

Plastic Trees Tell no Tale: The Non-Subjective Accounts of 'Nature' in Philippe  
Grandrieux's *Sombre* and *Un Lac*

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## ABSTRACT

Plastic Trees Tell no Tale:

The Non-Subjective Accounts of ‘Nature’ in Philippe Grandrieux’s *Sombre* and *Un Lac*

Étienne Trudeau-Tremblay

The articulation of audio-visual effects in Philippe Grandrieux’s *Sombre* (1998) and *Un Lac* (2009) effectively accounts for the non-anthropogenic world without relying upon its mediation through representation. Through a series of complex formal manipulations of their visual and sonic components, both films shape and inscribe the potential of depicting non-human entities in film beyond paradigms of narration and illustration. Building upon significant works by Gilles Deleuze as well as contemporary scholarship mobilizing some of Deleuze’s concepts, this research approaches two of Grandrieux’s feature films for their unstriated accounts of the non-anthropogenic world. More precisely, this analysis points to the way they frame this world’s qualitative capacity to form territorial arrangements or its potential to convey logics of sensation. Through a close audio-visual analysis of both *Sombre* and *Un Lac*, this research endeavor aims to examine epistemologies that account for the depiction of the non-anthropogenic world beyond the Anthropocene. At the same time, it seeks to understand how these same epistemologies account for depiction of relationships in between the anthropogenic world and the non-anthropogenic world in ways that elude their conception in subjectivity.

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# Introduction.

At the time of writing these lines, a contingent of scholars and researchers scattered across diverse disciplines, in the fields of humanities and STEM alike, agree that the current scale and speed with which anthropogenic activity has come to impact the earth should be regarded as its own climactic event or Epoch; many referring to it as the Anthropocene. Reviewing the recent literature pertaining to the Anthropocene reveals its wide ramifications as a topic of research. For instance, some scholars have pointed to the ways in which the shift characterized by Anthropocene acts as a continuation of socio-economic paradigms which have been ongoing for decades if not centuries; namely Capitalism and Colonialism with their logic pertaining to material extraction and distribution as well as economic growth. (Jadodzinski 2) An article written by Shela Sheikh, *The Future of the Witness*, points to the interjection of these paradigms when accounting for the consequences of anthropogenic activity in the present time. More precisely, her article points out the correlation between ecological crises and race entailed by the ongoing articulation of colonialism in South Africa; accounting for the ways racialized subjects and ‘nature’ are considered similarly under colonial paradigms of exploitation. (Sheikh 146) Although Sheikh’s work is inscribed in an already thorough field of research seeking to examine the relationship in between colonialism and the Anthropocene, my interest in evocating her piece here lies beyond the scope and aims of that research field altogether. Nevertheless, as I conducted my preliminary research for thinking the relationship in between Cinema and the Anthropocene, a passage of her article caught my attention and ultimately came to shape and define my point of entry into navigating this relationship. In this passage, Sheikh ponders on the

anthropocentric pitfalls entailed by representation when attempting to account for 'Nature' in discourse. As she mentions:

It is with this risk of anthropocentrism, in particular, that what follows adds a specific line of enquiry to existing conceptions of the witness figure beyond the human. While the discourse of the rights of nature, and its 'vocative moment', has been debated in terms of the risks entailed in 'giving voice' to nature, I phrase this here in terms of the paradoxical risks entailed in retrieving missing figures. In contexts in which the witness is missing (that is, absent and, for some at least, missed), should not a prosthetic or proxy testimony be sought? How, then, to grapple with the problematics of 'speaking for', or in lieu of, the missing or missed, insofar as this runs the risk of reinforcing an original silencing or effacement through the category of nature or race, for instance? (Sheikh 151)

She later expands on this notion further writing: "Representation, especially in defense of the rights of nature, remains an 'impossible necessity' – an experience of being trapped between 'a representationalist rock and a hard place of complicit silence.'" (Sheikh 157)

Although Sheikh's concern is here aimed at the representation of nature in the fabrication of discourse in general, the scope of this conundrum also expands to the realm of film studies. Indeed, how are we to conceptualize a post-Anthropocentric cinema given the limitations of representation? The problem here seems to be two pronged. On the one hand, humanist historic traditions have constituted Natural and Human histories to be categorically separate from one another. (342 Snaza) On the other hand, re-constituting the more-than-human world in terms of subjectivity, even in good faith, entails that we take upon ourselves the role of accounting for its agency; articulating an ontological paradigm restricting that said world's potential to form relationships with the anthropogenic world. This then begs us to ask the following question: being conscious of the risk of anthropocentrism entailed by the representation of the more-than-human world, can cinema account for that said world beyond subjectivity?



Over the next two chapters, the aim of this research effort here is to navigate this question using thought frameworks developed by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and subsequent generations of scholars building upon his writings. As a means to depart from the anthropocentric tradition, many researchers have come to assume a Deleuzian position in thinking and imagining a way of life beyond the Anthropocene. As Jan Jagodzinski write in the introduction of *Interrogating the Anthropocene*:

The further issue is that philosophical roots of ontological thought in the western world are grounded in an anthropocentrism of a world for us as developed by the Greeks; as Alfred North Whitehead (1978, p. 39) once quipped, all of philosophy is a footnote to Plato, necessitating the recovering of a minoritarian trace within philosophy, following Deleuze and Guattari, that opens up other imaginaries. But even here the Deleuzian position is but an inversion of Plato; Platonic Ideas come down to Earth, so to speak, as potential multiplicities that are actualized in various ways when addressing never-ending unsolvable problematics in what is called transcendental empiricism. There are openings, of course, into the non-human through virtual potentialities. (Jagodzinski 16)

As mentioned by Jagodziński, Deleuze's philosophy has often been regarded in relation to potentiality. Tackling ontological problems that have long riddled the western philosophical tradition, the Deleuzian position is frequently framed as thinking the world and life beyond the subject; characterized by a proclivity to restore their infinite constitutional and relational potential in becoming. Working closely with some of Deleuze's texts (either written alone or in collaboration with Félix Guattari) as well as written works that were built upon some of his concepts, I'll attempt to derive epistemologies that account for openings in thinking the depiction of the more-than-human world in film.

That being said, my approach also encroaches on the area of formal analysis. Although the thought framework I mobilize here departs from encompassing the more-than-human world in subjectivity, I'm still left dealing with that world's matter-of-fact, its plasticity as it is depicted

in pro-filmic reality. Acknowledging that this matter-of-fact is expressed at the interjection of sight and sound, I thought it best to mobilize Michel Chion's Audio-Vision's framework to carry on with my analysis. My reasoning here is that Chion's Audio-Vision model understands the sonic and visual dimensions found in cinema not to be experienced on separate levels, but at once, in co-generative arrangement; a "mixture" as Chion would refer to it. (Chion qtd. in Kruth and Stobart 202). As such, working with Chion's Audio-Vision model will prove to be rather instrumental in enabling us not only to compare the individuated components found within the films' visual and sonic dimensions, but to examine how these dimensions interlap in rendering the plasticity of the non-anthropogenic environments they attempt to depict.

As per the object of my analysis, I will conduct this inquiry looking at two feature films by French director Phillip Grandrieux: *Sombre* (1998) and *Un Lac* (2009). Both *Sombre* and *Un Lac* deal with rather heavy subject matter as it pertains to their narratives. *Sombre* follows the path of Jean, a puppeteer turned serial killer. The film accounts for his travels and encounters; at the same depicting his journey conducting a killing spree across the French countryside and neighboring suburbs. *Un Lac*'s storyline takes inspiration from Tarjei Vesaas' Norwegian novel *The Birds* and focuses on the tenuous relationship in between Alexi, a young epileptic lumberjack living with his family in a secluded region of the Alps and his older sister, Hege. (Walton 198) Taking this into consideration however, my interest in these films lies beyond their narrative articulations. As noted by Jenny Chamarette: "Grandrieux's feature films, *Sombre* (1999) and *A New Life/La Vie nouvelle* (2001) do not lend themselves easily to narrative completion or even narrative sense-making; rather they operate on a level which appeals directly to the sensorium." (Chamarette 18) Expanding on Chamarette's account, *Sombre* and *Un Lac* are

both sensorially impactful. Grandrieux himself, has accounted spending a significant amount of time not only on the film's formal qualities visually, but sonically as well. Visually both films mobilize a significant amount of disorienting shots, relying on extreme articulations of blur and framing. Sonically, both films rely heavily on foley and field recordings captured on location. (Goudet et al. 11) For *Sombre*'s soundtrack, Grandrieux worked with the late musician Alan Vega, who is notoriously known for his contribution to the New York electronic act *Suicide*. Vega's score features both rich ambient and unsettling soundscapes. As such, the complexity of these soundscapes will be taken into account moving forward. In both works, this concern for expressing the sensorial expands beyond the consideration of anthropogenic entities, playing a large part in depicting the world beyond-the-human. This is why we consider both *Sombre* and *Un Lac* to be viable case studies for this present analysis.

In the field of film studies, Grandrieux's features have often been analyzed for their specific articulation of disembodiment, corporeality and subjectivity. (Chamarette 189) Additionally there are a few scholars who have already begun looking at Grandrieux's works from a Deleuzean position, establishing the way in which they relate to some of Deleuze's concept pertaining to materiality, immanence and painting. (Walton 198) As such, with this current research endeavor, I wish to acknowledge the research that has already been made in relation to Grandrieux's feature films and Deleuze's philosophy. At the same time, I also wish to add my contribution to this rather niche field, examining how both *Sombre* and *Un Lac*'s relationships with Deleuze's concepts figure in thinking filmic accounts of the non-anthropogenic world beyond the Anthropocene.

# Chapter 1. Trees and Roads Grow from the Middle: A Turn to Geomorphism.

“C’est que le milieu n’est pas du tout une moyenne, c’est au contraire l’endroit où les choses prennent de la vitesse.”

- Deleuze and Guattari, *Mille Plateaux*

The road occupies a significant portion of *Sombre*. Its presence is manifested right from the beginning, and if we leave it for brief lapse of time, it’s always to find our way back there. But *Sombre* is not a road movie; it’s a road-movie - in the machinic sense- that is. *Sombre*’s road, despite being present so often, is non-significant as a narrative or symbolic device. It does not embody a journey, a transition from a place to another. In *Un Lac*, it’s the forest in which the film’s protagonists and their family lives that take the main stage. Sometimes depicted as being open; seemingly casting itself towards the infinite. At given times, that same forest also becomes narrow and claustrophobic - with the fog or night engulfing it making it appear both unsettling and intimate at once. Throughout the film’s unfolding, we witness the dispositions of *Un Lac*’s protagonists towards the forest evolve and shift simultaneously with those territorial fluctuations.

Both the road in *Sombre* as well as the forest in *Un Lac* embody the notion Deleuze & Guattari refer to as “le milieu”; that is “l’endroit où les choses prennent de la vitesse.” In *Sombre*, the road is framed as being adjacent to many different things, i.e. people, cars, grass, trees, forests, even the sky and becomes the *line of flight* where these differentiated elements get *moving*; escaping the semiotic order conferred to them by language and structural rigidity. On *Sombre*’s road as well as within *Un Lac*’s forest, these differentiated elements acquire

momentum, and flourish into the realm of expression. And it is precisely in the ways they hone the expressive qualities of the territorial formations they depict that both films serve to benefit this inquiry as it pertains to the representation of the non-human world. Rather than to impart ‘nature’ with a given subjectivity, the film through audio-visual processes, acknowledges its materiality and restores - to that said materiality - its expressive qualities.

As such, in order to move forward with this analysis, it is imperative that we carry on with the audio-visual analysis of both works, as to see how these processes take shape and, furthermore, shape the encounters in between human and beyond-human entities. As such, most of the terminology associated with this portion of this analysis comes from Michel Chion’s writing, specifically *Audio-Vision*. Then having discerned as much, I’ll expand on my findings using Deleuze and Guattari concepts excerpted from their writing in *A Thousand Plateaux* as well as some which were derived from their writing by contemporary writers. The chapter is to be divided into two subsections each concerned with the analysis of *Sombre* and *Un Lac* respectively. To avoid redundancy, the first subsection will also serve the purpose of expanding on certain concepts that are to be mobilized later during my analysis; more specifically, Deleuze and Guattari’s *ritournelle* as well David Fancy’s concept of *Geoartistry*.

In my analysis of *Sombre*, I suggest that we look into the film’s opening sequence - decorticate it, examine its every detail with careful minutiae and see how its articulation of audio-visual effects bring about a territory in transit; depicting a road which shifts shapes or rather speeds, as different milieus pass through it. As for my analysis of *Un Lac*, it will also focus on one particular sequence taking place at about the halfway point of the movie. This part

specifically will touch upon the notions of soundscapes and territorialization; examining then analyzing how encounters in between multiple soundscape registers are framed and depicted within that said sequence.

The road in *Sombre* doesn't exist in and of itself. It passes through the milieus surrounding it and gains momentum with them. The forest of *Un Lac* expands and contracts with the breaths of those that walk within its confines. Considering this, we have the right to wonder where that road leads then. What happens when the pavement leaps beyond the path it was meant to trace initially? And what of the forest's soundscape, overstepping its bounds as it echoes the crackles and laughter of the people navigating its trails? What kind of knowledge can be gleaned from examining those territories as they form? Those are the kind of questions this portion of this analysis will attempt to answer. Put differently, this chapter, touching upon notions of the territory through the analysis of audio-visual effects in Grandrieux's works, seeks to envision how the paradigms of artistic depiction and expression found in them – as it pertains to other-than-human worlds - depart from human exceptionalism and anthropocentrism.

