of multiple layers of heteroglossia in the novel that allow authors to still effectively represent marginalised individuals and groups, without causing excessive distancing between readers and characters, indeed:

> the reading of a novel of deviancy does something to enlarge the experience of middle class readers by showing alternative lifestyles and modes of speech. And it does much more if these are presented as a troubling challenge to the norms encoded in middle class language.
>
> […]
>
> Their motivation is to reveal to the bourgeois reader the life-experience, or worldview, of the deviant group, to give access to an alternative reality. The revelation of an alien mode of experience from an outside world and an underworld is valuable enough within a literary genre which assumes possession of language as an object (Fowler, 1979, p.274).

Burgess, in a conscious effort to include as effectively as possible the experience of an alienated class and a voiceless generation, indeed relies on the immediacy and the estranging and de-familiarising effect of a lateralised variety of language, Nadsat, a mixture of English, (adapted) Russian, rhyming slang and "gipsy talk". Nadsat can be defined an anti-language as it responds affirmatively both to the representational and the ideological issues foregrounded in the novel and to the linguistic principles connected to anti-language theories that guide its formation.

The author, observing the ongoing situation regarding British teenage criminality, had reflected on the possibility to write a novel on the issue, potentially including their language as well as their point of view. The use of an actual variety of language however worried Burgess, for it did not fit the atemporal setting he had imagined for the story - an undefined close future. Also, language – and especially jargons - being historically specific and subjected to swift changes, Burgess also worried about the slang being already outdated before the publication of the book (Biswell, 2012, p.18).

Biswell reports that during a trip to Leningrad in his wife's company, the writer had noticed that in Russia as well as in England gangs of violent teenagers – dressed quite fashionably, as the Teddy Boys did – terrorised the streets. Given the extensive diffusion of the issue of youth crime, Burgess then decided to employ Russian words to create a new, artificial language to be included in the novel. The author himself states that "Alex and his friends speak a mixture of the two major political languages of the world – Anglo-American and Russian – and this is meant to be ironical, for their activities are totally outside the world of politics" (Burgess, 2012, p.223). The statement indeed underlines that teenage violent behaviour actually has a universal component showing that, even if still aiming to oppose the dominant ideology, "dandified, lawless youth is an international phenomenon, equally visible on both sides of the Iron Curtain" (Biswell, 2012, p.18).

Employing Russian in a novel which was going to be published in a time when the Cold War was dominating the socio-political and cultural landscape also assured a heightened affective response in readers, especially those belonging to the ruling class. Indeed, the

main character's jargon and anti-language has "inherent dialogic potential because it has a specialized social origin: [it] originates in an unofficial opposition, so its dialogic angle is, specifically, antithetical" (Fowler, 1979, p.265).

Alex's distancing from society then happens both on a behavioural level and a linguistic one, through "phonological and morphological alterations, [the use of Russian] foreign loan words, and domesticated words with obvious foreign elements in their derivation" (Fowler, 1979, p.265). Essential Nadsat vocabulary indeed consists of words directly taken from Russian, more or less literally applied to the same sign ("malchick", "baboochka"), whilst to the latter category – domesticated vocabulary - belong those words that were adapted and thus resulting in an anglicised form, such as the term "horrorshow" already mentioned. Alex's violence then finds its linguistic equivalent, with language becoming "hearable counter-ideology": Goh reprises Lecercle (1990) stating that:

> such linguistic violence [is] the opportunity for the emergence of a 'remainder' of meaning, for 'minority' values and expressions which are otherwise occluded by the conventional and conventionalising language of the majority (2000, p.272).

Furthermore, Goh recognises the close relationship between the private and the public sphere foregrounded in the novel: the critic highlights the universality of the issue regarding individuality and authenticity in the oppressing and alienating social environment where Alex and his anti-language are immersed. He indeed states that

> Burgess's concern is with the individual's lived experience within the novel's given scenario, which encapsulates the effect of power in general upon the individual, rather than satirising a particular political regime or era. By making language and its relationship to experience the primary political arena, the novel emphasises the textuality of politics, its manifestation as power over the social

praxis of the individual, and its creation of a dilemma of legality and individuality (2000, p.265).

He also underlines the oppositional nature of as anti-language, as it does not represent one possibility among the multiple available, but becomes tangible representation of the character's unwillingness to conform not only to the laws, but also to the subjugating methods of social and political discipline: indeed Alex's "own linguistic performance is set against the language-as-power used by the adult members of his society" (Goh, 2000, p.275). Alex's linguistic violence can be considered even more significant than his physical violence because of its immediacy, its penetrative power in the minds of characters and of readers as well. Unsurprisingly, Burgess, on multiple occasions, defined his novel a "brainwashing primer", a piece that needed to be read without a glossary to effectively acquire the vocabulary as one would do when learning a new language, even though some terms are glossed by Alex himself[15]. In the novel, the doctors encountering Alex's slang for the first time acknowledge the political implications of this form of "language imprinting" commenting that it consists of "Slav. Propaganda. Subliminal penetration" (Burgess, 2000, p.86)

Readers are then introduced to Nadsat, and to the "tribe"[16] to which Alex and his friends already belong; indeed, if the sentence opening the story is in colloquial English, starting from the following sentence is a narration that overflows with Nadsat.

Fowler noticed that Burgess's anti-language contains both relexicalization and overlexicalization, following Halliday's principles:

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[15] It is interesting to notice that the use of Nadsat instead of standard English is a deliberate decision on the part of the character and narrator, who appears to be extremely eloquent in both. Alex *chooses* to include - both narratively and linguistically - the reader in his world instead of distancing them as he does with other adults in the story. This can be first noticed during Alex's conversation with his Post-Corrective Adviser P.R. Deltoid in Part One, Chapter 4.

