



IDENTIFYING BODIES: EMERGENCES OF REPRESENTATION IN “THE CHANCE”

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ABSTRACT:

In this paper I approach the body as agent of construction and a part of the process of identity in the short story “The Chance”, written in 1979 by Peter Carey. The characters' identity – understood as a process according to the perspective forwarded by Zygmunt Bauman and Stuart Hall, among others - is revealed in their behavior and interactions. The story contextualizes a genetic lottery called The Chance, which gives the possibility of changing one's body through technology. Based on the perspective that the body is constantly affected by new technologies and considering the body as the main agent of the exclusion of the Other, I conceive that identity is a process in constant mutation/modification and a change of body leads to a change in identity.

KEY WORDS: Body, identity, post modernity, technology

When Peter Carey wrote the short story “The Chance”, in 1979, the world polarization between “right” and “left” ideologies was ruining. Great utopias, as Marxism, were already losing strength. In the same year, Michel Foucault published “Microfísica do Poder”, showing that Nothing in the bourgeois capitalist society, is more material, more bodily, than power, for power is not only repressive, on the contrary, it produces positive effects and knowledge about the body (FOUCAULT, 2000, p. 147). In what other way than bodily control would the Earth settlers aliens in “The Chance”, the *Fastalogians*, exercise power over humans since for them, the human race was “nothing but cattle” and “their sole function was to provide intergalactic balance of payments” (CAREY, 1993, p. 57)? “The Chance” has several points that can be focused and studied under a political and historical perspective, for it approaches the Marxist ideology right to some of its most vulnerable points. However, my objective here is not to deal with these points, my focus is on the very argument of Carey's short story: the Genetic Lottery. “The Chance” brings to the reader a new sort of possibility in terms of genetic manipulation, a Chance, and also a place – the Chance Centre – where one can change one's human body for another one, also human. Nonetheless, what would be the implications of such a change as the entire change of the body in the personal identity? And what are the evidences, representations and facts that appear in people's (and the story characters') course of existence as manifestation of their processes of identity that can serve as guides for an analysis based on theories of Postmodern philosophers and writers so that it is possible to define both identity and the body as places occupied by Subjects? Is it only the exclusion of the Other, suggested by Stuart Hall (HALL, 2005) that moves the process of identity and gives it direction?

This article aims to show how the characters' bodies in the story effectively function or act as indicators of identity, or the identity process. The characters will be displayed in relation to the bodies of their own and the others', as characters who are endowed with movement, interact with one another and “don” several personifications/embodiments or

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masks/personalities according to the place they occupy. Each situation described here is an effort both to tell the story and to raise alternative readings found along the study. However, as shall be seen, at first are summarized the main events in the story and its (dis)continuity and the Chance is presented, with the finality of leading the reader into the analysis. I may use the present as the narrative tense and eventually appeal directly to the reader in the second person. And the story characters shall be presented along its synopsis as well as analysis.

Although at the beginning of the story Paul, the narrator, seems to be merged to the environment and to be like most people, he begins to appear along the story undoubtedly by the exclusion of the Other and the reader can consequently find and define him as the narrator and main character. However, those processes of exclusion are engendered by the image he constructs of his body. To the reader, by means of his narration and speech, Paul classifies the Others as different from him, as well as himself as distinctive, and that is why the reader sees him sometimes in situations somewhat hostile, for there seems to be a collision point to come and, although such a point never comes into effect, the imminence or proximity of this collision (and sometimes even the overtaking of it) marks the construction of each character's identity. The imminence takes place in Paul's situation with Carla, the things he wants badly to occur, his hard attempts to cancel her Chance, his efforts to get closer to her but he is never able to; Carla seems to be unreachable after some point. The proximity and overtaking happen when Paul gets very close, spatially speaking, to the hook-nosed lady but when the collision is at the point to be concretized, it is overtaken by Paul's close vision of the lady and his consequent withdrawal. These two Others force Paul to accept that the collision is impossible, because he cannot effectively touch the Others as it would be necessary to collide with them.

INDIVIDUAL MOVEMENTS: THE SYNOPSIS OF THE STORY

Three years after people on Earth have been introduced to the Genetic Lottery, the Lottery that gives you a Chance, the story begins. This technology was presented to human beings by the aliens named *Fastalogians* or *Fastas*. The name "Chance", is not arbitrarily assigned, say, not by chance, but due to the fact that it gives anyone – who has enough money – the opportunity (the Chance) to have a complete change on his own body. Right after you get out of it, possibilities are that you will not recognize yourself in the mirror. The procedure is unknown, as well as the home planet of the *Fastas*, but the lack of knowledge and curiosity about how any sort of technology works has become a habit by the time the story starts, as asserted by Paul in the beginning, the acceptance of technologies has become automatic: "We were used not to understanding. It had become a habit with the Americans who had left us with a technology we could neither control nor understand" (CAREY, 1993, p. 56)