### ***Introducing Geoartistry and Sombre:***

As I've mentioned previously, the road in *Sombre* makes its first apparition right after we get to see the title card. There, we see Jean's car traveling slowly on a mountainous path surrounded by a vast amount of vegetation. In the first shot, it's easy for us to distinguish the different elements composing the landscape. The car, the pavement, the mossy rock formations bordering the road, the cliffside - all of which are brightly lit by the sun- depict a vivid scenery.

However, as the car begins approaching the forest, we rapidly begin to venture in the unknown. Shots begin to get darker (somber), and the outline of the many elements composing the shots, so crisp initially, begins to get blurry. In the darkness, Jean's car and the road on which it moves forward, start to merge with the dense forest of pinecones which surrounds it. What we're left with begins to look more two-dimensional. As the colors fades away from the picture, we're left with a sort of *estampe*; a flat image where the only distinction that can be made from what sits in the frame then lies in between the yellow-washed sky and the darkened landmass resting beneath it. In a continuous gesture which the car's movement, the treetops in *Sombre*'s opening sequence begin to seemingly move on their own as if they were *gathering speed*. Put in other terms, as the car moves through the forest -the latter begins moving with it. The movement of the car, dictated by the long sinuous road on which it travels has begun animating the forest as all of these 'landlocked' elements seemingly merge into darkness; becoming unknowable to paradigms of language and symbolism. In this, we experience not only the suspension of indexicality, but also the simultaneous *expression* of a new territoriality engendered by its immanent motion. With this opening sequence, the film initiates its first territorializing act; deserting a binary conception of anthropogenic and non-human world orders through the articulation of its aesthetics.

Speaking of its aesthetics, or more precisely those which are found in Philippe Grandrieux's cinema in general, Gregg Hainge, in his book titled *Philippe Grandrieux: Sonic Cinema*, writes on the ways in which they often challenge visual and linguistic frameworks that imperatively categorize and imbed elements of a given visual field into striated formations; mentioning:

The mechanics of Grandrieux's aesthetic achieve this via a number of different means (psychological alienation, narrative estrangement, visual or sonic confusion...) that have the effect of isolating us not only from our ambient reality but also from any anthropological or sensory reflex that we might use to try and orient ourselves within unfamiliar spaces, destabilising what we take to be fixed forms in a desire to perdure within a knowable identity. [...] what is in play here is the conversion and subsequent transmission of perception, affection and meaning into, respectively, percept, affect and sensation that Deleuze and Guattari find in those forms of art that seek to undo form (1994, 174-77). (Hainge 9)

That is to say, Grandrieux's aesthetic strategy of "visual and sonic confusion" as Hainge refers to it, operates in a way that obfuscates a linguistic-subjectivizing apprehension of the differentiated world; working against a taxonomical reflex as we attempt to account for it. Hainge also hints that Grandrieux's aesthetical dispositions share an affinity with those of Deleuze and Guattari, especially as it pertains to their conceptualization of the relationship that exists in between art and affect. Shortly, I'll be coming back to Deleuze and Guattari to expand on that relationship further, but for now I suggest that we focus on the conceptual notion of *territorial expression*; more precisely the ways in which *Sombre*'s articulation of audio-visual effects bring forth *Geoartistry*.

My first encounter with this term happened upon reading David Fancy's essay *Geoartistry: Invoking the Postanthropocene via Other-Than-Human Art*. In his essay, Fancy challenges the notion that artistic expression be regarded solely as an anthropogenic activity, rather arguing that non-human entities, traditionally taxonomized as being constituent of so-called 'natural' world orders are, in a way, capable of artistic expression. Leading to the conceptualization of his Geoartistic model, Fancy first builds upon Deleuze and Guattari's concept of Geophilosophy which, as he puts it:

speaks to a mode of thinking that both emulates and affirms the multiplicitous complexity of becomings of natural reality. This insight is borne from each thinker's commitment to



postidentitarian, differential and processual forms of thinking that seek to work outside inherited models of thought anchored in binarist conceptions of substance, ones bound by restrictive logics of recognition and representation. (Fancy 220)

As Fancy highlights, Deleuze and Guattari understood Geophilosophy as a concept for dwelling on the *relationships* in between “earth and territory”; going beyond the humanist essentialist reflex of taxonomizing nature. (Fancy 219) Expanding on that notion, he adds:

Art’s drive ‘to raise lived perceptions to the percept and live affections to the affect’ (170) takes place, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest is the case with geophilosophy, ‘in the relationship of territory and the earth’ (85) and, like this geophilosophy, art can be understood to link ‘the cry of humanity and the earth’s song’ (176). I suggest that such instances can be described, as with Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy’s turn earthward, as geoartistry, or as being geoartistic. Both a concept and an unlimited series of artistic practices—phenomena that instantiate events in thought and precipitate the finite that restores the infinite through specific moments of creation—geoartistry, like philosophy can help serve to ‘summon [...] forth a new earth’ (99). (Fancy 220)

As Fancy puts it here, Geoartistry as a concept, seeks to examine how artistic expression operates as the “link” between the finite worlds of nature and man; enabling the formation of post-anthropocentric territorial arrangements that restores the non-human world their expressive qualities. Less focused on defining or constituting human as well as non-human entities as subjectivities, Geoartistry not only situates the delineations of human and non-human territories, but also maps out the artistic gestures *expressed* at their encounter beyond those delineations.

Fancy is aware that the framework he borrows comes with its own set of epistemological challenges. A problem he points to is the risk of re-instating the anthropocentric paradigm he seeks to depart from. As he mentions:

It is clear that the risks of articulating geoartistry could readily be infiltrated by a recuperative anthropocentric gesture of understanding increased complexity of relationalities between other-than-human entities solely for the purposes of sustaining the planet’s ecosystem for continued human viability as a species. (Fancy 220)

As highlighted by Fancy, *Geoartistry*, by uncovering new sets of uncharted data as it relates to ‘natural’ relational arrangements could run the risk of producing new paradigms of extraction; at the same time reinforcing the anthropocentric order it attempts to challenge. This is where Fancy, in his conceptualization of *Geoartistry*, introduces the Deleuze and Guattari concept of the *Ritournelle* which in English, translates to the refrain.

The role of this ‘refrain’ is, Deleuze and Guattari indicate essentially territorial ‘Bird songs: the bird seeks to mark its territory’ (ibid., p. 312). These ‘territorial assemblages’ are however ones that are clearly open to their own deterritorialization and evolution through the improvised capacity for expansive inclusion of elements outside initially contained by the portion of the process of the refrain that circumscribes spatio-temporal parameters of ‘chaos, terrestrial forces, cosmic forces’ (ibid.). Milieus are the ‘blocks of space time’ constituted by the territorializing act refrain (ibid., p. 314) that ‘pass into one another’ opening them to chaos and potentials for change due to the rhythmic states that exist in the transition between milieu (313). Milieus become actual territories ‘when milieu components cease to be directional, becoming dimensional instead, when they cease to become functional to become expressive’ (315). (Fancy 223)

As Fancy is ascertaining from Deleuze and Guattari here, the territory, as they understand it, is constantly shifting in relation to what lies within and outside of it. It is a refrain, a song that builds from “motifs and counterpoints that express the relation of the territory to interior impulses or exterior circumstances’ (ibid.).” (Fancy 224) As this happens, they mention that the territorialization is no longer a signature, that is, the cumulation of signage of the elements that build into a becoming-expression, but a style which expresses; it gathers momentum on its own independently from the elements that brought forth its becoming. Fancy goes on and mentions that: “According to Deleuze and Guattari’s onto-genetic model, it is clear that all phenomena are creative, and as such engage with a kind of artistry that produces the art brut of territorial expression.” (Fancy 224)

Directing our attention to the original Deleuze and Guattari text Fancy is referring to here, they provide a lengthy argument as to how the *ritournelle*'s stylistic consideration of the territory refrains from engaging into further anthropocentrism. In his own writing, Fancy fragments this passage for it to follow the logic of his argumentation:

Les qualités expressives entrent les unes avec les autres dans des rapports variables ou constants (c'est ce que font les matières d'expression), pour constituer, non plus des pancartes qui marquent un territoire, mais des motifs et des contre-points, qui expriment le rapport du territoire avec des impulsions intérieures ou des circonstances extérieures, même si celles-ci ne sont pas données. Non plus des signatures, mais un style. Ce qui distingue objectivement un oiseau musicien d'un oiseau non musicien, c'est précisément cette aptitude aux motifs et aux contre-points qui variables ou même constants, en font autre chose qu'une affiche, en font un style, puisqu'ils articulent le rythme et harmonisent la mélodie. On peut dire alors que l'oiseau musicien passe de la tristesse à la joie, ou bien qu'il salue le lever du soleil, ou bien qu'il se met lui-même en danger pour chanter, ou bien qu'il chante mieux qu'un autre, etc. Aucune de ces formules ne comporte le moindre danger d'anthropomorphisme, ou n'implique la moindre interprétation. Ce serait plutôt du géomorphisme. (Deleuze & Guattari 391-392)

As sustained by Deleuze and Guattari here, it is precisely in expressing the relation in between milieus that the territory comes forth, as opposed to looking at the qualities of milieus *for* and *by* themselves. Fancy also expands on that notion further as he quotes Deleuze on the concept of Spinozist ethics.

Indeed, Deleuze writes that for Spinoza, 'a body, of whatever kind' is simultaneously by a 'kinetic component' composed of 'an infinite number of particles' constituted by 'relations of motions and rest, of speeds and slownesses between particles' and a 'dynamic component' by which a body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies' (ibid.). This constitution and co-constitution of bodies via singular composition as well as mutual engagement with other bodies invites a recognition of the situated nature of ethical engagement. Instead of depending on an arbiter of justice external to bodies to legislate what is or is not moral behaviour, Spinoza suggests instead that which is ethical is that which expands a body's capacity to act is ethical and joyful, that which restricts it is unethical. In his reading of Spinoza, Deleuze directs the reader to understand the extra-individual nature of 'affections' constitutive of human or any other perceptual experience in that affections 'involve both the nature of the affected body and that of the affecting external body' (49). (Fancy 221)

As we can ascertain here, Deleuze building upon Spinoza, understands the ethical component of engagement not as being adjudicated by a justice or moral external to them, but situated in the affective relation inherent to those engagements. Following this Fancy then adds:

It is then the transmissional and shared aspect of the affections that makes them constitutive of a variety of bodies simultaneously, and therefore cannot be reduced to the property of one specific body but instead circulate between bodies. This circulation of constituting and constitutive affections cause ‘transitions’ and ‘passages’ to be experienced between varying states—durational feelings called affects—that allow bodies ‘to pass to a greater or lesser perfection’ (48). This increase or decrease of perfection is oriented not towards a perfection exterior to the body with which the body is being compared or adjudicated, but instead towards the functionality and expression of the coherences inhering within and constituting the body itself. (Fancy 221)

As emphasized by Fancy here, it is precisely this notion of engagement, one which carries with it the gestures of affect circulation, that refrains geoartistry from reductively assessing the expressive qualities of the bodies as they are encountering each other. Furthermore, ethical encounters do not bring forth a taxonomical and essentializing ontology; but instead restore milieus their expressive potential and qualities through a circulating gesture.

In accordance with that principle, Fancy’s Geoartistic model abides by the notion of Spinozist ethics in conceiving that the expression of affects in between human and non-human entities is situated in their territorialization - not through reductive subjectivization. It recognizes, just as Deleuze asserted that “The common notions are an Art, the art of the Ethics itself: organizing good encounters, composing actual relations, forming powers, experimenting.” (Fancy 222) In this, Geoartistry acknowledges not only that beyond-human entities have the potential of artistic expression, but also that humans play a part in composing those expressive relations with entities beyond the anthropogenic world. Ultimately Fancy’s Geoartistic model

spans from a desire to deepen our understanding of those relationships beyond their anthropocentric articulations. He asserts that much in his closing argument saying that:

[...] Perhaps what is clear from these speculations here is that ultimately it behooves those humans attempting to move beyond the anthropocentric histories of reductive materialization to articulate the ways in which other-than-human entities might 'experience' creative and artistic phenomena given that these can be central to each entity's expansion or contraction of abilities and potential, of their capacity for joy. In other words, understanding with nuance the experiences of beauty generated and taken up by other-than-human entities can help humans attempt to understand these entities' 'value' on their own terms. [...] Continuing to find ways to describe other-than-human entities' qualities and capacities for artistic expression would seem to be an important part of the collective and deeply political work of imagining ways in which humans and other-than-human bodies can live together. (Fancy 233)

Geoartistry, in its disposition to understand our relationship with the other-than-human world, avoids the anthropocentric and anthropomorphizing impulse to subjectivize that said world.

Moving forward, I suggest that we examine how the emergence of distinct audio-visual effects in *Sombre* and later on, *Un Lac*, bring forth that said Geoartistic disposition; bringing forth encounters in which territories are set to emerge and express the relationship in between the different milieus that pass through them.

Shortly after the initial sequence of *Sombre*, the movie cuts to a crowd of children sitting in the dark, they appear to be in a theater of some sort. They are visibly agitated, some of them are screaming and vividly immersed in the display they're currently witnessing. As this scene progresses, the sound of their screams begins to slowly fade over a low frequency rumbling drone, but the screaming children's faces are still seen. This drone we hear begins as a multilayered sound; part a low pitch rumble, the other some sort of high frequency dissonant chime. As the scene progresses, the chime slowly begins to fade, just like the children's voices had faded priorly; allowing for the low tone rumble to expand in the film's auditory field.