[16] The notion of tribe is linked both to the sense of familiarity and colloquiality already observed and the establishment of a sense of belonging that substitutes the traditional dysfunctionality of family representation, in a temporary way.

'Relexicalization' is the provision of a new vocabulary item for a new concept peculiar to the deviant group, or adaptation of an existing item in such a way as to make it clear that a shift or an inversion of values has occurred. 'Overlexicalization' is the provision of a large number of alternatives for the important concepts of the counterculture, either synonyms or finely differentiated variant (Fowler, 1979, p.264).

As already anticipated, "core" Nadsat is the result of a relexicalization of Russian terms in English, focused almost completely on those areas central to the activities of the subversive group of friends: the glossary then displays a massive presence of terms referred to money, body parts, women and in general vocabulary related to the domains of violence and crime.

One of the most layered and interesting cases of relexicalization is the already mentioned adjective "horrorshow": not only the Nadsat term is phonetically equivalent of its Russian counterpart "khorosho", but the process of phonetical modification when transposed from one language to the other creates a doubly layered oxymoron. Fowler indeed comments that:

Alex consistently applies it to acts of violence, that is, acts which are positive in his system of values but negative for the culture generally. The double-valued semantic of the word is signalled in its English spelling: the English transliteration produces a word which is overtly bad in meaning for, for example, Alex's parents, but implicitly good in meaning for Alex: horror plus show (1979, p.269).

In the novel Burgess openly underlines the wider social implication of the term during a verbal exchange between Alex and one of the doctors responsible for the Ludovico Treatment: indeed, when Alex remarks that "this must be a real horrorshow film if you're so keen on my viddying (seeing) it, one of the white-coat vecks (men) said, smecking

(laughing): 'Horrorshow is right, friend. A real show of horrors.'" (Burgess, 2000, p.76). The term also shows more or less directly[17] not only the twisted playfulness associated to the language, but the Whorfian connection between linguistic means of expression and its cognitive impact as well.

Overlexicalization, on the other hand, is "the provision of a large number of alternatives for the important concepts of the counterculture, either synonyms or finely differentiated variant" (Fowler, 1979, p. 264), aspect which it almost represents a technical necessity, as standard language lacks specificity in those liminal areas. In *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex provides an example of overlexicalization when he refers to "any of the other bandas or gruppas or shaikas that from time to time were at war with one" (Burgess, 2000, p.25), all terms translating into standard English as "gang".

Alex's speech is also permeated by other instances of playfulness, which make the character and the tale even more peculiar and excessive and, arguably, wickedly enjoyable: hyperboles and Shakespearian register, onomatopoeia and repetitions all contribute to the overall stylistic profile of the protagonist's language.

The distribution of Nadsat however is not constant throughout the narration, but it is more concentrated – arguably very conveniently for the reader as well – in Part One, especially in Chapter 6, when Alex describes the attack perpetrated against an old lady, attack which will eventually lead to her death and Alex's arrest and incarceration for murder (Vincent & Clarke, 2017). On the other hand, the lowest concentration of Nadsat is noticeable in the chapters of Part Two and Part Three in which Alex most frequently interacts with adult characters (Vincent & Clarke, 2017). This observation also leads to another possible reflection: while Part One reports Alex's activities in their full intensity and frequency, the two following parts see their interruption caused by the incarceration but more prominently by Alex's undergoing of the Reclamation Treatment.

The Treatment, through a process of conditioning, appears to automatically direct Alex towards positive behaviour not only physically, making him sick at the thought of violence, but also forcing him to modify his way of expressing himself when he

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[17] The origin and diffusion of the slang are not explained in the novel. It is then impossible to know if the adjective in the current form already was part of the original vocabulary or was adapted by Alex to better fit his worldview.

addresses other people. Indeed, during a public demonstration to show the results of the treatment, Alex is confronted by two actors enacting possible scenarios which would normally trigger a violent response in the teenager, but which now instead cause him to get unbearably sick at the mere thought of the consequences. To redirect the course of his thoughts and avoid feeling even more sick, Alex tries to linguistically mediate with the person in front of him in a higher register of standard language less contaminated by Nadsat, a technique that appears effective in calming his symptoms:

> 'Keep your stinking bribes to yourself. You can't get round me that way.' And he banged at my rooker (hand) and my cut-throat britva (razor) fell on the floor. So I said: '*Please, I must do something. Shall I clean your boots?* Look, I'll get down and lick them.' (Burgess, 2000, p.93, emphasis added).

> '*Let me*,' I creeched out (to scream), '*worship you and be like your helper and protector from the wicked like world*.' Then I thought of the right slovo (words) and felt better for it, saying, 'Let me be like your true knight,' and down I went again on the old knees, bowing and like scraping. (Burgess, 2000, p.95-96, emphasis added).

In both these instances, the correction and the performance of the conditioned good behaviour is accompanied and intensified by his linguistic equivalent (Solinger, 2021, p.74). Despite the reversal of behaviour, observing these examples it is possible to confirm that the Whorfian hypothesis establishing the bidirectional connection between language and cognitive activity remains valid. Processes of behavioural conditioning then operate as forms of ideological purging: discipline is not only administered on actions both also on language, effectively repressing and silencing *every form* of expression. Solinger indeed notices that "the change in behaviour effected by the Ludovico Technique takes place at the level of language, with Alex's wild tongue tamed;

by robbing him of his means of verbal and physical expression, he and the class he represents are rendered invisible" (2021, p.76).