Paul has lost in the Lottery, that is all he says. He works as a gardener and on a Tuesday afternoon he meets Carla on his way back home. Carla is sitting on a footpath asking for money with a dead body by her side², a common practice to raise money for funerals. Paul, finds her beautiful, stops, and shares his beer with her. Since he gives her one beer, she decides to buy him a meal and, then, both of them go to a restaurant where they talk, eat *Fasta* food, and start a relationship. This is when Paul says he feels like real people, a mixture of sensations he describes saying, "I cannot explain what it was like to sit in a restaurant with a woman. I felt embarrassed, awkward, and so pleased that I couldn't put one foot straight in front of the other [...] Here I was. With a woman. Like real people." (id., p. 60)

When, in the restaurant, Carla lets Paul know she is going to take a Chance; which is no problem for him at the beginning. However, after they fall in love, Carla's longing for a

² According to the narrator, a common practice was to ask money on the street with a corpse by side, usually someone of the family. The money would be gathered for the funeral. In this case, Carla would say that the corpse was her grandfather; however, as explained after in the story, it was the body of a stranger.

Chance starts to bother Paul, his obsession springs and is manifested as a series of endless efforts to prevent her from doing that. After some time, Paul moves to Carla's place, but not for long. This is only until their conflict arises. Carla is taking a Chance in order to fit in a group of people who believe that to make a revolution demands a people's body, a body without "rich habits", habits which Carla, for instance, has. However, unlike Carla, Paul does not belong to any of those kinds of group – the ones formed by people who believe in the Revolution, as the *Hups*, or others like the *Namers* and the *L.A.K.* (id., p. 57) –, he believes in the present, not in the future, his concern about the future is only one: putting Carla's Chance off indefinitely.

First of all in the series of efforts to stall Carla's eventual Chance, there is the episode of the posters. Paul puts away Carla's posters because for him there is no functionality in them after the event they announce has passed. She goes mad, because the posters for her have a completely different meaning than for Paul: the past for Carla is as important as the future, whilst Paul does not care about the past.

Later, there are the meetings in Carla's place to be reckoned with, as part of Paul's counter movement. The meetings were held to gather her revolutionary friends, apparently to discuss issues about the Revolution, its viability and the Chance as the means to reach it. In the first meeting Paul gets to know them, people who build the context as revolutionary characters according to the situation.

In the second scheduled gathering, Paul gets home expecting to find the same "collection of people" (id. p. 70) but, instead, there is only one of them: the hook-nosed lady; even Carla is away. The lady tries to talk to Paul but she is not able to make linear conversation or to produce a continuous discourse, so, after some chunks of sentences and pieces of poems apparently thrown loose in the air by her, both of them almost engage into sexual intercourse. The situation is pushed by the lady, who asserts to be doing that for Carla, so she would feel better, adding that it was Carla's idea for reasons of desperation and unhappiness: "'You are not only ugly', she said, 'you are also stupid. I did that for Carla [...] It was to make her feel better. It was arranged. It was her idea, my friend, not mine.'" (id., p. 78)

After that, Paul and Carla have some moments of relative tranquility, but only because Carla is preparing herself to her change of body. She is quiet and Paul is uneasy, nonetheless, he tries to please her with nice food and entertain her with videotapes she likes. Notwithstanding, Carla is firmly decided to take her Chance, her ideals must be pursued until the end. Paul cannot believe that she wants to do away with her beauty, that she would rather get a grotesque body, and gather with freaks and fight for an idea than be in peace with him: "[w]hen the sun, in time, caught Carla's beautiful face, she opened her eyes and smiled at me [...] It was unbelievable that this should be taken from us." (id., p. 81)

This obsession about Carla's Chance, therefore, leads Paul to elaborate a powerful plan as an attempt to prevent her from undergoing the change of body: a good trap to keep her a prisoner for one single day, the day before her Chance. He must be smart enough to prepare an "enticing, or at least neutral" trap (id., p. 83), just like the Alien technology: a trap that attracts for its simplicity and does not move the target away. Paul builds an orange door, for the rest of their place is orange outside, so he could blame the landlord for the color. It is perfect, it cannot fail, and Carla is going to miss her Chance.