Visually, this change is accompanied by a noticeable shift in speed of the moving image. The children begin gesturing faster to a point where their agitation becomes inhumanly frantic. As their speed grows and gains momentum, the film abruptly cuts to the scenic exterior we saw at the beginning of the movie. This time we appear to be inside an automobile rather than out of it although it's hard to get a sense of our bearings at first for we barely see the inside of the car at all. As a matter of fact, only a few clues point towards that conclusion. The point of view we get of mountains in the distance appears to be dramatically zoomed in, for micro movements make the image jerk tremendously. In that jerking motion the camera briefly gets obstructed by an unfocused black mass (possibly the frame of the car door). While these visual clues begin to point towards where our point of view might be situated, in this instance, it is sound that really ties in the diegesis of this mysterious bit of space. Indeed, while the film initiated a visual rupture in cutting from the theater to this moving interior, the low-pitched drone carries over that cut; and begins resembling the diegetic muffled sound of car wheels rolling on pavement as heard from inside the vehicle's habitacle. As this scene keeps unfolding, however, the auditory field becomes multilayered yet again as another sound creeps in the auditory field. This sound is lower in pitch than the one we heard previously, but it's still significantly higher than the low frequency hum that carried over. While the chimes we heard in the theater set a gloomy atmosphere then, the one we hear now expresses a certain sense of distress, resembling the sound of a crash cymbal reverberating forever or that of a heavily distorted string instrument rapidly oscillating in pitch; is if caught in a feedback loop.

Through this succession of events, the film generates a variety of audio-visual effects that are reminiscent of territorialization gestures described in Deleuze and Guattari's *De la*

*ritournelle*. First, when the film cuts to the theater, the children are visually isolated from one another through close-up framing and focal length. When children are in frame the depth-of-field remains narrow so as to isolate them from their peers. The film cuts several times, jumping across the theater for us to witness the reaction of multiple spectators within the room. A clear diegesis is then experienced by the viewer as the screams heard are matched synchronously with the children's lip movements. These shots act as a form of signage (or signature as put by Deleuze & Guattari) delimiting the territory's edge; we get a sense of the individuated elements from which the territory can emerge. For brief a moment, we get a sense of our bearings, we are in a theater, that much is clear. However, as the diegetic sounds of screaming get withdrawn from the film's auditory field, we begin to question those bearings. This sudden vanishing of sound triggers a succession of effects that Michel Chion defines as the effect of *suspension* and the effect of *phantom sound*. As he describes it in his book *Audio-Vision*:

Suspension is specific to the sound film, and one could say it represents an extreme case of null extension. Suspension occurs when a sound naturally expected from a situation (which we usually hear at first) becomes suppressed, either insidiously or suddenly. This creates an impression of emptiness or mystery, most often without the spectator knowing it; the spectator feels its effect but does not consciously pinpoint its origin. [...] An effect of phantom sound is then created: our perception becomes filled with an overall massive sound, mentally associated with all the micromovements in the image. The pullulating and vibrating surface that we see produces something like a noise-of-the-image. (Chion 132)

With the screaming sounds gone, we begin perusing the images of the theater. We get a sense that children are scattered around, but the narrow depth-of-field and low-lighting of the environment refrain us from assessing how large the space in which we are truly is; as if we were immersed in a large and dense fog (or perhaps a dense forest in the depths of night?). On that note, Chion is quick to mention that phantom sounds usually tend to narrow our focus on the dimensional characteristics of visually depicted spaces, as he puts it: "When the sound is removed our

beholding of the image is more interrogative, as it is for silent cinema. We explore its spatial dimension more easily and spontaneously; we tend to look more actively to the image to tell us what is going on.” (Chion 132) With this shift, the territory initiates a gesture of expression; it gains a rhythm of its own. There is a transition from signature to style for the territory is no longer defined by a cumulation of its individuated expressive qualities, but by the refrain those expressive qualities set in motion. That refrain maps the relation in between the elements within the territory framed by (the children agitating one another in their commotion, the spectacle they’re witnessing) with those that stand outside of it (the low-rumble drone that they don’t seem to hear). With the articulations of those audio-visual effects, the interior milieu opens as it passes through this emerging territory, becoming permeable to that which stands outside.

As such, when the drone we hear carries over into the next segment, the anthropogenic interior space of the theater is set to meet with the exterior ‘natural’ milieus we encounter soon after. However, as soon as the film cuts to that sequence inside the car, the low rumbling drone get deterritorialized into an element of signage delimiting the territory by situating its boundaries. It tells us we are inside a moving car; a moving car rolling on flat pavement. As such, to borrow a term from Chion’s framework, the low rumbling sound becomes an index of Materializing Sound Indices. In Chion’s terms, MSIs are defined as such:

The materializing indices are the sound's details that cause us to "feel" the material conditions of the sound source, and refer to the concrete process of the sound's production. They can give us information about the substance causing the sound—wood, metal, paper, cloth—as well as the way the sound is produced— by friction, impact, uneven oscillations, periodic movement back and forth, and so on. (Chion 114)

In this sequence, the rumbling sound mobilizes several MSIs that refer to the specific material conditions and movements from which the sound originates; but also situates us precisely into



the setting from which we get to experience that sound. The rubber wheels rolling against pavement produce a relatively stable tone; one which fluctuates ever so slightly in pitch with the changes in speed from the car and its amplitude, the volume of the sound, stays the same. In this we ascertain that the sound is the result of movement. Also, as the sound's amplitude doesn't change we can also ascertain that we are moving *with* the origin of the sound. If we weren't, the sound would fade away as distance grows between us and its point of origin. Additionally, the sound appears to be muffled, as if all of the high frequencies had been filtered out; leaving only its low-end tones to be heard. From this, we begin to sense that we are experiencing the sound from within an enclosed space. This notion gets re-enforced as we realize that some MSIs are notably absent from the aural field, mainly wind noises that would introduce a broad and dynamic range of high frequency tones; tones that would in turn become noticeable and referential in our experience of that sound.

Put together with the shaky zoomed-in footage of rapidly moving mountains, those MSIs not only situate our point-of-view as being within a moving car, but also allow for the deployment of another audio-visual effect that Chion refers to as *rendering*. Chion makes a distinction in between the paradigm of *reproduction* and that of *rendering*. As he puts it, sound reproduction has to do with verisimilitude, that is creating a soundscape that reproduces at best the indexical sound registers that would be associated with the depiction of an event seen on screen. On the contrary, rendering has to do with conveying “a clump of sensation” that refer to a given display of intensity. In his words:

[...] Why should sounds "render" their sources all by themselves—a belief that sound-effects people are obviously completely disabused of? No doubt because sounds are neither experienced objectively nor named, and through a magnetism related to all the vagueness and uncertainty surrounding them, sounds "attract" affects for which they are

not especially responsible. [...] sound here must tell the story of a whole a rush of composite sensations and not just the auditory reality of the event. (Chion 112-113)

In light of this assessment, one could assume this car segment falls under the paradigm of indexical reproduction rather than rendering a given cluster of intensities; simply being a verisimilar account of the sounds that would result from the material conditions depicted in their visual counterpart. While it might seem that way at first, I would rather argue that these sounds render the sensations of a territorializing act. It is not so much that the MSIs we've mentioned operate on the level of establishing a given location for the sake of narrative facilitation and immersion, but rather they frame and render an encounter in between milieus; those milieus being the interior anthropogenic space constituted by the car's habitacle and the scenic outdoor view of the mountainous landscape. In this rendering, the expressive qualities of those milieus become motifs and counterpoints and as this shift occurs, the territory emerges. The interior habitacle gathers momentum and moves, yet our knowledge of its rhythm is gleaned *outwards* as we look at the mountains and treetops vibrating in the distance, passing by rapidly. The anthropogenic movement of the car sets the *mountain-road* territory's expressive qualities in motion and, simultaneously, the vibration we perceive in return produces a *phantom sound* that allows for the 'natural' milieu we perceive to traverse its exterior bounds and seep into the anthropogenic interior space of the car. In our line of sight, the trees we see move and vibrate, yet they produce no sound that we can hear. This is only normal as the habitacle shelters our sonic perception from that which lies beyond it. Nevertheless, from the micro-movements we perceive in the image, a *kinaesthetic* shift begins operating on our senses. In saying that, I'm drawing from Gene Youngblood's conceptualization of kinaesthesia in his book *Expanded Cinema*, a work which investigates multiple paradigms of expansion as it pertains to the moving image. Youngblood's definition of the term reads as follows:

The term kinetic generally indicates motion of material bodies and the forces and energies associated with it. Thus to isolate a certain type of film as kinetic and therefore different from other films means we're talking more about forces and energies than about matter. I define aesthetic quite simply as: the manner of experiencing something. Kinaesthetic, therefore, is the manner of experiencing a thing through the forces and energies associated with its motion. This is called kinaesthesia, the experience of sensory perception. (97 Youngblood)

As the visual field becomes saturated with vibrations, its oscillation is reminiscent of the mechanic process through which sound travels through the air; the phantom sound effect we experience in this instance operates on the level of translating this process so it can be perceived through visual registers rather than sonic ones. Taking causality into account, there are no mechanical forces at work that would prompt the forest to produce rustling sounds matching the vibration we perceive on screen. However, as the effect is deployed, the forest is set in motion through territorialization, it vibrates and despite the material constraints that would logically deny us from perceiving those vibrations as audible sound, it reaches us, nevertheless. Put differently, this audio/visual territorializing effect allows for the artistic expression of nature through sound; enabling the passage of exterior 'natural' milieus into closed off anthropogenic spaces. In doing so, it subsumes the binary of an interior/exterior as well as that of the anthropogenic/natural; instead framing encounters through audio-visual effects that enable expressive qualities from human and beyond-the-human to be 'known' of their own accord through territorialization.

For a while now, we've broken down in detail the articulations of given audio/visual effects and mapped their movements through one of *Sombre's* early segments. Having so far

carried that task minutely, let us now recapitulate what we've examined in broader strokes to further understand how the knowledge we've gained as of yet pushes our inquiry forward. Through suspension, the anthropogenic rhythm flowing from the theater is brought to an extreme degree of intensity. This intensity cannot be contained within sound or image alone, but springs from the audiovisual effect that carries its motion over into the car's habitacle. In accordance with diegetic convention, we first recognize the sound that carried over as an indexical sound; referential as it points to the car from which we are set perceive what lies outside of it. But just as we're getting comfortable in this setting, the film deploys yet another series of audio/visual effects that set apparently opposing milieus to encounter one another. In these encounters, the expressive qualities of 'natural' milieus frame a refrain with the counterpoints of anthropogenic milieus. In these encounters, nature goes to us. Attuned to surface of the road, its irregularities and bumps, the forest resonates with it. It senses the pavements, the car that rolls on it, and it waives back with vibrating pulses; a *phantom sound* which is sensed as it passes from one milieu into another.

In this segment, the qualities of each milieu are first brought to our attention, but only so that we can perceive the moment at which they stop being *functional* to become *expressive*. What we perceive then is no longer the window delineating the limits between a 'would be' inside and outside, but the expressive relationship emerging from the road-mountain assemblage. Using Deleuzian terminology, what we get to witness in this segment then, is the mutual deterritorialization of both 'natural' and anthropogenic milieus and their subsequent territorialization into this assemblage. In this, underlies a geoartistic disposition, for it enables the non-human world to express the territorial relationships it forms with the anthropogenic world.

### ***Of Soundscapes and Un Lac:***

*Un Lac*, just like *Sombre*, also mobilizes audio-visual effects that bring forth that notion of the geoartistic; forming a profilmic territoriality that defies the anthropogenic/natural ontological binary. This time, however, these effects operate at more subtle level; not the rendering of vibrations, not phantom sounds as we've seen earlier, but the quiet infiltration of geophonic sounds within the close quartered encounters in between the film's characters as they rummage through the forest. By geophonic sound I simply mean sound produced within natural territories themselves. In a paper in Oxford University's journal *BioScience*, Bryan C. Pijanowski et al. attempted to present "a unifying theory of soundscape ecology, which brings the idea of the soundscape—the collection of sounds that emanate from landscapes—into a research and application focus." (Pijanowski et al. 203). In this paper they expand on Bernie L. Krause's division of sound arrangements occurring within 'natural' soundscape into two distinct categories. On the one hand, "biophony" as they put describes "the composition of sounds created by organisms." (Pijanowski et al. 204) On the other hand, they employ the term "geophony" to point to "nonbiological ambient sounds of wind, rain, thunder, and so on." (Pijanowski et al. 204) Adding to this terminology, they decide to coin a new term; that of "anthrophony" pertaining to sounds produced by humans. With this taxonomy in hand, the authors of the paper state that: "Soundscape ecology thus can be described by our working definition as all sounds, those of biophony, geophony, and anthrophony, emanating from a given landscape to create unique acoustical patterns across a variety of spatial and temporal scales." (Pijanowski et al. 204) If those notions are reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari's *ritournelle*, it's because they in part work in favor of their concept; acknowledging that soundscapes come into formation at the encounter of different

milieus. To that effect, just like Deleuze and Guattari, they give very concrete examples of how these different milieus pass through one another in order to shape the territory:

Our general conceptual framework (figure 1) bases soundscape ecology on the same foundations as landscape ecology and draws from areas of coupled natural–human systems (Liu et al. 2007), with natural and human systems interacting to form spatial-temporal patterning of sound in landscapes. [...] Biophony, geophony, and anthrophony (arrows 4 and 5) integrate to create the complete soundscape. What occurs in the soundscape can feed back to natural processes (arrow 6); for example, animal vocalizations masked by human-generated noise may alter population or community dynamics such as predator-prey relationships (Barber et al. 2009). (Pijanowski et al. 204-205)

Here again, we find the notion of motifs and counterpoints we've touched upon earlier on in this chapter. As anthrophonic sounds find their way into realms of biophonic-geophonic systems, the territorial arrangement shifts and the functions inside the territory change in relation to what sits outside of it; shaping a new refrain.