3.5.5. Doublespeak as the System's Form of Deception

The use of anti-language is an example of an estranging process happening on a linguistic degree, for the deviation from standard language of the signifier impairs or completely precludes comprehension to the dominant group for ideological reasons.

In the novels however it is possible to notice that the System employs deceitful linguistic mechanisms and expressions as well. In many instances, the meanings that the speakers intended to express are deliberately "coded" and understandable only by the members of the institutions. Its meaning then cannot be transmitted because it does not correspond to the actual representation of reality referring to that term. Both in *A Clockwork Orange* and in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* the medical staff – individuals operating in the high ranks of the oppressive system – employs expressions that disguise violent practices and a de-humanising ideology. Lutz (1987) reports that the use of a "word or phrase that is designed to avoid a harsh or distasteful reality [constitutes an] euphemism [that, when] used to mislead or deceive, becomes doublespeak" (p.382). He then proceeds specifying that:

> this use of language constitutes doublespeak because it is designed to mislead, to cover up the unpleasant. Its real intent is at variance with its apparent intent. It is language designed to alter our perception of reality (p.382).

This intentional falsity of communication creates an environment in which the appearance of positivity and trust is able to thrive, while instead it proves false once compliance is not granted by the people that rely on institutions to provide a collective

service. "Indeed, those who exist in such environments rarely are able to distinguish between pseudo-communication and communication, between the illusion of survival and actual survival" (Moran, 1975, p.224), as this type of language is specifically conceived to distort reality and its perception in the mind of citizens. Moran also remarks that in this form of pseudo-communication "control tends to remain with the sender in a non-sharing experience with power held by the message sender who determines the meanings of symbols" (1975, p.224). Considering these premises, it is possible to affirm that institutional structures use language as a form of non-physical control and invisible violence which corrupts the univocal connection between sign and signified and slowly affects the perception of the individual's environment and its practices. Pashaee, also referencing Fiske (1998), comments that:

> such control is best exercised by the naturalization "of the meanings that serve their interests into the 'commonsense' of society as a whole". This is how certain criteria creep into our lives unawares, through what Althusser calls *ideological state apparatuses*. There are norms regarding every single aspect of our individual and social being. [...] The norms do not come naturally. They have been inculcated. They do not necessarily serve humanity's best interest; they serve the dominant class's interests (2011, p. 210, emphasis in the original text).

This discrepancy in meaning subjects victims of doublespeak to doubts, fear of madness or denial, symptoms visible in an episode reported in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.* McMurphy defines Nurse Ratched a "ball-cutter" and a "monster chicken" who forces patients to peck at each other during Therapeutic Community, to reveal each other's secrets in order to gain her trust, allowing her to maintain control of the ward.

To this insinuation Harding responds:

> The staff desires our cure as much as we do. They aren't monsters. Miss Ratched may be a strict middle-aged lady, but she's not some kind of giant monster of the

poultry clan, bent on sadistically pecking out our eyes. You can't believe that of her, can you?" (Kesey, 2005, p.53)

Harding also seems irremovable further down when he repeats: "Our dear Miss Ratched? Our sweet, smiling, tender angel of mercy, Mother Ratched, a ball-cutter? Why, friend, that's most unlikely." (Kesey, 2005, p.54). These therapy sessions, held in the name of recovery and improvement, are instead one of the practices most commonly employed by Nurse Ratched to *adjust* her patients.

That of adjustment is a recurring term and theme, as seen with Bromden machinery metaphor, to describe the process of surrendering one own individual agency to the dominant ideology. Apparently innocuous, the word however carries a variety of violent and oppressive meanings when employed by the medical staff referring to the patients: Bromden himself has "adjusted" to a society that aimed to exclude his race and his tribe faking deafness and dumbness, eventually becoming "a giant janitor. [A] vanishing American, a six-foot-eight sweeping machine, scared of its own shadow" (Kesey, 2005, p.62).

Adjustment is then connected to the notion of recovery: while the most common meaning of the term is based on health improvement, this "is not the kind of 'recovery' which the Combine desires to accomplish, that would be a total *surrender* of the self" (Vitkus, 1994, p.75, emphasis in the original text) to the ideological principles of the dominant class. The System indeed insists on "rehabilitation" in order to reintroduce individuals in society as "a completed product […], all fixed up good as new, *better* than new sometimes" (Kesey, 2005, p.36, emphasis in the original text) to the joy of the Nurse.

The concept of rehabilitation indeed appears to be twisted by a System that operates on people's mind to discipline and repress forms of anti-social behaviour considered dangerous, subversive and corrupted. Nurse Ratched employs a seemingly positive language as well; it is however quite obvious from her passive-aggressiveness that behind the appearances, her linguistic choices and her actions aim towards the proposal of an operation to reduce McMurphy's destructive agency. Bromden in the novel tells

the readers that "at the meeting she tried once more to bring up her suggestion for a more drastic measure, insisting that the doctor consider such action 'before it is too late to *help the patient.*'" (Kesey, 2005, p.252, emphasis added) when instead the lobotomy will leave McMurphy completely unrecognisable and dead inside, "a face milk-white except for the heavy purple bruises around the eyes" (Kesey, 2005, p.277).

The same twisted vision of rehabilitation is applied in *A Clockwork Orange* as well: as previously observed by Bradbury (2012), it was becoming a diffused practice in the 1960s to "cure" homosexuals by emetics and films, in order to discourage any behaviour that the System regarded as a "deviancy" and as symptomatic of insanity. In the novel Burgess applies the same modalities to his Reclamation Treatment, or Ludovico Technique, to kill the criminal instincts in prisoners in order to avoid prison overcrowding and damages. Inmates then are treated on a "curative basis" (Burgess, 2000, p.69) that should supposedly heal, eliminate their aberrations to render them functional and disciplined through feelings of sickness which would modify their behaviour.