However, Carla has been smarter and faster, either she foresaw the trick coming up or she found Paul mad enough to be unworthy of her trust. She had misinformed him about the day of her Chance, so she went away without Paul's knowledge and dropped him a letter explaining her reasons, apologizing and justifying herself for not changing her mind, leaving him clueless as to how to find her. Paul gets mad at her as well as in great pain; he goes after her to the Chance Centre but he cannot find her, the place is crowded, busy, stinking, a

complete mess, and Carla can be anywhere. As demonstrated in the following lengthy quotation, Paul describes the mess of the Chance Centre and the frenetic search of the people there for the results of Chances of their relatives, when he goes there to try to find Carla:

Even though it was early the Chance Centre was busy. The main concourse was crowded with people waiting for relatives, staring at the video display terminals for news of their friends' emergence. The smell of trauma was in the air, reminiscent of stale orange peel and piss. Poor people in carpet slippers with their trousers too short sat hopefully in front of murals depicting Leonardo's classic proportions. Fasta technicians in grubby white coats wheeled patients in and out of the concourse in a sequence as aimless and purposeless as the shuffling of a deck of cards. I could find Carla's name on none of the terminals. (id., p. 86)

Paul goes back home and nothing happens for some time. In the night, Carla comes back; she has been transformed in a fat woman with a coarsed face, grey hair, fingers and arms full of creases. She stays all night long besides Paul, sitting in a chair near his bed, but he decides not to open his eyes: “[b]ut in the deep grey selfish folds of my mean little brain I decided that I had not woken up, that I would not wake up. I groaned, feigning sleep and turned over” (id., *ibid.*). Carla, the fat revolutionary, noticing that Paul would not move towards her, would not talk or look at her, in the morning goes away. After that, Paul decides to wake up. He finds out that she left behind a pair of large grey knickers, wet with her tears, so he puts them away and goes out.

The Revolution has finally happened; it has been a bloodbath, a time of infinite terror, torture and pain. Paul still loves Carla but she has never reappeared, probably she has died during the Revolution, for she apparently has been “one of the fiercest fighters, who attacked and killed without mercy, who slaughtered with rage that was exceptional even in such a bloody time” (id., p. 88), and she has also been perpetuated in stamps celebrating the Revolution.

PROCESSES OF IDENTIFICATION: PAUL

Above, during the synopsis have been described, in a few words, how Paul meets Carla and two *Hups* meetings, both held at Carla's place. These meetings are not mere encounters among the characters, they create and are created by specific situations, hence may here be understood how those meetings involve interaction and participate in the construction of personal identity for the characters. To interact with someone demands the recognition of the Other and, in most cases, the sustenance of a dialogue, either with words, movements, or both. Based on the theories presented by Stuart Hall, namely, that the process of identity is started by the exclusion of the Other (HALL, 2005, 1997), may now be presented Paul in contrast, dialogue and interaction to other characters: Carla, the hook-nosed lady and the dwarf (one of the *Hups*).

When Paul meets Carla for the first time, he promptly makes the distinction between himself and the Other. The girl beside a corpse, asking for money of strangers, has her features pondered one by one by Paul, her “dark hair cut quite short and rather badly”, her full eyebrows, her mouth wider regular and her large hands (CAREY, 1993, p. 58-59). She has feminine features and masculine behavior, she is strong and vulnerable all at once, she likes to be talked about, with the exception of the subject of her beauty. Paul not only looks at the Other and points out the differences, but is also attracted by these differences. Moreover, this happens in a way he cannot resist, if he bothered to. Therefore, the exclusion of the Other works here, besides as a constructor of identity, not as a factor of rejection, but of attraction.

Michel Maffesoli (2004) asserts that evil(ness) must be integrated, in order to participate of good(ness). This assertion entertains the whole concept of duplicity, he claims

that good does not exist without evil; what may be read as an obvious observation is not so obvious, since nothing can be claimed to be obvious, philosophically speaking. Maffesoli claims that evil is inherent to the Earth and to Man, for, as he argues, “evil is summarized as following: to taste the fruits of the ground”(id., p. 80). To assume evil as part of the human, comes from the assumption of duplicity, stating that if salvation comes from the sin, completion comes from the lack, the “one” comes from the “double”. This is not taken as a dichotomy, but as an act – or rather: **the** act – of completing something, namely, “Me” is completed by the Other. In the Postmodern mutation, according do Maffesoli, what suits is to give value to the evil, the Devil’s part, and make good use of it, aggregate it. One can make **distinction** from the Other but cannot be **apart** from this Other, because both are the same, “one” does not exist alone, but has to see the Other and integrate him.

Even though the reader may trust the narrator about Carla's beauty, it is possible for the reader, based on Paul’s description of her, highlighted above, to make his own judgment. Hence she may here be taken as beautiful, for Paul’s point of view be considered as one possible truth. What Paul sees in Carla is what he lacks in himself, this duplicity, registered by the look he puts on her, this departure, is pursued by him in her as a way out of himself. This situation is nothing more than a possibility of identification enjoyed by Paul.