With these notions in hand, I suggest that we look at *Un Lac* by Phillipe Grandrieux to explore its audio-visual treatment of anthro-geophonic encounters as well as analyze how that treatment challenges the anthropogenic/natural binary. To do this, however, we should first review some of Chion's terminology as it pertains to the perception of sound causes in film. In the fourth chapter of *Audio-Vision*, Chion proposes a loose taxonomy to identify sound categories falling both in the realms of "visualized" sounds and "acousmatic" sounds. (Chion 75) In this endeavor, he formulates two categories relevant to this analysis of *Un Lac*, mainly that of internal sounds and ambient sounds, the latter which he also interchangeably refers to as "territory sounds." On the one hand, the internal sound "although situated in the present action, corresponds to the physical and mental interior of a character. These include physiological sounds of breathing, moans, or heartbeats, all of which could be named objective-internal sounds." (Chion 76.) On the other hand, he also formulates the category of ambient/territory sounds that he defines as such:

Let us call *ambient sound* sound that envelops a scene and inhabits its space, without raising the question of the identification or visual embodiment of its source: birds singing, church bells ringing. We might also call them territory sounds, because they serve to identify a particular locale through their pervasive and continuous presence. (Chion 75)

Like I mentioned earlier, Chion understands those categories to be rather flexible, saying that: “these distinctions only have meaning from a geographical, topological, and spatial perspective, analogous to zones among which one finds many shadings, degrees, and ambiguities.” (Chion 75). Additionally, Chion also recognizes the difficulty of isolating the source of a given sound as that sound propagates within a spatial environment that confers it perceptible properties as it runs its course through it. In his own terms:

For example, the sound of a shoe's heel striking the floor of a reverberant room has a very particular source. But as sound, as an agglomerate of many reflections on different surfaces, it can fill as big a volume as the room in which it resonates. In fact, no matter how precisely a sound's source can be identified, the sound in itself is by definition a phenomenon that tends to spread out, like a gas, into whatever available space there is. (Chion 79)

As we can ascertain from these passages, Chion’s categories leave room to be tweaked at length, but are handy in that they allow us to examine how given milieus get to interact with one another in forming new territories as they pass into each other. However, rather than expanding on those categories in creating further subdivision as Chion calls for in his chapter (Chion 75), let us instead examine how the audio-visual effects deployed in selected segments of *Un Lac* work in favor of confounding these categories through their deterritorialization and subsequent re-territorialization. As such let us look at the ways in which *Un Lac* frames encounters in between anthroponic objective-internal sounds and geophonc ambient sounds so as to inform a larger territorial, ‘audio-visual scape.’

Philippe Grandrieux has repeatedly stated the significance of sound in his filmmaking practice. Speaking of *Sombre*, Grandrieux in an interview, accounts for his sonic practices in detail, saying: “Je voulais vraiment travailler sur le son. On a généralement l’impression que le son se réduit à des dialogues, du son direct, trois bouts d’ambiance et un peu de musique. Ce n’est pas vrai. Nous avons travaillé cinq mois sur le son. Je voulais des bruits de cailloux, du vent, du rouling.” (Goudet et al. 11) *Un Lac* as it stands, does not lack that same attention when it comes to its acoustic treatment. For that matter, the film features a rich and complex soundscape filled with geophonic, biophonic, and anthrophonic sounds altogether - using music very sparingly if (almost) not at all. To that effect, the profilmic audio-visual space developed within *Un Lac* is articulated in a way that never falters from being reminiscent of the territorial processes at play in between the film’s characters and the forest in which they often set foot throughout the film’s course. More specifically, the attention the film caters to the milieus shaped within its frame never isolates those milieus in and of themselves, but rather the territorial refrain that emerges from their encounters; their passages into one another. This attention can be noticed at multiple instances throughout *Un Lac*, but for the sake of clarity and concision, let us look at two distinct passages in which that articulation of audio-visuality can be noticed.

One of these sequences occurs shortly after the film’s midpoint. In this sequence Alexi and Jurgen venture together in the woods. Initially framed in an extreme long shot, we see them advancing towards the camera, moving slowly through a snowstorm. The visibility is minimal to the point at which we barely see the characters’ silhouettes at first. The sounds of their steps crushing the snow under their feet get increasingly louder as they advance towards us. Despite this, we can still hear the gusting wind blowing at the same amplitude throughout the entire shot.



As they venture further into the woods, the film cuts to alternating shot scales in framing the two characters ranging from long shots to extreme long shots. In this particular shot succession, Alexi and Jurgen are seen walking across the forest's uneven terrain - a patchwork of snow, dirt and twigs audibly crackles with each of their steps no matter how far or close they stand in relation to our point of view. As they walk, the sound of their axes tapping on trees echoes in the forest shrouded in thick impenetrable fog. Throughout this entire sequence, the geophonic sounds of the forest (wind, snow, leaves rustling) are mixed at a consistent volume level despite in spite of the cuts - making the soundscape appear as if it was a continuous field recording. In this, we begin to notice the beginning of a territorializing process in which the expression of the territory stops being directional and becomes dimensional. At first glance it seems like we're capable of isolating the expressive qualities of each milieu separately from one another. On the one hand, we clearly hear the anthrophonic sounds of Alexi and Jurgen as their weight shifts the dirt and snow in their paths - the same goes for the sound of their axes knocking on trees. On the other hand, the soundscape of the forest almost seems immutable - remaining clearly audible throughout the sequence regardless of the noise made by the two characters rummaging through it. Yet, Alexi and Jurgen are not stepping on concrete or pavement, but on soil. And the forest, not existing within the confines of an anechoic chamber, allows for the sound of their axes to resonate deep within its confines, at the same time attesting of its volume, its dimensional characteristics.

Now as the sequence progresses further, the camera nears closer to both characters. Alexi and Jurgen are now framed in a series of medium close-up shots and close-up shots as they chop down a tree with their axes. Being up close, the sounds of their tools hitting the tree's trunk are amplified. Tangentially, we also get to hear the sounds of their efforts - what Chion refers to as objective internal sounds. These sounds are that of their labored breathing, the groans and moans escaping their mouths - a sonic measurement of their hard work and exhaustion in attempting to realize such an intense physical feat. Here too, just like we've described earlier, the reverberation of their strikes resonating through the forest is still audible. Despite both characters occupying such a large portion of the framing in this sequence, the dimensional characteristics of the forest still seep into the film's pro-filmic territory - they are isolated visually, but the film insists on echo-locating their presence within the sonic territory they stand in. Yet, the objective-internal sounds they produce themselves can still be matched to the indexical visual representation of their actions. Put differently we're still able to match the sounds produced by their bodies to a source found in the film's visual counterpart. These relations, however, shift as the sequence unfolds further.

Interrupting their efforts, Alexi's sister is heard off screen screaming his name and that of Jurgen in the distance. As the film cuts to a long shot of her standing next to Alexi's younger brother, we hear their axes hit the trees a few more times before they come to a complete stop. We're then left contemplating her standing in the distance in silence for a few seconds. From this moment on, the soundscape shifts from being partly referential to being fully acousmatic - and the refrain begins gathering momentum. As we cut back to a close-up of Alexi's face looking in awe at his sister, the geophonic sounds of the forest - that of snow falling on and off the trees'

branches, the snapping of twigs – are subtly seeping into the film’s soundscape. We then cut to Jurgen’s face, who’s also looking to Alexi’s sister with admiration. Cutting back to a close-up of her face, we hear the breaking out of laughter, but her lips are not moving. Moving to a close-up of Alexi’s little brother, we see him laughing and attribute him as the source of the laugh, we heard in the previous shot. His laugh carries over however - unchanged in amplitude- as the film cuts back to a shot of Jurgen leaning against a large rock, then again cutting to a close up shot Alexi’s sister face. Through this short succession of shots, Alexi’s brother’s laugh becomes acousmatized and disembodied - it becomes an expression of the territory to come. One that emerges at the joyful encounter of Alexi’s family with the woods. The same goes for the objective-internal sounds produced by Jurgen. His haltered breath carries over a series of shots depicting the rest of Alexi’s family - unchanging in amplitude as those cuts are carried through.

As we’ve been able to gather so far, this scene mobilizes a lot of close-up shots of the characters’ faces, bringing about a sense of intimacy that is somewhat visually hermetic - in that it isolates them from their immediate surroundings. Nevertheless, through the laughter, the geophonic sounds of the forest still find their way within the film’s profilmic reality at this instant - a persistent and consistent field recording of snow falling, impacting everything it touches - its crackling uninterrupted by cuts in images. At this moment, these audio-visual motifs and counterpoints are then no longer referential. but an expression of the coming territoriality emerging from the encounter of anthropogenic and ‘natural’ worlds; forming at the same time a new arrangement as they *pass through one another*. Again here, just like we found in *Sombre* earlier, the audio-visual treatment of this encounter in *Un Lac* challenges the anthropogenic/natural worlds binary in articulating territorial expression in a way that is

geoartistic; one which recognizes, ‘nature’s’ capacity to express itself artistically. More so, in the fashion of Deleuze and Guattari’s *ritournelle*, it articulates a disposition that recognizes the difference entailed in each world while refraining to build from human exceptionalism.

More remains to be said on *Un Lac* and the notion of *ritournelle*, much of it being partially grounded in the film’s narrative articulation as well as its parsimonious use of singing. Hearing Alexi’s sister and mother sing feeble songs in the woods, I’m reminded of the way in which Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of the *Ritournelle* in *A Thousand Plateaux*: “Un enfant dans le noir, saisi par la peur se rassure en chantonnant. Il marche, s’arrête au gré de sa chanson. Perdu, il s’abrite comme il peut, ou s’oriente tant bien que mal avec sa petite chanson. Celle-ci est comme l’esquisse d’un centre stable et calme, stabilisant et calmant, au sein du chaos.” (Deleuze et Guattari 382) However, considering the limited scope of this current analysis, it regrettably does not belong to us to expand on those notions at once.

### ***In Conclusion:***

With this chapter, my aim was to examine, then analyze how the expressive qualities of natural milieus depicted in both *Sombre* and *Un Lac* are restored to them through the films’ articulations of audio-visual effects. Using Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of *la ritournelle*, as well as David Fancy’s concept of Geoartistry (itself building upon *la ritournelle*), I’ve determined that the encounters in between the different milieus within these films shaped a territorializing act honing the expressive qualities of ‘natural’ milieus. I’ve also carefully accounted and analyzed the ways in which the films’ respective mobilization of audio-visual effects materialized those encounters on screen. As such I meant to understand one of the ways in

which both films account for nature's materiality in artistic mediation without subjectivizing it. In articulating the 'anthropogenic-natural' territory from the interjection of sight and sound, both films not only grant natural soundscapes the capacity of expression, but also frame the restoration of that capacity as being inexorably linked to the passage of anthropogenic milieus within them. In doing so the coming territories found in both of Grandrieux's works challenge the anthropocentric binary of the anthropogenic and the natural.

And so, what kind of broader conclusions can we draw from these findings? While writing this chapter, it became apparent that to account for 'nature' in the arts as well as in writing that pertains to artistic practices, it is imperative we acknowledge the relationship we maintain with it. Additionally, we must also explore the ways in which we engage with it materially and account of its plasticity - its expressive potential. In this mindful engagement with 'nature' we come to - not set the bounds of its subjectivity - but engage into a de-stratification of the world; where individuated elements within that world get to express their relation to one another.

As nature's world grows closer to ours, we also walk towards it. May those worlds, encounter on the road or deep within the forest, the territory they'll come to form will sprout from the middle - where things gather speed.

## Chapter 2. Fleshing Out the Trail: On the Emergence of a Figural Way.

“Non pas raconter une histoire, mais prendre le spectateur derrière le cou et le conduire; qu’au fond il ne sache pas trop ce qui se passe, mais qu’il ne puisse pas décrocher et qu’il ait la sensation d’avoir traversé quelque chose de sa propre épaisseur.”

- Phillippe Grandrieux

To say the plots of *Sombre* and *Un Lac* are confusing would be euphemistic. Filled with abrupt ellipses, drastic setting changes, mumbled dialogues - both films make for a watch that is nothing short of disorienting. Adding to this, they also articulate complex relational modalities in between their characters. On the one hand, *Sombre* articulates the violent and terrifying bond in between Jean, a serial killer and his captive, Claire. On the other hand, in *Un Lac*, we get a glimpse of the anxious intimacy shared in between Alexi and his sister, Hege. Despite this, the figurative violence articulated through these relationships pales in comparison to the films’ violence as it pertains to the realm of *sensation*. That violence lies beyond narration for it eludes representation. It appeals not to reason, but to the *flesh*.