As Alex struggles to understand the process of conditioning and the involuntary change of behaviour connected to the occurring of sickness, Dr Branom elucidates him on how his body is adapting, effectively "learning" to reject determinate instincts and stimuli that do not conform to normality. "What is happening to you now is what should happen to any normal healthy human organism contemplating the actions of the forces of evil, the workings of the principle of destruction" is what the doctor tells Alex before specifying: "You are being made sane, you are being made healthy." (Burgess, 2000, p.81)

Health then is not associated to a balanced condition of physical and mental wellbeing, but it relates to the purging of a "contagious disease" that infected a body that would be otherwise fit to function in its social environment.

Control and discipline then are administered not only physically but also linguistically, as the institutions contribute to further damage the mental state of psychiatric patients, in order to persuade them not to question the validity of the treatments. The undetectable

violence perpetrated by the System through doublespeak on its citizens contributes to the notion of a dysfunctional government, aspect which becomes evident in both novels, especially in connection to the terms employed to describe the representative of the institutions.

3.5.6. Dysfunctional Family Vocabulary - Manipulative Mothers and Surrogate Brothers

In both *A Clockwork Orange* and in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* the readers can notice a recurrent use of family-related vocabulary. This procedure appears extremely useful to mentally associate a character - or the reader - to their "social" role according to the function that a specific family member performs in their familial context. These functions however can be connoted differently than expected, according to the cultural context and period in which they are employed.

In the broad historical context of the post-war years, the figure of the mother acquired new centrality also in relation to the losses of soldiers suffered during the Second World War. The attention is especially focused on the figure of the repressive, dysfunctional mother: a woman that beneath the appearance of sweetness and nurture is actually overprotective, castrating and manipulative.

As feminine and nurturing qualities arguably are the result of the gender-related role of the "good, passive housewife" assigned by a traditional patriarchal system of values, it can also be stated that "bad mothers" are the consequence of a subversion of these same principles. In the post-war years, mothers were required to partially step out of their traditional feminine role to assume a – not necessarily positive - fatherly role that was left vacant, overcompensating and assuming an "hybrid" status between the two parents: "a patriarch dressed as a matriarch" (Reis, 1987, p.92).

The figure of the manipulative "hybrid mother"[18] perpetrating patriarchal values remains in the foreground during the 1960s and 1970s[19], when the decisive establishment of capitalism as both an economic and a socio-political ideology generated counter-ideological currents and movements. Indeed, according to Fisher

> the protest impulse of the 60s posited a malevolent Father, the harbinger of a reality principle that (supposedly) cruelly and arbitrarily denies the 'right' to total enjoyment. […] Yet it is not capitalism but protest itself which depends upon this figuration of the Father (2008, p.14).

Following Fisher's statement then it is possible to assume that the equation of capitalism to an abusive Father allows the role of the Manipulative Mother to remain relevant, generating similar responses of cynicism and distrust.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest's characters and narration elaborate on these considerations with effective immediacy, as Nurse Ratched is openly identified by the patients as a (dysfunctional) motherly figure (Kesey, 2005, p.33, p.43), most prominently in the passage where Harding refers to the Nurse as "our sweet, smiling, tender angel of mercy, Mother Ratched" (Kesey, 2005, p.54). This identification is underlined most frequently in the first part of the novel, while it will be abandoned as the events gradually unfold and the Nurse's manipulative practices become more evident.

Indeed Harding, addressing McMurphy, says that in the ward they are all "victims of a matriarchy" (Kesey, 2005, p.56), for the asylum's supervisor is also a woman, and an old friend and colleague of Nurse Ratched. Bromden However recognises that "it's not

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[18] See also Reis (1987). The author references the theory of the *dual mother goddess* in connection to a patriarchal view of the split mother mythos, a theory that despite admitting the ambivalent and coexisting nature of a "good", nurturing mother and a "bad" devouring one, still tends to emphasise the latter (p.78).
[19] See also Romero, J. S., & Cabo, L. M. V. (2006).

just the Big Nurse by herself, but it's the whole Combine, the nation-wide Combine that's the really big force, and the nurse is just a high-ranking official for them." (Kesey, 2005, p.64). This statement connects the figure of the castrating (or lobotomising) Manipulative Mother to the Abusive Father (the System): Ratched is then an example of middle management who still serves a bigger System of surveillance and control (Vitkus, 1994, p.66). In the big factory of the Combine then both Mother and Father can be considered different manifestations of the same patriarchal, alienating and oppressive ideology of the dominant class.

Pashaee indeed remarks that:

> being an ideological state apparatus, the mental hospital in Kesey's novel displays the same characteristics as a capitalist system. […] Nurse Ratched is the seeming supreme power, but only seemingly. The boss, the supervisor, is only heard of once or twice in the story, but as the name implies, [she] is the puppet master, who must, in turn, serve another puppet master and so on (2011, p.211).

Nurse Ratched also possesses the quality of the hybrid mother: she refers to the patients as "boys" (Kesey, 2005, p.17) and she "seems to be more of a man than a woman" (Pashaee, 2011, p.212). Indeed in order to maintain control and discipline, she behaves rationally and assertively, qualities traditionally considered as masculine, rejecting those moral qualities of humanity commonly associated with femininity and motherhood. The result is a dangerous travesty of a nurturing and protective mother, a parent that should assume a positive role while instead exhibits "often perverted maternal qualities" (Sullivan, 2007, p.16). Sullivan also expresses some disappointment in noticing that women in Kesey's novel "[fail] to play a warmly maternal role or, when actually assuming that role, their failure to play it effectively" (2007, p.20), virtually supporting even further the insidiously violent practices of the oppressive system.