The next situation to be pointed out is found in the fourth chapter of Paul’s narrative, when he describes the episode of the first meeting at night, inside their place recently painted “bright orange” outside. This episode has one of the greatest pictures of contrast in the story, for among a dwarf, a hook-nosed lady and a pock-marks-faced boy or man stands the “most beautiful Carla” (CAREY, 1993, p. 71), enthusiastic about that important event taking place at her house; and, to Paul, she seems not to be aware of her beauty. In such a contrast is important to observe the processes of identification within – Me and the Other, within a range of limits – and identification outside – the Others without Me –, the process of excluding without separating, of recognizing oneself and its limitations, mainly facing one’s own impotence concerning an external change. For instance, Paul cannot make any difference in Carla’s course of life, except from being part of it. Despite him, she meets her *Hup* partners, she holds firm onto her objective of changing her body, and finally takes her Chance.

When Paul enters home, he sees these group formed by people who have taken (perhaps many) Chances, and are the living results of the playing with life, a practice he accuses Carla of doing when she determinedly asserts she is going to take a Chance: “you’re too young to know anything. You’re a fool. You’re playing with life [...] Playing with it.” (id., p. 69), says Paul throwing books at her, right after their argument about the posters (the posters’ episode shall be detailed ahead). Paul is consumed by rage when he finds out his expectation of putting off Carla’s Chance indefinitely was a mere illusion. Paul’s assumption was first to postpone his girlfriend’s entry into the Genetic Lottery so that, maybe, she would finally agree that it was senseless, perhaps quit taking it, but he seems to think that she may simply forget her Chance, because he himself has failures in his memory and does not care about memory preservation. However, his lack of memory is a consequence of his previous Chances, not a natural or inborn condition, Carla will not forget that, she takes care of her memory and her life’s main objective – the Revolution – is only conceivable through the Chance. Paul’s impotence in face of reality, in face of the unreachable and unchangeable decision of the Other, is transformed into rage and violence, against the impossibility of changing reality by his own will he reacts aggressively. The *Hups* meetings are opportunities for Paul to exercise the exclusion of the Other in relation to himself.

This is the first of the two times when Paul meets the dwarf, a remarkable secondary character in his narration, a man who was once handsome, on his own view, and has now his human figure transformed and representing deformity. To be a dwarf may neither be reason for pride nor humiliation, but here it serves to this character’s purpose, which is that of

identification with the group to which he belongs, therefore making him proud – he has achieved his own expectation as well as his group’s short term ones. When the dwarf shows one old picture of him and says he was handsome, Paul addresses the reader, it is a joke, although its meaning is not clear for him, it becomes clear not exactly as a joke but as an irony in the next line, when Paul continues “[t]he photograph was creased with lines like the palm of an old man’s hand” (id., p. 71). As the man on it, it also has been deformed, it also has been modified, it also has been changed for particular reasons, being faithful still to its owner’s existence. This specific object, this picture, contains the dwarf’s whole essence, from his previous visual image, through the transformations it has suffered, until its function of memory; the picture has for the dwarf the same importance Carla finds in her posters: memory, conservation, preservation.

The second meeting of *Hups* at Carla’s place is far more involving for Paul and a considerably more traumatic one. This is when Paul meets, for the second time, the hook-nosed lady, who is then “arranged in tight brown rags and draped across a chair, her bowed legs dangling [...] revealing an uneven line of stained and broken teeth”(id., p. 74). After the lady’s shoe falls off one of her feet, “revealing her mutant toes in all their glory”, she makes an effort to make conversation with Paul and this is when it is possible to observe how a Chance affects communication through language. The lady cannot speak continuous sentences, she leaves empty spaces, periods of silence and breaks followed by repetitions of words throughout her speech, as can be observed when she tries to make conversation to Paul:

“Come and sit. We can talk.”

“About what?” [...]

“About life,” she waved her hand airily, taking in the room as if it were the entire solar system. “About...love. What...ever.” Her speech had that curious unsure quality common in those who had taken too many Chances, the words spluttered and trickled from her mouth like water from a kinked and tangled garden hose. “You can’t go until your mince...mince has thawed.” [...] (id., p. 75)

As the Other for Paul, and in so being, not transparent at all, the hook-nosed lady seems to be harmless in the beginning of their interaction, Paul even ignores her. However, such harmlessness disappears and turns out into a somewhat threatening situation when Paul realizes how close she is to him. Paul was busy doing other things in the kitchen and eating mushrooms on his empty stomach, finding excuses not to look to the hook-nosed lady, but when he runs out of things to do and looks at her, he has his first surprise: she is closer to him than he thought. Paul is not so lucid anymore, due to the mushrooms he has eaten, so as they find each other too close and the lady keeps on talking to Paul, a very confusing situation is developed. Both of them have to deal with the Other in different ways: the lady tries to approach and Paul tries to withdraw. This gets more confusing when Paul reveals, in his narration, that he does not want to resist, that he knows her reasons and deeply inside he wants the same as she does.