In the introduction to his book on Grandrieux’s works, Gregg Hainge recalls a conversation he and the director had over a meal. As Hainge states, the conversation quickly took on a turn to philosophy - with Grandrieux himself invoking the relationship in between Deleuze’s writing and the filmic creative practice:

In Shanghai Village Dumpling Restaurant, down an alley in Melbourne’s China Town, between mouthfuls of xiao long bao, our conversation turned to Bacon or, to be more precise, Gilles Deleuze’s book on Bacon, *Logic of Sensation* (2003b). “That’s the one”, said Philippe Grandrieux excitedly, stabbing the air with his chopsticks, “that’s the book where he [Deleuze] talks about the cinema more than any other”. This statement puzzled me for a

long time; how, I wondered, could a book on a painter be considered more relevant to the cinema than, most obviously, the two-volume work that Deleuze had penned about the cinema, titled, appropriately, *Cinema* (1986b & 1989)? (Hainge 5)

Just like Hainge, I too was initially perplexed by Grandrieux's statement upon reading those lines. In what ways could a book about painting pertain more to filmmaking and cinema than the two volumes Deleuze dedicated to Cinema itself? Conducting my research further, I eventually came to understand what might've compelled him to regard this specific Deleuze text as such: that is its conceptualization of Bacon's works as a turn to non-figuration - the rejection of narrative relationships within his compositions. Hainge makes similar assertions as well in recognizing that many of Grandrieux's films reject "narrativity" as being their main driving component; here mainly invoking the ways in which Grandrieux's screen-writing practice shies away from narration as much as it can, working much more so like a musical score. (Hainge 7) Moreover, Hainge doesn't refrain from relaying Grandrieux's scriptwriting aversion citing his own words: I don't write a script that goes "interior, kitchen, daytime", that's so depressing, I'd shoot myself if I had to write like that. I write little fragments, notes, I look for a certain rhythm in phrases too. I also take a lot of notes on the actors, the light, the sound." (Renaud et al. 1999 qtd in Hainge 6). This is not to say that his films are devoid of distinct characters or that they don't follow a general plot line, but that the films themselves depart from the realm of figuration and even abstraction to venture down a figural path - a path of sensation.

To understand this distinction however, it will be crucial for us to revisit Deleuze's *Logique de la sensation*. As such a portion of this chapter will be dedicated to understanding some of the concepts laid out in his text, namely this distinction. Doing so will not only provide us with a framework to understand the ways in which *Sombre* and *Un Lac* abide by their own logic of

sensation, but in turn also enable us to expand on the potential of these said logics of sensation to further our epistemological goal in accounting for non-human entities in audio/visual production in a way that does not entail their subjectivization or their erasure.

Following a similar structure as the previous chapter, this chapter will also be divided into two distinct sub-sections; each dedicated to the respective analyses of *Sombre* and *Un Lac* in that order. To proceed with each sub-sections, I suggest that they first be concerned with understanding the logic of sensation found in both works respectively; more precisely how they venture down what Deleuze refers to as the “the figural path”. Having done as much, each section should then conduct an audio/visual analysis of the works, focussing on specific segments, to examine how elements found within the frame relate to one another as well as the individuated movements of these said elements within their respective compositions. Just like it was the case in the first chapter, the first sub-section here also dedicates some space for unpacking of the theoretical framework with which I’ll be using to move forward with our subsequent analyses of both films.

Remaining in line with our greater aims here, this chapter seeks to mobilize Deleuzian epistemologies once again to account for the expression of non-human entities in audio/visual artistic practices. Taking a turn to the painterly this time, our approach here is concerned with examining the relationship in between both films’ articulation of sensation and the potential they hold in restoring non-human entities their capacity for expression beyond representation.



### ***Of Figures and Athleticism:***

In the first chapter of *Logique de la sensation*, Deleuze argues that the rendition of *Figures* in Bacon's paintings is done in a way that wards off the figurative, illustrative, and narrative character entailed by those figures. Are they not first isolated. Following up that reasoning, Deleuze states: "La peinture n'a ni modèle à représenter, ni histoire à raconter. Dès lors elle a comme deux voies possibles pour échapper au figuratif : vers la forme pure, par abstraction ; ou bien vers le pur figural, par extraction ou isolation. Si le peintre tient à la Figure, s'il prend la seconde voie, ce sera donc pour opposer le « figural » au figuratif." (Deleuze 12) That is to say, to leave the realm of representation and narrativity, a painting can either venture down the path of abstraction or go down what Deleuze understands to be the "figural path".

As stressed by Deleuze here, to go down the figural path necessarily entails that a figure be submitted to a process of either extraction or isolation. This process is the first many to which the figure is confronted to in Bacon's works according to him. In *Logique de la sensation's* foreword, Deleuze states that each of these processes are accounted for in the different chapters and rubrics laid out in his book. As he mentions: "Chacune des rubriques suivantes considère un aspect des tableaux de Bacon, dans un ordre qui va du plus simple au plus complexe. Mais cet ordre est relatif, et ne vaut que du point de vue d'une logique générale de la sensation." (Deleuze 10) In the last portion of this statement, Deleuze mentions that all of these processes as well as the relationship in between them are to be encompassed and examined under a "general logic of sensation". However, this logic is not to be regarded as appealing so much to reason as it appeals

to sensation. Speaking of the French impressionist painter Cézanne, Deleuze evokes this relationship in between the Figure and sensation:

Il y a deux manières de dépasser la figuration (c'est-à-dire à la fois l'illustratif et le narratif) : ou bien vers la forme abstraite, ou bien vers la Figure. Cette voie de la Figure, Cézanne lui donne un nom simple : la sensation. La Figure, c'est la forme sensible rapportée à la sensation ; elle agit immédiatement sur le système nerveux, qui est de la chair. Tandis que la Forme abstraite s'adresse au cerveau, agit par l'intermédiaire du cerveau, plus proche de l'os. (Deleuze 39)

As we can ascertain from this excerpt, the figural path entails a rapport in between the sensible form and sensation. Although Deleuze's writing is concerned with painting here, that rapport can also be found in both *Sombre* and *Un Lac* as they attempt to ward off narrativity and indexicality without verging into abstraction. In doing so they move away from representation, down the figural path. As I've mentioned, Deleuze's book accounts for many processes through which the Figure is set to emerge in Bacon's works. Drawing from some of the rubrics found in *Logic de la sensation*, I suggest that we attempt to flesh out the logic of sensation found in both works. However, to do this, we first need to further unpack some of these rubrics to shape the framework with which we'll be working moving forward. First, let us read Deleuze's text a bit more closely and examine the ways in which he frames isolation as one of the initial prerequisites for the figure to emerge in Bacon's painting.

In the first chapter of *Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze writes of the ways in which Bacon mobilizes a variety of shapes and geometric outlines to isolate the Figure; constituting processes that act upon it. Here, Deleuze is quick to assess that these processes, rather than constraining the Figure to a sort of stasis, accentuate the spatial relationships in between the Figure and the isolating area in which it travels. In his own words: "ils doivent rendre sensible une sorte de cheminement, d'exploration de la Figure dans le lieu, ou sur elle-même. C'est un champ

opératoire.” (Deleuze 11) Having ascertained this much, Deleuze then makes the claim this isolation is the first prerequisite for painting to ward off narration and figuration. As he puts it:

Isoler la Figure sera la condition première. Le figuratif (la représentation) implique en effet le rapport d'une image à un objet qu'elle est censée illustrer ; mais elle implique aussi le rapport d'une image avec d'autres images dans un ensemble composé qui donne précisément à chacune son objet. La narration est le corrélat de l'illustration. Entre deux figures, toujours une histoire se glisse ou tend à se glisser, pour animer l'ensemble illustré. Isoler est donc le moyen le plus simple, nécessaire quoique non suffisant, pour rompre avec la représentation, casser la narration, empêcher l'illustration, libérer la Figure : s'en tenir au fait. (Deleuze 12)

Through isolation, the Figure is bound to reconstitute its relation to space within a given visual composition, but not in a way that would allow for narrative-associations to form in between the elements within that composition; including the ‘backgrounds’ of the works themselves. As Deleuze points out later, the ‘backgrounds’ found in Bacon’s work operate against an illustrative representation of depth. Speaking of those said ‘backgrounds’, he mentions:

[...] ce qui occupe systématiquement le reste du tableau, ce sont de grands aplats de couleur vive, uniforme et immobile. Mince et durs, ils ont une fonction structurante, spatialisante. Mais ils ne sont pas sous la Figure, derrière elle ou au-delà. Ils sont strictement à côté, ou plutôt tout autour, et sont saisis par et dans une vue proche, tactile ou « haptique », autant que la Figure elle-même. (Deleuze 14)

As such, as the Figure gets isolated, Bacon’s ‘backgrounds’ are set to operate within the same narrow depth of field; depicted with the same precision in absolute proximity as Deleuze would say. (Deleuze 15) What is to be ascertained here is that in establishing this spatial relationship in between Figures and the backgrounds that surround them, the works operate in a way that dismisses the representation and illustration of indexical space. Moreover, we also come to acknowledge the process of isolating the Figure as being the primordial prerequisite for that break with figuration to take place. But as hinted previously by Deleuze, this process of isolation alone is far from sufficient in achieving that end. Indeed, once isolated within its composition,

the Figure will endure a series of further *deformations*. Moving forward, I suggest that we examine the ways in which Deleuze frames these deformations to take place.

In the third chapter of his book, *Athlétisme*, Deleuze re-asserts what he argues are the three pictorial elements found in Bacon's painting, defining them as follows: "les grands aplats comme structure matérielle spatialisante - la Figure, les Figures et leur fait - le lieu, c'est-à-dire le rond, la piste ou le contour, qui est la limite commune de la Figure et de l'aplat." (Deleuze 21) Having asserted that the isolating contour of the Figure is its *lieu*, and that this *lieu* shares a common frontier with both the Figure and *l'aplat*, Deleuze then writes on the ways in which the contour introduces a new dynamic rapport in between these pictorial elements:

En effet, le contour comme lieu est le lieu d'un échange dans les deux sens, entre la structure matérielle et la Figure, entre la Figure et l'aplat. Le contour est comme une membrane parcourue par un double échange. Quelque chose passe, dans un sens et dans l'autre. Si la peinture n'a rien à narrer, pas d'histoire à raconter, il se passe quand même quelque chose, qui définit le fonctionnement de la peinture. (Deleuze 21)

As Deleuze writes here, new rapports in between the isolated Figure and *l'aplat* emerge once it endures this isolation; an exchange occurs. Deleuze expands on this further invoking that through isolation, *l'aplat* wraps itself around the contour in which the Figure is deployed. From this wrapping motion emerges a type of athletic exchange in between the Figure and the background which surrounds it. Deleuze says: "le lieu, le contour deviennent agrès pour la gymnastique de la Figure au sein des aplats" (Deleuze 23). This movement spans from the background towards the Figure, but it also tangentially coexists with its opposite movement; one that sees the Figure works towards *l'aplat* which Deleuze also refers to as the material structure. But the Figure's athleticism goes much farther beyond this point. Past those two reciprocal movements, the body, which is the Figure, also conjures up an *effort upon itself* to become Figure. As understood by

Deleuze, the body attempts escaping itself, as if grasped by a spasm, towards the material structure. He gives a few examples, notably as it pertains Bacon's coupling of bodies and washing basins:

La cuvette du lavabo est un lieu, un contour, c'est une reprise du rond. Mais ici, la nouvelle position du corps par rapport au contour montre que nous sommes arrivés à un aspect plus complexe (même si cet aspect est là dès le début) Ce n'est plus la structure matérielle qui s'enroule autour du contour pour envelopper la Figure, c'est la Figure qui prétend passer par un point de fuite dans le contour pour se dissiper dans la structure matérielle. C'est la seconde direction de l'échange, et la seconde forme de l'athlétisme dérisoire. Le contour prend donc une nouvelle fonction, puisqu'il n'est plus à plat, mais dessine un volume creux et comporte un point de fuite. (Deleuze 24)

Ascertaining from this excerpt, we get the sense that the contour does not only offer the Figure certain latitude of movement through isolation, but also allows for its dissipation in the material structure. In this, the contour enables the Figure to be susceptible to deformations. But as Deleuze is quick to note here, those deformation have less to do with imagination or the insertion of a narrative logic here as they are rather entailed to the realm of sensation. (Deleuze 25) This is also why Deleuze insist on the distinction that the Figure never endures a series of transformations but of deformations. As he states:

C'est en ce sens que les problèmes de Bacon sont bien de déformation, et non de transformation. Ce sont deux catégories très différentes. La transformation de la forme peut être abstraite ou dynamique. Mais la déformation est toujours celle du corps, et elle est statique, elle se fait sur place ; elle subordonne le mouvement à la force, mais aussi l'abstrait à la Figure. Quand une force s'exerce sur une partie nettoyée, elle ne fait pas naître une forme abstraite, pas plus qu'elle ne combine dynamiquement des formes sensibles : au contraire, elle fait de cette zone une zone d'indiscernabilité commune à plusieurs formes, irréductible aux unes comme aux autres, et les lignes de force qu'elle fait passer échappent à toute forme par leur netteté même, par leur précision déformante [...]. (Deleuze 59)