The novel assumes a male point of view on the issue, indeed focusing into the Nurse's extreme – an ineffective – attempts at concealing physical signs of visible sexuality and femininity associated to her gender. On multiple occasions the patients remark on the physical attributes of the Big Nurse, whose appearance seemingly resembles that of a "smiling flour-faced old mother there with the too-red lipstick and the too-big boobs" (Kesey, 2005, p.43), while Harding comments that "her face is quite handsome and well preserved. And in spite of all her attempts to conceal them, in that sexless get-up, you can still make out the evidence of some rather extraordinary breasts" (Kesey, 2005, p.64).

Indeed, particular attention seems to be directed to the Big Nurse's breasts, as they should symbolise "the promise of softness and abundant giving one can associate with a mother's breasts" (Sullivan, 2007, p.21), while for the Nurse they merely represent the visible contradiction of that androgynous, sexless hybridity that she desires to embody for her role.

Most significantly, as Harding continues in his praising monologue, he underlines that "[Nurse Ratched] is so intoxicated with the *sweet milk*[20] *of human kindness* that her deed has generated within her large bosom, that she is beside herself with generosity" (Kesey, 2005, p.55, emphasis added). Kesey, in referencing *Macbeth* (Act I, Scene V, 14-15), invokes the ghost of Lady Macbeth, the literary character that most famously rejects her feminine sensitivity assigned to her by "nature" and societal stereotypes to adopt a male mentality in order to "compensate" for the sweet and human nature of her husband. She factually aims to revert the patriarchal dichotomy that associates femininity with weakness opposing it to male strength. Indeed, in order to become "functional" outside of a traditionally domestic environment, society imposes her to exorcise her womanly nature and qualities related to her gender, leading to her plead to be "unsexed" (Tosi, 2020).

The same process of "degendering" can be observed in the nurse as well. She resents those physical attributes that allow others to collocate her in a defined gender, for she

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[20] Interesting to see that milk, the first form of nurture, symbol of life, health and growth, is used by Burgess for the deviously iconic "moloko plus" drink, milk spiked with mescaline and amphetamine.

believes that they carry multiple connotations on the role she should assume and its effectiveness. Apparently, Bromden says, "a mistake was made somehow in manufacturing, putting those big, womanly breasts on what would of otherwise been a perfect work, and you can see how bitter she is about it" (Kesey, 2005, p.6). To functionally operate in society as a figure of authority then she needs to restrain those visible womanly qualities to assume a hybrid status which allows her to be perceived as "stronger" in a system dominated by the male gaze of traditional patriarchy. She appears constricted between the limited roles open to women in post-war society (she was an army nurse) and the caring connotations attached to them and the refusal of those same connotations in order to assert dominance and discipline.

This status of hybridity and degendering represents an issue because the rejection of femininity - as shown by Lady Macbeth as well – fundamentally consists in the abhorrence of those features "typical" of the female gender, as the latter should be gifted with more humanity than their male counterpart. Inhumanity then becomes an integral attribute of the castrating, manipulative Mother that is "denying, destructive and terrifying" (Sullivan, 2007, p.16), as the novel repeatedly states: Bromden refers to the Nurse and her methods using terms that relate to the underlying machinery metaphor that dominates his narration. The example presented above uses the term "manufacturing"[21] instead of "creating", connecting the figure of the nurse to that of an industrially produced material object rather than a human being: "there's no compact or lipstick or woman stuff, she's got that bag full of a thousand parts she aims to use in her duties today" (Kesey, 2005, p.4).

As parental figures defy their traditionally assigned roles, it seems impossible for the character to establish functional and healthy "family relationships" inside the social nucleus. In such dysfunctional environment then, the protagonist seemingly feels the need to create new familial bonds as a replacement for the abusive models displayed by the "parents", the silencing and disciplining institution.

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[21] See the definition provided by the Cambridge Dictionary, from <u>Manufacture - Cambridge Dictionary</u>

Sullivan argues that - in openly opposing the Big Nurse's abusive practices - McMurphy "plays father to all the inmates" (2007, p.16), aspect which should be confirmed by the comparison that Bromden repeatedly voices between his father and the protagonist. It is however necessary to underline that the two central male figures in Bromden's life, despite being both symbols of resistance to attempts of forced compliance coming from the system, differ in one interesting aspect: while Bromden's father fails in his purpose, McMurphy is eventually successful in humiliating the Nurse and depriving her of her controlling power.

Arguably then McMurphy plays the role of a protective big brother to his inmates, especially throughout the second half of the novel, after realising that he is committed "under jurisdiction and *control* [of the nurse]" (Kesey, 2005, p. 125, emphasis in the original text), the latter being the only person that could grant for his release. After realising that his behaviour precludes him of the possibility to be discharged, McMurphy's efforts will be focused on protecting and entertaining his weaker "rabbit" brothers, building an authentic sense of community that opposes the deceitful communal meetings held by Nurse Ratched.

Kesey's "vision of the necessity of inter-dependence and mutual brotherhood" (Knapp, 2007, p.43) as an - at least temporary – antidote to the dysfunctionality of authority occurs inside the closed group of the psychiatric patients. In *A Clockwork Orange* on the other hand, the notion of brotherhood is extended outside the layer of pure narration, to eventually reach the readers.