Considerably high on mushrooms, Paul starts to think about other times when he was drunk or on drugs and went through similar situations, times when he did not resist. However, this time, after she gets so close that she touches him and after some poems she recites, he wants to resist, to go out, to move away from the lady. What happens when the Other gets too close in this situation? The Other, as a whole, is not completely different, for the lady, as well as Paul, has taken too many Chances (id., p. 75), so here Paul avoids her not because of their difference, but because of their similarity: he sees himself on her, the overstepping number of modifications she has done on her body, one after/over another, building a deformed creature. She has first shown what happened to her after so many changes of body, how that has affected her and in what levels. Paul gets apprehensive because until then he has not seen

himself in that way; he needed someone like this lady to make his “nature”, or his final model, visible to him. The lady helps him to see himself.

Above I said that there is no collision, what means that, consequently, there is no exactitude. Baudrillard says that the closer we get to the *simulacra*, the more evidently everything escapes from its own double (BAUDRILLARD, 1991, p. 136). When the lady gets close to Paul, she gets closer enough to show him that even though they are extremely alike, although Paul does not want them to be, they are not the double of each other. That is when Paul goes back to himself, sees himself reflected on her. Baudrillard says that there is never similarity, metaphor, however, there is proximity, metonymy. This is what the lady proves to Paul, with what, explicitly or unconsciously, he is forced to agree.

The second surprise happens after the incomplete sexual intercourse between Paul and the hook-nosed lady. That is when, after being rejected, she reveals her real name to Paul: Jane Larange. He gets astonished when he remembers who Jane Larange is: a once beautiful and famous actress. This hook-nosed bow-legged mutant-toed lady keeps on being the woman she once was, simply because the beautiful woman does not exist. In the present, that is what matters, the hook-nosed lady is the beautiful actress as soon as the latter ceases to exist, and that is what probably may happen to Carla after her Chance.

The beautiful actress exists on Paul’s imaginary, and probably on the imaginary of everyone who saw her once, but effectively, on Paul’s view, there is no beauty on the body in front of him. I could say that there is no beauty **any longer**, but I would be then emphasizing a past time, and this is not the point for this discussion. Although the past belongs to the imaginary – therefore it is possible to say that it exists somehow –, what is important here is the present, for there is no way to participate of past events and, in so being, I leave the past out of the current questionings.

At the moment Paul and the hook-nosed lady get close enough to each other for Paul to effectively see her, he suddenly withdraws from her, “I wrenched her hand from my shoulder and she shrieked with pain. I pulled her leg from my waist and she fell back on to the floor, grunting as the wind was knocked from her.” (CAREY, 1993, p. 77) The proximity of collision here triggers the inverse movement, appears the lady’s “face so foul, so misshapen, broken, the skin marked with ruptured capillaries, the green eyes wide, askance, alight with premature triumph.” (id. *ibid.*)

If Carla is the Other that attracts Paul, if the hook-nosed lady is the Other that disgusts him, the dwarf is not, at any moment, effectively a threatening Other; the dwarf is harmless, and yet Paul gets angry with him. In addition to the situation already presented above, when Paul meets the *Hups* at Carla’s place, there is another remarkable moment in the story when the protagonist meets the dwarf. This moment is when Paul is working on the plans for the door (to be painted orange) he aims to construct in order to lock Carla for the day before her Chance.

Paul gets angry with the dwarf because he seems to be threatening, but in fact he is not. First the dwarf demonstrates knowledge about the objective of the door: “with a door like that you could lock someone up in fine style, eh?” (id., p. 83), that, for Paul, is extremely invasive knowledge, for his plan concerning the door is a secret and should be protected. Although the dwarf does not explicitly say that he knows the function of the plan he discovers (and the function of the door), he shows Paul that he knows about traps and jails, about how to attract an enemy to a good trap. Paul’s argument is that the door is for a friend, but the dwarf does not care, he tells Paul that he should see “someone [...] [t]o talk about your [Paul’s] problems. A counsellor, a shrink, someone.” (id., *ibid.*)

Then, right away, the dwarf reveals that he knows about Paul’s problem with Carla. Moreover, he tells that this problem is not worthy of anger, or of preoccupation, he tells Paul: “there are bigger problems you could address your anger to. Your situation now is that you

are wasting energy being angry at the wrong things” (id., *ibid.*). The dwarf, Carla, the painter who was painting their place orange, all of those people compose the “wrong things”, the Revolution constitutes the right thing to worry about. The dwarf is saying not to care about other people, about the Other(s), and Paul in fact does not care about them, except from Carla.