As we can ascertain from this excerpt, Deleuze insist that deformations are not dynamic but static; that they subordinate movements to forces. Writing on the ways in which Bacon depicts

heads in his work, he insists on that point by making the claim that deformations don't reconstitute movements, but that they show the whole area of the form as it is affected by a force:

l'extraordinaire agitation de ces têtes ne vient pas d'un mouvement que la série serait censée recomposer, mais bien plutôt de forces de pression, de dilatation, de contraction, d'aplatissement, d'étirement, qui s'exercent sur la tête immobile. [...] C'est comme si des forces invisibles giflaient la tête sous les angles les plus différents. Et ici les parties nettoyées, balayées, du visage prennent un nouveau sens, puisqu'elles marquent la zone même où la force est en train de frapper. (Deleuze 59)

This is not to say that Deleuze understands movement to be absent from Bacon's work, but that movement is always to be regarded as being subordinated to the forces that produce it. As such, from those movements, we're able trace our way back to the forces that entail them. Re-invoking the movements we've tackled so far, Deleuze writes:

Puisque les mouvements apparents des Figures sont subordonnés aux forces invisibles qui s'exercent sur elles, on peut remonter des mouvements aux forces, et faire la liste empirique de celles que Bacon détecte et capte. Car, bien que Bacon se compare à un « pulvérisateur », à un « broyeur », il agit beaucoup plus comme un détecteur. Les premières forces invisibles, c'est celles d'isolation : elles ont pour supports les aplats, et deviennent visibles quand elles s'enroulent autour du contour et enroulent l'aplat autour de la Figure. Les secondes sont les forces de déformation, qui s'emparent du corps et de la tête de la Figure, et qui deviennent visibles chaque fois que la tête secoue son visage, ou le corps son organisme. (Bacon a su « rendre » intensément, par exemple, la force d'aplatissement dans le sommeil.) Les troisièmes sont des forces de dissipation, quand la Figure s'estompe et rejoint l'aplat : c'est alors un étrange Sourire qui rend ces forces visibles. Mais il y a encore beaucoup d'autres forces. (Deleuze 62)

This is where we can begin to see how Deleuze's book can tie into forming our own epistemological framework as we move forward with our respective analyses of *Sombre* and *Un Lac*. First and foremost, as we've noted before, going down the figural path entails an attempt at warding of figuration, that is the constitution of a narrative, ergo the constitution of a narrative subjectivity. This is already in line with the global aim of our endeavour, as it presents us with the possibility of framing the depiction of the non-human world in relation to a figural logic, not one of representation. However, more precisely, proceeding within that figural logic also entails

that we recognize the Figure as a pictorial element affected by forces. As such, framing the non-anthropogenic world, as it is depicted in these films, through a figural logic of sensation also implies that we recognize the forms it constitutes as a series of Figures to also be affected by forces. Proceeding this way therefore not only acknowledges the works' potential in deserting figuration, but their capacity at restoring the plasticity of the non-anthropogenic world as it is being rendered by their figural logic of sensation.

Moving forward with our analysis I suggest that, like Deleuze did with Bacon, we direct our focus on the movements found in given sequences of both films respectively, so that we can trace our way back to the forces affecting the Figures at work within them. These movements are deployed kinaesthetically through sight and sound simultaneously. As the works' sonic and visual fields are not to be regarded as operating separately or independently in producing these movements, their analysis entails that we operate within Michel Chion's *audio-vision* framework once more.

### ***Sombre's Logic of Sensation:***

As it was already mentioned before, the road is always adjacent to the non-anthropogenic world in *Sombre*. It cuts through vegetation, circles, and twirls around the curves of mountains; almost wrapping it up like ribbons on a package. Strafing through hills of green grass and thick patches of trees, the road sinuously mangles the space in which it is deployed; wrapping itself around it. And there we have it, *le rond, la piste* - our prerequisite for warding off figuration - isolation. But we're moving a bit too fast here. In mapping the logic of sensation found in Bacon's works, Deleuze defined and characterized some of the pictorial elements found within

their compositions. As we move further analyzing both distinct sequences and shots of *Sombre*, it will be important for us to lay out which pictorial and sonic elements share the space deployed before us within their respective audio-visual compositions. As we've already ascertained here, the road in *Sombre* often occupies a similar function to the circular shapes that isolate the Figure in Bacon's work. Although that pictorial element is present, the same cannot be said for *l'aplat* or the material structure as it is referred to by Deleuze. Here I'm not implying that this pictorial element is in fact totally eclipsed from the film, but that it shows up much more rarely as it did in relation to Bacon's work.

Shortly after the first half hour of the film, Claire and her friend, having spent their evening attending a family gathering, get into Jean's car. The trio then embarks on the highway. Each of them is sitting quietly, looking outwards, and absorbed in their own thoughts and contemplations. So far it would seem that what we're seeing is figuration; a story unfolds, albeit a very simple one. Three people are in car, and that car is being driven on the highway. The narration is told through montage; a succession of shots where we see a close-up of Claire's friend, Claire and then Jean who's driving the car. But as we cut to what would conventionally be considered a counter-shot, figuration begins unravelling. In front of us now, we see the road moving ahead. At a first glance, the shot looks as if it were embodying the point of view of someone sitting in the car; a subjectivity casting its gaze outwards. However, the car's habitacle can't be seen in the shot, and more importantly, the entire shot is blurred. In this, we see the germination of the figural as it begins to ward off the paradigm of figuration we had encountered earlier on in this sequence. To expand on this notion, let us track back to ways in which Deleuze has come to understand the notion of depth, or that of its lack thereof, in Bacon's work. Deleuze asserts that



in Bacon's compositions, each pictorial element, the Figure, its contour as well as the material structure operate in the same narrow depth of field. Doing so enables the composition to move past the concern of indexical spatial representation found within the logic of figuration. A similar operation occurs in our shot here as well. As the depth of field is narrowed to an absolute point, the image becomes flattened and so are the pictorial elements found within it.

As the composition's depth of field comes to a point of absolute narrowness, we can begin to make sense of the pictorial elements found within it. As we've hinted to earlier, the road in this instance, operates as our contour, delineating the field in which vegetation operates as a Figure. But then this introduces yet another layer of complexity as we begin pondering on the other elements in the frame surrounding our vegetation Figure. What are we to make of buildings, lamp posts, road signage and even the sky which are too part of this dynamic composition? Well just like the road, they also surround our vegetation Figure here, effectively also working as its contour. But they are also Figures, at they remain susceptible to deformations as we'll see soon enough. As such all of these pictorial elements, including the road, are Figures, but in their dynamic arrangement with one another, also enact the function of contours in relation to one another; informing a sort of athletic synergism. As the sequence unfolds further, we get a sense that this form of athleticism entails a series of expansions and contractions. As the camera moves further down the road, the space occupied by each Figure as well as their shape shifts. Sandwiched in between the road and the horizon line, our vegetation Figure fluctuates in accordance with that logic as well; forming a sort of channel or gap that narrows and widens. In this, the travelling movements of the camera no longer serves the purpose of telling a narrative. It ceases to operate as an illustrative device, telling us a car moves on the highway. Rather, it

introduces the relationship in between forces and the Figure; mapping the deformed areas of the vegetation Figure *as* they are being affected by forces of contraction and dilation. For a few seconds, this channel oscillates, with its ends opening and closing, it fluctuates through a series of minor variations. However, soon enough the left end of the Figure opens fully, engulfing half of the frame. In this expansion gesture, our vegetation Figure soon makes it way to the right side of the frame, saturating it almost completely. Just as we expect the Figure to cover the entirety of the frame, the sequence cuts to a new shot which introduces yet more degrees of complexity to what we've witnessed so far.

At first glance this new shot appears as if it were a close-up shot of the vegetation that was filmed in the previous one, also moving from the right side of the frame to the left side. This time however, we get to make out the outlines of this vegetation Figure. In the green mass that lays bare before us we're able to distinguish blades of grass, flowers and leaves of all shapes and sizes. Yet again here, the flattening force we'd encountered in the previous shot resurfaces once more. Shot through what we can assume to be a telephoto lens, the different vegetal shapes that we see appear to be flattened once more as if they'd had been laid out in an herbarium. This once more acts to conjure the figural logic that we've encountered so far in isolating the Figure at a certain depth of field, at the same time warding off the illustrative concern of indexical spatial representation. As our shot is fully blown up, the limits of the frame also act as the Figure's contour; its *matter of fact*. Being isolated as such, our Figure begins once more to engage in a type of athleticism. Initially, as we'd established, the Figure seems to be moving from right to left, as if in continuing the movement of the previous shot. However, five seconds in, the movement shifts in direction. now moving from left to right. Another five seconds later, the

movement reverses itself once more, but this time for half of the duration of the previous movement. Then ensues a back and forth in between these two movements at gradually increasing speeds. Again, here the reversal of this movement works in a way which wards off a paradigm of narrativity in resisting the notion of continuity through montage. Montage here does not operate to introduce illustrative continuity, but functions as means to witness a variation of the same force in both shots. Deleuze points to this witness function in Bacon's work especially as it pertains to his triptychs:

On dira que dans beaucoup de cas, subsiste une sorte de spectateur, un voyeur, un photographe, un passant, un « attendant », distinct de la Figure : notamment dans les triptyques, dont c'est presque une loi, mais pas seulement là. Nous verrons pourtant que Bacon a besoin, dans ses tableaux et surtout dans les triptyques, d'une fonction de *témoin*, qui fait partie de la Figure et n'a rien à voir avec un spectateur. De même des simulacres de photos, accrochés au mur ou sur rail, peuvent jouer ce rôle de témoin. Ce sont des témoins, non pas au sens de spectateurs, mais d'élément-repère ou de constante par rapport à quoi s'estime une variation. (Deleuze 22)

According to Deleuze, this variation does not pertain to a register of sensations each belonging to different levels in and of themselves, but to different levels of a same sensation. In his words:

“C'est chaque sensation qui est à divers niveaux, de différents ordres ou dans plusieurs domaines. Si bien qu'il n'y a pas *des* sensations de différents ordres, mais différents ordres d'une seule et même sensation. Il appartient à la sensation d'envelopper une différence de niveau constitutive, une pluralité de domaines constituants.” (Deleuze 41-42) Therefore, montage, as a witness function serves to articulate the variation of a same sensation, or as Deleuze understands it, to encompass the plural domains of that same sensation. We will further expand on the notion of the Witness-Figure and rhythm as we examine the sequence's soundscape. For now however, let us get back to where we were. If this back-and-forth motion introduces the witness function in our composition, it tangentially also points the Figure's athleticism in relation to the frame.

Indeed, as our vegetation Figure carries on with this motion, it endures a series of deformations as if it were stretched and pulled across the frame. Just like Deleuze writes of the ways in which washing basins in Bacon's work are a means for the Figure to dissipate and leap in the material structure, what we see in this pushing and pulling of the Figure here is its athletic effort to leap out of the frame. Our Vegetation-Figure here, emerges under the same conditions in which Deleuze understands a Landscape-figure to emerge in Bacon's work. As he puts it:

Car les paysages de Bacon sont la préparation de ce qui apparaîtra plus tard comme un ensemble de courtes « marques libres involontaires » rayant la toile, *traits assignifiants* dénués de fonction illustrative ou narrative : d'où l'importance de l'herbe, le caractère irrémédiablement herbu de ces paysages (« Paysage » 1952, « Étude [13, 15] défiguré dans un paysage » 1952, « Étude de babouin » 1953, ou [17] « Deux figures dans l'herbe » 1954). Quant aux textures, à l'épais, au sombre et au flou, ils préparent déjà le grand procédé de nettoyage local, avec chiffon, balayette ou brosse, où l'épaisseur est étalée sur une zone non figurative. (Deleuze 14)

As it affects the Vegetation-Figure, this stretching motion renders the landscape in a series of *assignificant traits*. Although the image isn't blurred in its entirety like in the previous shot, the motion blur introduced in this portion of the sequence here brushes off certain area of the image, accentuating the deformation of those traits which are clearly rendered in the frame. Referring to André Bazin, Deleuze understands this process as “détruire la netteté par la netteté” (Deleuze 15). Inferring from *What is Cinema?* he expands on this notion with a Bazin quote pertaining to the articulation of dialogue in the films of Jacques Tati:

À propos de Tati, qui est lui aussi un grand artiste des aplats, André Bazin disait : « Rares sont les éléments sonores indistincts... Au contraire toute l'astuce de Tati consiste à détruire la netteté par la netteté. Les dialogues ne sont point incompréhensibles mais insignifiants, et leur insignifiante est révélée par leur précision même. Tati y parvient en déformant les rapports d'intensité entre les plans... » (*Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ?*, p. 46, éd. du Cerf). (Bazin qtd. in Deleuze 15)

As such, the deformations endured by the Vegetation-Figure here renders its asignificant character *clearly*; disrupting any processes that would seek to confer it with either narrative or illustrative functions. At this point in the shot, in addition this bi-lateral motion, we also begin witnessing a flickering of the Figure; a variation of its color saturation. Initially in the shot, that variation is somewhat stable and constant. For fractions of seconds, the Figure, at times, gets paler and brighter, but quickly shifts back to darker, more vibrant hues of green. However, about fifteen seconds into the shot, those variations begin intensifying further until the Figure reaches a penultimate peak of discolouration. Simultaneously, our Vegetation-Figure, in its stretching motion, has almost left the frame altogether, only a few discoloured traits remain in the frame. At this point in the shot, everything appears to be rather noisy. The traits of the Figure blend in with the celluloid's textural imperfections; almost getting dissipated in its grain and the scratches on its surface. In this, we can see the continuation of the Figure's athleticism we had witnessed so far. Not only does the Figure leap upwards almost exiting the frame, but in its athleticism, also leaps out of its own color and shape, leaving room for an off-white *aplat* to wrap itself around its few asignificant blades of grass that have remained in the composition. This *aplat* however, rapidly gets overtaken with the Vegetation-Figure as it fades back into the frame; the coalescence of the latter dynamically resulting in the dissipation of the former. Once more, the Figure is caught in a back-and-forth movement, only this time the axis has changed. Instead of oscillating in between the left and right sides of the frame, the vegetation-Figure now moves along a vertical plane; going up and down. As it goes through this motion, the Figure once more undergoes a series of deformations. The Vegetation-Figure with its blades of wild grass, flowers, and leaves is stretched outwards along the entire vertical axis in an athletic leap towards the frame's contour.