Alex refers to both his group of friends and to the audience of his tale as "his brothers". Abandoned by his droogs to avoid being arrested, Alex eventually turns to his readers for "the real weepy and like tragic part of the story, [calling them his] brothers and only friends" (Burgess, 2000, p.57). Such narrative choice allows Alex to refer to his readers as compassionate companions and it reduces the distance between him as a character and his audience. Moreover, rejected by his parents as well and replaced by a respectable young man that now rents Alex's old bedroom, the protagonist indeed struggles to find a new, "adoptive" family in the novel, therefore needing to extend that research for belonging and brotherhood in the readers, with whom he tends to create a "pseudo-family" (Davis & Womack, 2002, p.27)

This imaginary community of readers and witnesses of his hardships then appears to at least marginally contribute to Alex's healing process, newly found peacefulness and hope for the future, as he recounts in the finale of the novel addressing his audience one last time: "And so farewell from your little droog (friend) […] o my brothers, remember sometimes thy little Alex that was" (Burgess, 2000, p.141).

3.5.7. Memories, Reconditioning and Fear of the Familiar

As both novels' aim is to describe the mental and physical detriment caused by the abusive practices perpetrated by the institution on psychiatric patients, cognitive functions become elements defining identity as they allow the characters to return to comfort and familiarity. Alex and Chief Bromden as speaking persons expand their account of their experience, infusing it with memories. It is possible to observe however that the role played by memories in connection to the characters' mental wellbeing develops in opposite directions inside the two pieces: indeed, if Bromden's nostalgic flashbacks to childhood will help him restore his identity and his agency he thought lost, for Alex memories will coincide with the (temporary) loss of his freedom through the process of conditioning.

In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Bromden's mental state is heavily obfuscated by sedatives and sleeping pills: during night-time he describes the functioning of the Combine's machinery and the presence of a thick fog. With McMurphy's arrival in the ward and the progressive neutralisation of the Combine's insidious practices, Bromden will see a gradual improvement of his mental condition, so that the fog will noticeably leave space to nostalgic flashbacks.

The fog – an hallucination resulting from Bromden's schizophrenia – is connected to the humming and clicking sound of "a big machine room down in the bowels of a dam where people get cut up by robot workers" (Kesey, 2005, p.80), or the way he "heard a cotton

mill hum once" (Kesey, 2005, p.34), both referencing Bromden's difficult past. Moreover, in the first part of the novel the involuntary recession in the domain of dreams appears to be traumatic – perhaps because drug-induced.

Bromden's conscious memory instead seems to be a more comforting place to which he can retreat, when he needs "to try and get [his] thoughts off someplace else" (Kesey, 2005, p.6). He states that he always tries "to place [his] thoughts in the past and hide there, [even if] the fear seeps in through the memory" (Kesey, 2005, p.6). Indeed as previously observed, in this section of the novel the flashbacks are still limited in frequency and length and enclosed in parentheses (p.7), visually placing them in a "mental place" that is different from that of the actual narration.

It can be stated that Bromden's memories are fragmented as a result of past trauma, violated - as much as his land, his tribe and his family are – by the government, which forcibly acquired the land for industrial purposes: "I see the US Department of Interior bearing down on our little tribe with a gravel-crushing machine" (Kesey, 2005, p.119). The building of the dam by the government results in Bromden's tribe being dispossessed and alienated (Reis, 2016, p.714). It appears obvious then that "his disconnection from place has been the source of his trauma" (Reis, 2016, p.725), aspect that is confirmed by the sounds – similar to those of a dam - attributed to the Combine, connecting Bromden's present machine metaphor to his traumatic past (Faggen, 2005, p.xv). Reis indeed remarks that "the desecration of his homeplace figures […] prominently in his flashbacks and nightmares [and] thus his tribe's and his own dispossession must figure into any comprehensive reading of his mental state" (2016, p.713).

The expansion of the factual experience with memories allows Bromden to consciously connect the nostalgic past of his childhood to his present and to "[re-imagine] the sources of his own pain and paralysis" (Hicks, 2007, p.76). This process of rediscovery of the self is apparently activated by McMurphy's disruptive agency: indeed – as the events unfold and the novel progresses – "Bromden experiences vital parts of his past in flashbacks, [each time retrieving] a part of himself from the fog and [becoming] more conscious" (Hicks, 2007, p.76).

In the second half of the novel Bromden's flashbacks surely become more vivid and elaborated, occupying wider portions of the narration and visibly indicating the Chief's reclamation of his past, his sense of self and his individual agency in relation to the external world. This self-awareness will also propel Bromden's final act of mercy towards McMurphy and his escape from the ward. In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* then, Kesey "suggests repeatedly that memory, knowing one's individual and collective pasts, is a key to any sense of present or future" (Hicks, 2007, p.76).

Such notion of memory as the cradle of individuality and identity can be noticed in Burgess's novel as well. In Alex's twisted and personal way, music – especially classical music by the "old German masters" – is his getaway to memory. In his bedroom Alex reaches ecstatic heights listening to Mozart, Bach and Beethoven while visualising "such lovely pictures" of violent acts performed in the previous nights, including those inflicted on F. Alexander and his wife:

> After that I had lovely Mozart, the Jupiter, and there were new pictures of different litsos (face) to be ground and splashed, and it was after this that I thought I would have just one last disc only before crossing the border, and I wanted something starry (old) and strong and very firm, so it was J. S. Bach I had, the Brandenburg Concerto just for middle and lower strings. And, slooshying (to listen) with different bliss than before, I viddied (to see) again this name on the paper I'd razrezzed (to tear) that night, a long time ago it seemed, in that cottage called HOME (Burgess, 2000, p.27).

Also, his memories of the event involuntarily make him remember – almost proleptically – about what F. Alexander had said about the clockwork orange:

> The name was about a clockwork orange. Listening to the J. S. Bach, I began to pony (to understand) better what that meant now, and I thought, slooshying (to listen) away to the brown gorgeousness of the starry (old) German master, that I

would like to have tolchocked (to hit) them both harder and ripped them to ribbons on their own floor (Burgess, 2000, p.27).