This situation shows how the Other bothers, threatens, invades, judges, even without intention to proceed that way. The proof is that when the dwarf comes around, Paul stops his occupation, folds his plans, starts to answer the dwarf’s statements with “go and fuck yourself”(id., *ibid.*) and only when this Other goes away, Paul returns to his plans again. Between the dwarf’s arriving and leaving, Paul is obliged to disguise his deep interest and intense concentration in his own plans and to go away to the pier to do something else, so the dwarf would leave and Paul could go back to the construction of his door, that he defines as the “monument to my duplicity and fear” (id., p. 84)

These processes of identification and identity described above are given through and by the body because the relations with the Others are given through and by the body and bodily parts. The Subject needs to notice and compare (himself to) the Other through his own body. Paul sees Carla’s beauty – what lacks in himself -, the hook-nosed lady’s strength and deformities – what exists in himself and overflows in the lady –, the perceptiveness of the dwarf – something he cannot deal with. This way, Paul dreams, not romantically but imaginatively speaking, of being himself, whilst occupying a different body, different from the one he has been born with. Paul wonders, perhaps unconsciously, who or what he is and is not, who or what must be excluded for him to remain himself. In other times, the ageing street fighter (Paul’s current body), may have been the Other, the excluded, and now Paul has to incorporate this body, to accept it as his own and as himself. This is the dream of absurdity of which Jean Baudrillard speaks, when we fight for our identity, find our label of existence and try to prove what is evident (BAUDRILLARD, 1997, p. 64).

Now shall be presented Paul and Carla interacting in terms of conceiving the Other as apart from oneself, as object of desire, of comparison, of contemplation. Both of the characters, comprehended here as the union of all of their parts, be them organic or inorganic, existing both inside the reader’s and the writer’s imaginary, are visual creatures, so the exclusion of the Other will be taken as the proximity of the look. Two different kinds of Subjects live in the same environment and express completely different ideas, ideals, and concepts of identity.

“PRESENTISM” IN OPPOSITION TO IDEOLOGY

The *Hups’* Chances are defined by Paul as masks. *Hups* are, for him, “masters amusing themselves by dressing as servants” (CAREY, 1993, p. 71), the same mask Paul himself dons, for unknown reasons, the mask of an ageing street fighter, a body that suits him, built to contain furies (id., p. 58). His metamorphosis does not stop in his changes of body, he also acts differently when, for example, talking to Carla at the restaurant in their first meal together. He recalls their conversation (id., p. 61):

I was amazing. I felt myself to be both saint and pirate, as beautiful and gnarled as an ancient olive. I talked with intensity. I devoured her, not like some poor beggar (which I was) but like a prince, a stylish master of the most elegant dissertations.

Paul’s masks are the manifestation of his unpredictability. The changes in his behavior, like the act of giving Carla his beer at the beginning of the narration, or even at the end of the story, when Carla returns to him in a different body and he pretends to be sleeping, are the indexes of unpredictability proper to the Postmodern Subject.

If, on one hand, Carla represents the modern Subject, the rational being, who believes to have control of himself and the world (MAFFESOLI, 2004, p. 118), Paul, on the other, is the one who recognizes the obscurity in himself and the world (id., *ibid.*). Michel Maffesoli says that Postmodernity is not characterized by this Subject any longer, the one represented by Carla, the Subject who “thinks, says and acts in a wider joint [...] ‘full’, secure of himself” (id., p. 154). Carla is the one who searches an ideal, the utopist who thinks about the future, believes that it is possible to change what is wrong, and wants to make use of his body in order to make difference, she feels to be part of this “wider joint”.

Paul is, undoubtedly, the characterization of the Subject who values the present, the “presentist”, the one who accepts the world (id., p. 166), not because he is not affected by the future or the past, but because, for him, such concepts as “future” and “past” do not exist. Previously, in the present chapter, I affirmed that Paul does not care about the past; however, in spite of this unimportance, he uses the past as well as the future to tell his story, for a narration, most times, needs to be told in different verbal tenses, and events constructing a narration also need to be expressed, most times, in the past as well as in the present tense. In “The Chance”, if Paul’s narrative is made in the past tense, it is because the facts narrated have an impact on his present; if the narrator, in the story, is concerned about Carla’s Chance – that is the future, as well as his plan to construct the door to lock Carla inside –, it is because as soon as she takes her Chance, it will be the present. As soon as she changes her body, the girl who Paul knows as Carla will then disappear and be lost forever; the new body will be – or turn into – the “original” Carla, as if no change had ever occurred, because of Carla’s body continuity, and Paul may not recognize her any longer. Her identity for Paul, the way he sees/knows her, will be lost, for it is in the body. So, for him, past and future are worth mentioning when (and only when) they end up affecting the present, but the present is his only reality.