This movement carries on for about fifteen seconds at which point horizontal traits begin fading into the frame. In an opposite motion, as the Vegetation-Figure begins fading away, those horizontal traits begin to flesh out the outline of hair. We've now cut to a new close-up shot. As this mass of hair coalesces into the frame, it becomes a new Figure in and of itself. Flowing in the wind, the Figure approximately occupies the bottom half of the frame. In the top half of the frame, we find yet another Vegetation-Figure. Just as we had seen in the early portion of the sequence, the two Figures in this shot are also flattened; brought to operate within the same narrow depth-of-field as the image is blurred. As this shot unfolds initially, both Figures dilate and contract, each dynamically functioning as the isolating contour of the other. In this composition, we're able to outline the shapes of both Figures. In the frame's upper portion, moving from left to right, we see different shades of green grouped in patches. In its lower portion, moving in the same direction, the fibrous texture of hair, shimmering in the light. This time, the blur not only operates to banish the illustration of depth, but to render both Texture-Figures as insignificant; clearly rendering their deformations through blotches, strokes and traits.

As for montage in this case, it neither functions as a Witness-Figure, nor as a mean to ensure narrative continuity. Rather here, montage operates as a mean to render the coupling forces affecting all Figures as our shots crossfade into one another. In the chapter titled *Couples et triptyques*, Deleuze evokes the potential risk of narrativity re-introducing itself in the composition when there are multiple Figures in it. Bacon, in order to counter this risk according to Deleuze, paints coupled Figures:

Nous avons vu dès le début que, selon Bacon, le peintre ne pouvait pas renoncer à mettre sur le tableau plusieurs figures à la fois, bien qu'il y ait danger de réintroduire une « histoire » ou de retomber dans une peinture narrative. La question concerne donc la possibilité qu'il y ait entre les Figures simultanées des relations non illustratives et non narratives, pas même

logiques, qu'on appellerait précisément « matters of fact ». C'est bien le cas ici, où l'accouplement des sensations à niveaux différents fait la Figure accouplée (et non l'inverse). Ce qui est peint, c'est la sensation. Beauté de ces Figures mêlées. Elles ne sont [76] pas confondues, mais rendues indiscernables par l'extrême précision des lignes qui acquièrent une sorte d'autonomie par rapport aux corps : comme dans un *diagramme* dont les lignes n'uniraient que des sensations 59. Il y a une Figure commune des deux corps, ou un « fait » commun des deux Figures, sans la moindre histoire [41,17] à raconter. (Deleuze 66)

Ascertaining from this passage, the fade in between the two shots couples the asinificant traits of the Vegetation-Figure with that of the Hair-Figure. As stated by Deleuze here, the traits of both Figures are not combined here, but made indiscernible from one another in the *clarity* with which those traits are rendered. Soon after this transition occurs however, the Hair-Figure begins to expand upwards. Now fully blown-up within the frame, the Hair-Figure, just like our Vegetation-Figure in the previous shot, is affected by forces of compression and stretching. Strands of hair are pulled in all directions in yet another athletic effort to reach the frame's contour. With this, our sequence ends as we cut to a close-up shot of Jean's face once more; still driving, looking ahead.

Until now, we've examined the sequence in relation to its visual qualities however, we have yet to conduct our analysis of its sonic field. If we are to investigate the sequence's soundscape at this point of our analysis, it is precisely because it operates as a Figure in and of itself spanning over the entire sequence. As per our previous assertions in regard to montage and that of Deleuze in relation to the function of *trptychs* in Bacon's works, we've come to regard the witness function as a means to measure a variation across multiple levels of the same sensation. Taking this notion a step further, Deleuze ventures into the realm of rhythm. As he puts it, there are three rhythms associated with the Figures found in the individuated panels of Bacon's triptychs: "On aurait alors trois rythmes, l'un « actif », à variation croissante ou amplification, l'autre « passif »,

à variation décroissante ou élimination, l'autre enfin, « témoin »." (Deleuze 70) Referring to a quote by French composer Olivier Messiaen, Deleuze here, understands the notion of "active" and "passive" in relation to coupled Figures; the "active" rhythm associated with the Figure that's *affecting*, and the "passive" rhythm associated with the one *affected* by that same Figure. Finally, the witness rhythm, also associated to another Figure, is there to attest of the variation in sensation between both Figures. We've already encountered these three rhythms in multiple instances in the visual portion of our sequence so far. We've seen both active and passive rhythms in the coupling of Figures on screen - Figures of vegetation, concrete, bricks - all affected by forces of dilation and contraction. We had also touched upon the notion that montage, in this sequence, effectively operates as a Witness-Figure. It acts as a conduit for sensation - a means to measure its variation across its different levels.

The three same rhythms can also be found in the sequence's sonic counterpart; each relying on different Figures within the frame of that said counterpart. The first Sound-Figure we get to hear could be regarded as a type of Soundscape-Figure; mostly consisting of ambient sounds produced by the car and its surrounding environment as it drives on the highway. The sound is droning and is mostly constant; only ever so slightly varying over time. This sound is not only the first Sound-Figure that we encounter in our sequence, but it also lasts throughout its entirety. As other Sound-Figures emerge later in our sequence, this specific soundscape-Figure operates to measure the variation of sensation conveyed through its sonic channel. Put differently this soundscape-Figure, for the most part, acts as a means of instilling the witness rhythm in the sequence's sonic frame. About ten seconds into the first blurred shot of the sequence, another Sound-Figure emerges into the sonic frame. This Sound-Figure consists of a multi-pitched tone



rapidly oscillating in its amplitude; sounding as if it were “chopped” through the blades of a fan. The tone repeats; fading in and out in a cyclical motion. There are now, two sound-Figures in the frame. As we established previously, our soundscape-Figure here has a witness function, but as this new sound-Figure gets introduced in the sequence, it also gets enmeshed in an active/passive dynamic with that said Figure. Just as we had seen in the visual portion of the sequence, both Figures here are pressed against each other; athletically struggling for space in the sonic frame. Soon after, as the sequence cuts to the blown-up shot of vegetation, another Sound-Figure layers itself in the sonic frame in addition to the two Figures we had already been hearing until this point. This Sound-Figure consists of a tone that is reminiscent of a bell being struck. Just like the Figure we had encountered right before, this one also cyclically fades in and out of the sonic frame; entering the active/passive rhythmic dynamic that had been introduced moments before. As more Sound-Figures enter the frame, this dynamic intensifies as each Sound-Figure struggles for space within it; yet if we are to listen attentively, each and every Figure can still be distinguished from one another. The penultimate Sound-Figure that gets introduced in our sequence could well be described as a “*block of noise*” the amplitude of which gradually ramps up in the frame; reminiscent of sounds usually associated with television static or radio hiss. As this Noise-Figure reaches its highest peak in the sequence, it inserts itself in that rhythmic struggle, pushing against the others Figures tightly layered against one another. As we fade to the final shot of our sequence, the dynamics of this struggle suddenly shift. At this point, all the Sound-Figures that had been introduced throughout the sequence, with the exception of our witness-Figure, fade out of the frame rapidly, while the final Sound-Figure in our sequence finds its way in the frame. This Figure, consisting of single droning note, slowly decreases in volume

over time as our sequence comes to an end, allowing our witness/soundscape-Figure to reign over the sonic field once more, bookending this portion of the film.

So far, we've looked at both the film's visual and sonic fields respectively, but we have yet to understand the way in which they interject dynamically with one another. To expand further on this notion, we ought to circle back to Deleuze's conceptualization of the triptych once more. As we've ascertained so far, Deleuze understands that three forms of rhythms, each depending on distinct Figures, can be found within the works of Bacon; whether in paintings existing on their own terms or within the isolated panels of a triptych. This, however, brings Deleuze to ask the following question. Considering that the Figures spreading across different panels of a triptych are isolated from one another, what then makes the unity of that said triptych? What is its *matter-of-fact*? In attempting to answer this question, Deleuze advances the following hypothesis: with the triptych, rhythm ceases to depend upon a Figure, instead becoming a Figure in and of itself. (Deleuze 70). As he puts it:

L'hypothèse permettrait d'assigner aux triptyques une place privilégiée dans l'oeuvre de Bacon. Peindre la sensation, qui est essentiellement rythme... Mais dans la sensation simple, le rythme dépend encore de la Figure, il se présente comme la *vibration* qui parcourt le corps sans organes, il est le vecteur de la sensation, ce qui la fait passer d'un niveau à un autre. Dans l'accouplement de sensation, le rythme se libère déjà, parce qu'il confronte et réunit les niveaux divers de sensations différentes : il est maintenant *résonance*, mais il se confond encore avec les lignes mélodiques, points et contrepoints, d'une Figure accouplée ; il est le diagramme de la Figure accouplée. Avec le triptyque enfin, le rythme prend une amplitude extraordinaire, dans un *mouvement forcé* qui lui donne l'autonomie, et fait naître en nous l'impression de Temps : les limites de la sensation sont débordées, excédées dans toutes les directions ; les Figures sont soulevées, ou projetées en l'air, mises sur des agrès aériens d'où tout d'un coup elles tombent. Mais en même temps, dans cette chute immobile, se produit le plus étrange phénomène de recombinaison, de redistribution, car c'est le rythme lui-même qui devient sensation, c'est lui qui devient Figure, d'après ses propres directions séparées, l'actif, le passif et le témoin... (Deleuze 71)

As we can ascertain from this excerpt, Deleuze understands the triptych to be a Rhythm-Figure which has the function of redistributing rhythms across its singular panels. While Deleuze's assessment here pertains to painting, I believe that the same logic also applies in relation to our sequence. More precisely, the *sequence* itself here operates like Bacon's triptych in the ways in which it redistributes rhythms across both its respective visual and sonic fields at once. Through the sequence, forces of isolation, contraction, expansion, and diffusion are distributed and mapped onto visual and sonic Figures alike as they endure deformations. At the same time, the sequence's redistribution of rhythm allows for the coupling of sonic and visual Figures. This is reminiscent of what Michel Chion understands as being Synchronesis. As he mentions:

Synchronesis (a word I have forged by combining synchronism and synthesis) is the spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular auditory phenomenon and visual phenomenon when they occur at the same time. This join results independently of any rational logic. [...] Certain experimental videos and films demonstrate that synchronesis can even work out of thin air—that is, with images and sounds that strictly speaking have nothing to do with each other, forming monstrous yet inevitable and irresistible agglomerations in our perception. [...] Play a stream of random audio and visual events, and you will find that certain ones will come together through synchronesis and other combinations will not. The sequence takes on its phrasing all on its own, getting caught up in patterns of mutual reinforcement and phenomena of "good form" that do not operate by any simple rules. (Chion 63)

As the audible Noise-Figure emerges in the sequence's sonic field, it couples itself through synchronesis with the Visual-Figures on screen as they get noisier. This is not to imply that the film introduces a sort of causal relationship in between sound and image, but rather that the insignificant noise of the image becomes indiscernible from that which is audible. Through synchronesis, the coupling of both Figures in this instance operates to convey different levels of the same *sensation*; that is the *sensation of noise*.

With our analysis of this sequence, we've been able to discern one of the ways in which Sombre attempts to ward off Figuration or illustration through its articulation of form. As we've seen, rather than functioning as a narrative device, the sequence's organization of forms, made Figures in their relation to sensation, works as means to drift away from audio/visual paradigms of representation that seeks to appose a subjectivity model upon pro-filmic reality. In this arrangement, Figures of vegetation, gravel, hair, and concrete remain differentiated, but shown to be affected by forces as they are brought back to the realm of *sensation* unequivocally.