Indeed, an integral part of the Ludovico Treatment – the name referencing Ludwig van Beethoven – is the presence of "emotion-heightening music, [through which] he is conditioned into feeling nausea, [both] when hearing Mozart or Beethoven as well as when contemplating violence" (Burgess, 2012, p.222). This process of conditioning through music is another form of violation perpetrated by the government on Alex, where "music, which should be a neutral paradise, is turned into a hell" (Burgess, 2012, p.222).

As Solinger rightfully remarks, "his only defense against this sensory assault is to try, as he did in his home with music, to build a defensive sound wall around himself" (2021, p.74), voicing the unfairness and injustice of the attack on sound: "but it's not fair on the music. It's not fair I should feel ill when I'm slooshying (to listen) lovely Ludwig van and G. F. Handel and others" (Burgess, 2000, p.86). To Alex complaints, Dr Brodsky replies that "the sweetest and most heavenly of activities partake in some measure of violence – the act of love, for instance; music, for instance" (Burgess, 2000, p.86), thus recognising the primary role fulfilled by music in relation to consciousness and memory. Music will be again employed by F. Alexander to torture the conditioned Alex after having discovered the protagonist's real identity, causing the teenager to attempt suicide by jumping out of a window.

Burgess however reinforces the position regarding music's positive function as a fundamental tool in the establishment and (re)discovery of one's own identity. During his recovery in the hospital, the protagonist discovers through music itself that he is "cured all right" – as the effects of the Treatment were reversed by his concussion. Indeed, Alex tells the readers that the medical staff equips him with a stereo and a selection of classical music, among which he obviously chooses Beethoven:

'The Ninth,' I said. 'The glorious Ninth.'

And the Ninth it was, O my brothers. Everybody began to leave nice and quiet while I laid there with my glazzies (eyes) closed, slooshying (to listen) the lovely music. […] Then I was left alone with the glorious Ninth of Ludwig van. Oh, it was gorgeosity and yumyumyum. When it came to the Scherzo I could viddy (to see) myself very clear running and running on like very light and mysterious nogas (feet), carving the whole litso (face) of the creeching (screaming) world with my cut-throat britva (razor). And there was the slow movement and the lovely last singing movement still to come (Burgess, 2000, p.132).

The chapter then appears to close with cyclical irony, as Alex appears to be "rehabilitated": when left alone he once again contemplates peacefully disturbing memories and images of violence listening to his favourite starry master, fully himself again and ready for a conscious choice for the future.

CONCLUSION

Inserting itself in the framework of affective theories and their interpretation - in relation to the cultural and historical context of the post-war period - this work highlighted the characteristics which allowed affect to be recognised as the powerful and pervasive force guiding cultural interpretation. De facto, affect represents an element central to intersubjectivity: indeed, it operates as infinite unrealised potential, fundamental for the creation of meaning and the elaboration of different stimuli into a coherent and conscious emotional response. This work also recognised that the audience's emotional response to a text is the result of a conscious process of re-organisation of inputs coming from multiple sources – external and internal to the subject involved - through each individual's Abstract Machine.

Indeed, in an historical background that sees the shift from disciplinarian societies to societies of control, new forms of control of the masses are developed in the landscape of the growing capitalistic society. Such events propelled a parallel shift, specifically in the processes characterising human production and reception of external inputs as culture rather than law became the primary source of propaganda. The renovated, more subtle, methods of conditioning employed by societies of control also sparked the interest of critics and academics on their impact on the citizens, relating the issue to affect and the latter's relationship with perception and experience. Starting from this premise, this thesis investigated the role of language as the principal mode of expression of experience – real or imagined through fictional stories – underlining its centrality especially in novels. Indeed, language represents a mode of expression whose qualities more effectively realise and conduce affectively charged meaning from a text to its biomediated audience.

Moreover, as the establishment of capitalism not only as an economic but also as cultural system, the development of new technologies allowed new and different perspectives on the physiological and neurological activity of the individual: the biomediated and informational body becomes then object of attention for its openness to information coming from different sources. Particularly, the informational body becomes relevant

for its ability to unconsciously absorb and register inputs, in order to eventually re-organise them on a conscious level as part of the subject's comprehensive experience. Such process, formally described referencing the workings of Deleuze and Guattari's Abstract Machines, factually connects each person's individual subjectivity to the occurrences unfolding across the environment in which they are immersed and in which the Machine operates. Cultural pieces then appear fundamental to facilitate the activation of such Abstract Machines and the re-elaboration of information registered through affect. Novels in particular represent a privileged medium not only for their ability to expand real life experiences of their time but also for their power to engage the reader through their formal qualities, boosting the activation of affect in the Abstract Machine.

This thesis concentrated on the domain of counterculture on the basis of these premises, as it recognised that both Anthony Burgess and Ken Kesey used the established and popular medium of fictional stories to engage their audience through affect in order to a world amplified their real-life experience. Such process responded to the authors' necessity to highlight certain historical issues that otherwise would have been short-lived or even voiceless in the socio-political landscape of the time. The authors of *A Clockwork Orange* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* facilitated the reception of affectively charged meaning in their readers harnessing the potentialities of affect through the novel's formal structure and the use of particular linguistic techniques. The propagation of affect from the Abstract Machine of the text to the Machine of the reader is then the result of the defamiliarizing language of the novel, language which contributes to the arousal of defined, polarised emotional responses in the audience.