It is possible to point out this little concern about time – and also about the “wider joint” of which Carla takes part – through some of his words, mainly after his first date with Carla: “I didn’t give a damn about politics”; “I had a desperate desire to change the subject, to plug my ears, to shut my eyes”; “‘Certainly I’m ignorant’ [...] I was very aware of my ignorance in those days”; and again, “[a]n idea was no worth of me, no worth fighting for” (CAREY, 1993, p. 62, 63, 64). Paul’s only worry is Carla in the present, the current Carla, he wants to keep her not in his memory, as the dwarf does with himself showing his picture, but in her present body.

After Carla’s Chance, by the end of the story, Paul does not say precisely the period of time elapsed between his search for Carla at the Chance Centre and the moment he gets back home. Probably along the rest of the day, since it was morning when he went after her and the event that follows takes place at night. Paul does not give precise time references, perhaps because it is not necessary to say that it happens on the same day, perhaps because, for him, “[n]othing happened.” (id., p. 86)

Furthermore, when Paul tells about his moving to Carla’s place, he makes clear that importance given to the present: “To cut a long predictable story short, we got on well together” (id., p. 65). Here the narrator discards everything between the time when he meets Carla and the time when he moves to her place, showing in this way that, since it is his story, he is the one who judges what is important, the one who selects whether this “got on well together” will or will not be described. Notwithstanding, this “long predictable story” might be neither long nor predictable for the reader, but this is something the reader never comes to know. The tragic feeling, the high valuing of the tragic inherent to the “situationism” (MAFFESOLI, 2004, p. 166) is clearly assumed here.

Whilst Carla represents the “solid modernity” Subject, the one who needs to identify with the group in order to make part of it (BAUMAN, 2001, p. 41), Paul, in turn, belongs to

the “liquid modernity”, when the Subject needs to be constantly “rearranging” himself because the places offered and found are not fixed, they are fragile and easily disappear (id., *ibid.*). Carla knows what she wants, feels capable and knows the means to get it, but Paul is endlessly obsessed with Carla’s Chance; it is the only thing moving him. However, after her Chance, he suddenly turns his back to her simply by pretending to be sleeping, then on the following day he puts her pair of sneakers – the only evidence left and his only connection to Carla – in the thrash.

Although Paul continually loves her during their affair and after the Revolution, his “presentism” does not allow him to go after her, to try to find her, either because she is then another body or because she decided to follow her ideal instead of agreeing with him. In this case, the reverse does not function as a factor of identification, but to favor this feeling, this taste for tragic. It is a way to show the uselessness of any attempts to attach to any time other than the present, the senselessness of keeping on making efforts to reconcile such opposite kinds of thought.

A character and narrator who has had Chances has gaps not only in memory, as mentioned by Paul, but also in the production of speech, as the hook-nosed lady, and in knowledge, as Paul himself who has lost knowledge and claims his ignorance to be a keenly feeling. One should wonder how far it is possible to believe in a narrator who has had so many Chances. For him, what matters in the present are not so much the facts, but his feelings of anger, his fears, his pleasure; things felt in the body but which are not concrete, graspable, things that have to do with his instinct. As the hook-nosed lady says, “we don’t forget how to make love when we change” (CAREY, 1993, p. 76). So all the story told by Paul, which is composed by facts and events, belongs to this category of which “making love” belongs, something related to instinct, that seems to be never forgotten and never lost with the Chances. Facts serve to illustrate, to give form to the overflowing of those feelings, as well as Paul’s body functions as a place to keep them.

Before telling what happened during his life with Carla, Paul explains this abrupt change in his life, one of many; namely, the one of moving to her place. He describes how sudden it is and shows his capacity of rearrangement, as can be observed in the following lengthy quotation:

I left my outcast acquaintances behind to fight and steal, and occasionally murder each other in the boarding house. I returned there only to pick up my fishing rod. I took it round to her place at Pier Street swaggering like a sailor on leave. I was in a flamboyant, extravagant mood and left behind my other ratty possessions. They didn’t fit my new situation.

Thus, to the joys of living with an eccentric and beautiful woman I added the even more novel experience of a home. Either one of these changes would have brought me some measure of contentment, but the combination of the two of them was almost too good to be true.

I was in no way prepared for them. I had been too long a grabber, a survivor. (id., p. 65)

Paul, here, shows he is neither concerned about the past nor affected by it, for he easily leaves everything behind. He changes over time, as well as his identity does, without any attachment to past or future elements. This change and non-attachment becomes evident when, done with the description of his change, he adverts the reader for the events he is going to narrate, his story with Carla, and its effects on him: “Regarding the events that followed I feel neither pride nor shame. Regret, certainly, but regret is a useless emotion.” (id., *ibid.*) For sure, regret is a useless emotion for someone who is concerned only about the present, an individual for whom the past has no importance, no effect, and for whom the past is as useless as regret, although it has impact on current life, after all, it has been once the present.

This non-attachment is certainly a characteristic which comes with the overstepping of Chances. If Paul changes/has changed his body so frequently that it becomes a habit, as that of changing clothes, for instance, it makes no sense at all the attitude of being attached to anything else. For, when he changes his body, he is leaving behind almost the whole of himself, and receiving a new whole, a new identity for his essence. The hook-nosed lady, who also has had a high number of Chances, uses the past in the form of her old image of a beautiful and famous actress to defend or justify herself after being rejected by Paul: such an image belongs to the past – to an identity of the past – and by definition does not exist in the present, only in Paul’s imaginary.

When Paul says, in the same context, that he was not prepared for these abrupt changes, and that he has been “too long a grabber, a survivor” (id., *ibid.*), as well as before telling his story, when he says: “It was through these streets that I strode, muttering, continually on the verge of either anger or tears. I was cut adrift, unconnected” (id., p. 57) are moments when he can join the concept given by Zygmunt Bauman (1997) of the “vagabond” (in opposition to the “tourist”). The “vagabond”, according to Bauman, appears in the Postmodern society as a class of individuals who are always in movement (as well as the “tourist”), who know they will not last long in the place where they are, and who move when this place becomes inhospitable (id., p. 117, 118). In these terms, Paul is also a universal character, who represents this class of people who are continually dislocated, out of place (and here I may refer back to the *Hups* meetings as illustration to this dislocation).

This “survivor”, this “grabber”, who Paul claims to be, is the perfect representation of the “vagabond”. Paul suddenly meets a girl, falls in love, leaves his friends behind and moves to her place, all because his “ratty possessions” do not fit his new situation. From one to the next new situation, Paul moves without feelings of ownership, location, belonging. His “vagabond” identity carries and is made of “survivor”, “grabber”, movement features. On the same line, Paul enters in the story as a “vagabond” of bodies, the individual who is capable to adapt to different bodies along the story and his own existence without feeling that he lost any of the previous ones. Even when Paul makes clear he has had one or many Chances, saying: “[m]y face in the mirror at morning was not the face my mind had started living with” (id., p. 57, 58), he does not show to carry any weight concerning that.

In my reading, the situations when Paul faces Carla, the dwarf or the hook-nosed lady construct Paul’s identity through the exclusion, the comparison, of the Other. If the Other starts to exist since his (the Other’s) visibility to the Subject, these meetings are necessary to promote such a visibility. If the “vagabond” of bodies, represented by Paul, migrates from one body to another, it happens because this Subject cannot stay fixed in one body, for many reasons. The *Hups*, as ideologists, stop changing their bodies at the point they reach their short term objective – that is to have a certain kind of body. But Paul does not raise his objective concerning his organic body, not a final one. Paul perhaps has his body as a place for experiment/experience of several Chances, but out of this place – this body – his objectives are very personal. The characters of the story are constantly moving and interacting, getting close to each other and affirming their identities to themselves through their bodies.

Many questions are left open after the reading of “The Chance”. How is a Chance actually made? Is it possible to bring it into effect out of fiction? How many Chances have we readers already made? How can an individual be the same individual after changing his body? What else does a Chance change, besides the body? And what remains?

My aim here has been to find emergences of representation among the characters, their behavior and interaction, which could lead to describe these representations. So, I have analyzed the interaction between Paul, the main character and narrator of the story, and three other characters in particular: Carla, the dwarf and the hook-nosed lady.

Carla is the unreachable Other, the one who is always close, but never close enough, the one who is imminently touching or almost being touched, however, this touching never comes into effect. Unlike the hook-nosed lady, who is, for Paul, the Other who gets to be close once and makes this one encounter too close. The dwarf's relation to Paul is harmless and the thread of the dwarf resides only in Paul's look, or way of looking.

For all these situations, events and dialogs, I believe that the body has also different meanings for each character. For Paul and the other "survivors" and "vagabonds" that the story does not point out directly but we can infer, the body is a place for experiment, a site for experience, whilst for the *Hups*, the body is an instrument for personal realization. Either way, it functions as means of excluding the Other, and there is also movement in the exclusion, as well as in these characters and their bodies, this exclusion goes back and forth in favor of the individual's identification.

Donna Haraway says that,

Cyborg writing must not be about the Fall, the imagination of a once-upon-a-time wholeness before language, before writing, before Man. Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other. (HARAWAY, 1999, p. 175)

That kind of writing comprehends Peter Carey's "The Chance". It is about the marks of the world, the observer and the vision of the Other and, mainly, the power to survive.

Notwithstanding, something lasts after a Chance, something that belongs to somewhere inside or outside the body, but definitely **not on** the body. I began my analysis searching indications and indicators of identity through bodily representation in the story, conceiving that identity can fit as one possible answer to the question, "what remains?" Now I close also with one questioning, in Donna Haraway's words: "Why should our bodies end at the skin [...]?"

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