The particular emotional response resulting from the reader's assumption of a sympathetic point of view towards the novel and its characters formally corresponds to the direction of affect assumed by the text and then shared by the reader as well. This position – defined of "complete allegiance" - represents the starting point for some considerations on the actual effectiveness of these novels and generally of countercultural novels as affective media. Indeed complete allegiance is the most favourable starting point for empathy in readers: the activity of reading itself, especially of fiction, can invite the reader to take the place of the protagonist and embody them in

their adventures and experiences through a process of central imagining that goes beyond sympathy and its workings. Despite the debate surrounding the degree of involvement of sympathy and empathy in the passage between the passivity of reading to the active nature of prosocial behaviour in response to stories, it appear obvious that readers' allegiance to socially engaged novels allow their audience to achieve a higher degree of awareness towards otherwise voiceless issue. Posited this notion as true, it becomes evident how both Burgess's and Kesey's novels – thanks to their fascinating and subversive protagonists and to narrations that weigh on their loss of agency and freedom - contributed to the establishment (rather than the creation) of a pervasive feeling of dissatisfaction towards the dominant class, its values and its subtle systems of repression which became more and more part of the countercultural sentiment.

Particularly, this work's method of research was applied to expand the body of knowledge already available on the Burgess's and Kesey's novels and on their novels' interrelation with the historical period to which they refer, in order to integrate the points of view already available on the literature of the 1960s and particularly of the Counterculture. Indeed, the thesis's primary aim was to offer another interpretation which – basing itself on Massumi's theories of affective realisation – explained reader's engagement as the result of a conscious process of elaboration of unconsciously registered information. To do so, this work investigated more deeply those punctual techniques which were both significative of the styles of the singular author as manifestation of their authorial needs, but also the response and actualisation of certain shared issues. The two novels analysed in this piece then become exemplificative of a much larger body of work produced throughout the 1960s and 1970s sharing the same intents and qualities as *A Clockwork Orange* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Indeed, they all seem to respond to shared social issues belonging to voiceless – or silenced – social groups in capitalistic societies across the Western world. Starting from the late 1950s or 1960s many other authors employ similar techniques and characters to build their stories. Some notable examples include William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon and Hunter Thompson: all the mentioned authors and their works are thus valid candidates for further research.

The pervasiveness of capitalism and of counterculture as its mirror is also due to globalisation and to the rapid development of all forms of communication. The primary role of the latter then opens multiple possibilities of comparative research spanning across different media. Indeed, the two novels analysed in this work characterised their decade as much as their extremely popular film adaptations did the following one: Stanley Kubrick infamous adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange* was released in 1971, while *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, directed by Miloš Forman, appeared in cinemas in 1975. The adaptations thus offer the possibility to further develop the research on affect and audience engagement in relation to countercultural products shifting the focus on a different to the medium of cinema, with its formal techniques of realisation. An interesting aspect to underline when considering the analysis the two films is that, in spite of the popularity achieved by both of them after their release, the reception and reviews were opposite in nature. The film adaptation of Kesey's novel was highly praised by audience and critics alike for its ability to highlight the reality of psychiatry of the 1960s and 1970s as a problematic form institutionalised violence. On the other hand, Kubrick's film was deemed dangerous and subversive, an attempt to instigate violent tendencies in younger generations, aspect which appear to contribute to aggravate the already problematic issue of youth violence. For this reason, the movie was retired from cinemas and banned for years, together with its source material – Burgess's novel. The difference in the reception of the two films, far more polarised than that of the novels themselves, represents an interesting aspect of research in the field of visual media, opening a debate on the affective impact that certain techniques of foregrounding proper to the visual medium (one of the most notable examples being the Kubrick stare and its connotations) have on the audience.

Music and comic books were other media forms that starting from the 1960s became integral part of the countercultural identity. From the late 1960s, many bands aligned themselves with the principles of the rising youth culture and used music as a form of protest and transgression. It is indeed in this cultural environment that psychedelic rock and punk rock developed, and where many legendary bands found popularity: among them are Pink Floyd, Sex Pistols, The Clash, Ramones and The Doors - whose name is inspired by Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* (pivotal book to understand American

drug culture and one of Burgess's references for *A Clockwork Orange*). Moreover, comic books too helped propagate the ideals of the counterculture, so much so that in the United States the genre of "underground comix" became extremely popular. Smaller publishers favoured the circulation of products that had been censored by the establishment and thus rejected by mainstream publishers. In some cases however mainstream characters became extremely popular for their defiant and subversive stance close to countercultural attitudes. It is the case of DC Comics' character of the Joker, whose allure never faded throughout its fictional life and is still visible at present.

Counterculture however never mutated into an organised group of opposition with an established political identity and program. Because the participants where not interested in establishing a different order or a new set of values but rather only wanted to oppose the ruling one, Counterculture instead remained a more general cultural movement formed by different groups of people belonging to the same generation and thus loosely sharing the same point of view on contemporary social issues. Moreover, because of globalisation, this common feeling of discontent was affectively reinforced through different social realities and countries mainly through the fruition of the same cultural products: tied mostly to the contingencies and the feeling of uncertainty of its own time then, Counterculture remains only partially realised. Interpreting the forces driving the movement in affective terms then prove extremely useful, for they show that the growth in influence of this oppositional current fed mostly on its environment and on the popularity of its novels, films and music. Once the external inputs coming from the context of reference mutated, the movements opposing it changed and evolved as well. Counterculture at present then remains relevant precisely because of its unrealised potential for change: with its iconic depiction of violence and transgression as visible, though twisted, forms of rebellion against the oppressive and coercive system of Late Capitalism, the protagonists of the Counterculture are still a source of fascination for younger audiences mainly because of their iconic representation, aspect which had made them almost legendary.

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