### ***A Lake Without Organs:***

Now shifting our attention to *Un Lac*, this portion of our chapter will touch upon an aspect of *Logique de la sensation's* framework we haven't reviewed yet. Towards the end of the book's sixth chapter, *Peinture et sensation*, Deleuze argues that multiple levels of a same sensation appeal to different organs of senses, but that each of these levels have the capacity to leap towards and call back to one another, no matter what object is depicted. As he states:

Entre une couleur, un goût, un toucher, une odeur, un bruit, un poids, il y aurait une communication existentielle qui constituerait le moment « pathique » (non représentatif) de la sensation. Par exemple chez Bacon, dans les Corridas on entend les sabots de la bête, dans le triptyque de 1976 on touche le frémissement de l'oiseau qui s'enfonce à la place de la tête, et chaque fois que la viande est représentée, on la touche, on la sent, on la mange, on la pèse [...] (Deleuze 45)

Having acknowledged this relation in between the levels of sensation and organs of senses, Deleuze then argues that it is the painter's role to *render visible* an original unity of senses through a multi-sensorial Figure. However, Deleuze stresses that this operation requires that establishment of a relationship between our levels of sensation and a *puissance* that circulate amongst them; that is rhythm. As he states:

[...] le rythme apparaît comme musique quand il investit le niveau auditif, comme peinture quand il investit le niveau visuel. Une « logique des sens », disait Cézanne, non rationnelle, non cérébrale. L'ultime, c'est donc le rapport du rythme avec la sensation, qui met dans chaque sensation les niveaux et les domaines par lesquels elle passe. Et ce rythme parcourt un tableau comme il parcourt une musique. C'est diastole-systole : le monde qui me prend moi-même en se fermant sur moi, le moi qui s'ouvre au monde, et l'ouvre lui-même. (Deleuze 46)

So here, Deleuze asserts that the relation in between the Figure and rhythm is crucial in rendering an original unity of senses. However, moving into the book's next chapter, he states that, yet another condition must also be met as well to render this unity. As he writes:

Ce fond, cette unité rythmique des sens, ne peut être découvert qu'en dépassant l'organisme. L'hypothèse phénoménologique est peut-être insuffisante, parce qu'elle invoque seulement le corps vécu. Mais le corps vécu est encore peu de chose par rapport à une Puissance plus profonde et presque invivable. L'unité du rythme, en effet, nous ne pouvons la chercher que là où le rythme lui-même plonge dans le chaos, dans la nuit, et où les différences de niveau sont perpétuellement brassées avec violence. (Deleuze 47)

Deleuze mentioning that this unity can only be found beyond the organism, works here as segue to introduce the relation in between the Figure and the *Body Without Organs*; a concept which he and Felix Guattari had already written on years before in *Anti-Oedipus*. As he pursues here:

Au-delà de l'organisme, mais aussi comme limite du corps vécu, il y a ce qu'Artaud a découvert et nommé : corps sans organes. « Le corps est le corps II est seul Et n'a pas besoin d'organes Le corps n'est jamais un organisme. Les organismes sont les ennemis du corps. »  
41 Le corps sans organes s'oppose moins aux organes qu'à cette organisation des organes qu'on appelle organisme. C'est un corps intense, intensif. Il est parcouru d'une onde qui trace dans le corps des niveaux ou des seuils d'après les variations de son amplitude. Le corps n'a donc pas d'organes, mais des seuils ou des niveaux. Si bien que la sensation n'est pas qualitative et qualifiée, elle n'a qu'une réalité intensive qui ne détermine plus en elle des données représentatives, mais des variations allotropiques. (Deleuze 47)

As ascertained here, the *Body Without Organs* does not stand in opposition to organs themselves, rather it opposes their arrangement into *fixed* and determined relationships with one another.

Deleuze expands on this, writing:

Une onde d'amplitude variable parcourt le corps sans organes ; elle y trace des zones et des niveaux suivant les variations de son amplitude. À la rencontre de l'onde à tel niveau et de forces extérieures, une sensation apparaît. Un organe sera donc déterminé par cette rencontre, mais un organe provisoire, qui ne dure que ce que durent le passage de l'onde et l'action de la force, et qui se déplacera pour se poser ailleurs. (Deleuze 49)

As Deleuze mentions here the *Body Without Organs* is itself traversed by a wave; This wave, according to the variation of its own amplitude, traces multiple levels and zones across the *BWO*. This is reminiscent of what we encountered previously with the variation in the levels of sensation themselves. As this wave encounters external forces, it results not only in the production of sensation, but the creation of a temporary organ to channel this sensation. This can be understood as a temporary, yet determined recomposition of the body that operates *beyond* the organism. As summarized by Deleuze here: "Bref, le corps sans organes ne se définit pas par l'absence d'organes, il ne se définit pas seulement par l'existence d'un organe indéterminé, il se définit enfin par la *présence temporaire et provisoire* des organes déterminés." (Deleuze 50) It's specifically through this operation, in which both organs and sensation are produced, that Deleuze notes the relationship in between the Body Without Organs and the Figure:

On peut croire que Bacon rencontre Artaud sur beaucoup de points : la Figure, c'est précisément le corps sans organes (défaire l'organisme au profit du corps, le visage au profit de la tête) ; le corps sans organes est chair et nerf ; une onde le parcourt qui trace en lui des niveaux ; la sensation est comme la rencontre de l'onde avec des Forces agissant sur le corps, « athlétisme affectif », cri- souffle ; quand elle est ainsi rapportée au corps, la sensation cesse d'être représentative, elle devient réelle ; et la *cruauté* sera de moins en moins liée à la représentation de quelque chose d'horrible, elle sera seulement l'action des forces sur le corps, ou la sensation (le contraire du sensationnel). (Deleuze 48)

The Figure, understood here as the Body Without Organs, wards off logics of representation and illustration. As it becomes affected by a force, the Figure maps out the passage of that said force through its own deformations, its athleticism. In this relation, new temporary and determined organs are created to channel sensation through the Figure.

Earlier, we not only reviewed the ways in which the sequence we analyzed in *Sombre* was a Figure in and of itself, but that this Figure also served a function of rhythmic distribution. With this in mind, sequences, being proper Rhythm-Figures themselves, could be understood as Bodies Without Organs as well. Moving forward with our analysis of *Un Lac* I suggest that we factor in this consideration in our attempt to unearth aspects of the film's logic of sensation; at the same time pointing to the ways that said logic deserts paradigms of indexicality and representation. Doing so, we hope to further the general aim of our inquiry in stating the ways in which the film mobilizes this logic in depicting both anthropogenic and non-anthropogenic worlds.

Twenty minutes or so into the film, we're presented with a long shot of the lake near which Alexi's family lives. The lake occupies the bottom third of the shot. It is surrounded by white patches of snow and large mountainous formations. The shot is relatively stable, but a faint amount of jitter is still noticeable in the image. Just like we had seen in our analysis of *Sombre*, this shot is blurred, resulting in a flattening of the image. In this, each of the Figures are brought to the same narrow depth of field and isolated from one another. Turning to sound, we hear a low frequency droning sound, almost reminiscent of thunder clapping far in the distance. As the shot unfolds further, we hear the faint sound of wind gradually rising. This shot marks the initiating

point of our sequence. As we cut to the next shot, the image is still blurred just as it was before. Here, the mountain is shot from a low angle, occupying the two bottom thirds of the frame. In the frame's top portion, we see a dark blue sky marbled here and there by clouds. In this shot, the camera jitter we had encountered earlier is intensified and distinctively more pronounced as it was before. Sound wise, the soundscape we heard previously carries over; only the thunderclaps and the wind get increasingly louder as the shot progresses. As the sequence progresses further, we're confronted to a series of similar shots depicting mountains. With each cut, the jitter in the image intensifies further. The same can be said about the soundscape which gets increasingly louder as it carries over each cut here. With the exception of the last shot in this series, which is shot clearly, all of the images we see here are evenly blurred. Eventually, the sequence cuts to a medium long shot of Alexi sitting on a rock by the lake's pier with his back facing us. In continuation to the last shot of the mountain we've just seen, the image also appears clearly. This shot however, captured through a telephoto lens, gathers all of the pictorial elements present within the same narrow depth of field once more, re-introducing flatness in the image as we had encountered it previously. Adding itself to the soundscape that had built up in our sequence so far, we now hear raindrops hitting the lake's surface. As we then cut to the next shot, we're presented with an extreme close-up of Alexi's mouth; slightly opened. Once more, the shot here is fully blurred and very jittery. As the shot unfolds further, Alexi's mouth begins opening up slowly. It gets increasingly wider, reaching a point where it almost exceeds the top and bottom of the frame at once. In addition to our ambient soundscape, we now also hear faint internal sounds; quiet breaths if not muffled whimpers, seemingly coming out of Alexi's mouth. As we move to the end of our sequence, the film cuts to a shot of the forest. Here again, the image is rather



blurry and camera jitter is still very much so noticeable. The soundscape, carries over this shot as well, remaining unchanged until our sequence concludes.

So far, we find in our sequence similar aspects to the one we had analyzed previously in *Sombre*. Isolated Figures, both pertaining to human and non-human entities brought to the same depth of field. The athleticism of those Figures is also quite apparent here; each struggling for space within the frame. Finally, we also encounter the three types of rhythm we mentioned earlier (active, passive, witness) as they get re-distributed in our sequence; either through the consistency of the soundscape or the horizon line as it shifts abruptly in between shots. Having ascertained this much however, let us now take into consideration the ways in which our sequence, being a Rhythm-Figure itself, effectively operates as a Body Without Organs.

As we've ascertained before, the sequence, as a Figure, has the function of re-distributing rhythm across the multiple elements that compose it, be they seen or heard; it is quite simply rhythm. Just like the body without organs, rhythm is traversed by a wave which traces the different level of a given sensation, redistributing it across both visual and sonic Figures. As this wave encounters a force, it determines temporary organs which become conduits for sensation. Our sequence effectively works to that effect. From our account of it, we can sense a buildup in intensity it as it unfolds; gathering momentum. Running across the sequence, it becomes articulated at different levels; visually and sonically. Through cuts, the camera jitter intensifies as it carries from Geological-Figures to a mouth-Figure, finally dissipating into a forest Figure. Sound here, follows a similar curve, with our ambient soundscape getting increasingly louder and cluttered until it finally dissipates over the sound of raindrops towards the final moments of

the sequence. As such our sequence, as a rhythm Figure, effectively operates as a defined and temporary organ. Affected by a force, it redistributes sensation through an array of sense-organs, be it through sight or sound. For instance, in our sequence, the Mouth-Figure, opens up violently. Visually, it vibrates intensely yet, we hear no scream. This again points back to Chion's concept of *the rendered* in regard to sensation. As he mentions:

But in reality rendering involves perceptions that belong to no sensory channel in particular. When Leonardo da Vinci marveled that sound does not render the fall of a human body, he was thinking not only about the body's weight but also its mass as well as the sensation of falling, the jolt it causes to the person falling, and so forth. In other words, he was thinking about some thing that cannot be reduced to one simple sensory message. This is surely why, in most films that show falling, we are given to hear (in contradiction to real-life experience) great crashes whose volume has the duty of "rendering" weight, violence, and pain. (Chion 112)

A violent spasm is rendered throughout our sequence here. Spanning from mountains, it traverses Alexi's body; finally dissipating amongst the trees. The articulation of this spasm here, is reminiscent of the ways in which Deleuze's describes the Pope-Figure in Bacon's work:

En tout cas Bacon n'a pas cessé de vouloir éliminer le « sensationnel », c'est-à-dire la figuration primaire de ce qui provoque une sensation violente. Tel est le sens de la formule : « j'ai voulu peindre le cri plutôt que l'horreur ». Quand il peint le pape qui crie, il n'y a rien qui fasse horreur, et le rideau devant le pape n'est pas seulement une manière de l'isoler, de le soustraire aux regards, c'est beaucoup plus la manière dont il ne voit rien lui-même, et crie *devant l'invisible*. (Deleuze 42)

Ascertaining from this, Alexi's mouth opening should not be regarded as a reaction to anything he sees (after all, the mouth is depicted here as being isolated from his eyes), but as an organ that renders violent sensation which exceeds and traverses his body. The lack of an audible scream here does not only work to isolate the mouth-figure visually, but to render a sensation that extends beyond the veil of representation; beyond the *sensational*.

### ***In Conclusion:***

With this chapter, I sought to look at the respective logics of sensation found in both *Sombre* and *Un Lac*. More precisely, we conducted this portion of our analysis, aiming to further our inquiry as it regards the audio-visual representation of the non-anthropogenic world within the moving image context. To do so, we adapted the thought framework laid out by Deleuze in *Logique de la sensation* as a means to expand its scope from painting to film. Through this process, we've ascertained that the articulation of both films' audio-visual treatments works as a mean to consider the depiction of their forms beyond the logic of representation and illustration. Made into Figures, moving images of non-anthropogenic and anthropogenic entities are brought back to sensation. In this process these Figures come to form relationships with one another, only not on the basis of narrativity. Instead, these relationships and the movements issued from them point to the forces *affecting* those Figures. As such, the figural modalities found in both works operate as a means to depict complex and specific aspects entailed in the relationship between anthropogenic and beyond-human worlds without needing to depend upon narration.

Thus far, we've only begun gleaning the figural potential of *Sombre* and *Un Lac*. Were we to conduct a broader inquiry into their respective logics of sensation beyond the scope of our research, there would be lots of ground to cover. However, with the approach we've taken here, we not only sought to bring attention to the potential of the moving image in conveying sensation, but to assert the ways that such potential can figure significantly in thinking about our relationship to beyond-human entities through film. This is reminiscent of Grandrieux's intention statement with *Sombre* as he states:

Ce qui m'intéressait, c'était d'avoir une approche documentaire à travers des questions de dispositifs et non pas à travers des questions de sujet. Ne pas se dire: "On va faire un film sur

la banlieue, alors on va prendre des spécialistes de la banlieue”. Mais qu’il y a un dispositif capable, à un moment donné, de rendre compte de la réalité. (Goudet et al. 10)

Through the figural way, these films do not tell a tale of nature, but reassert its matter of fact in their pro-filmic reality. As Grandrieux would say, *Sombre* and *Un Lac* both document that reality. They account for it to the best of their formal capacity; at the same time eluding its conception and realization in subjectivity.

# Conclusion.

With this research, I analyzed two of Philippe Grandrieux's feature films, *Sombre* and *Un Lac*. My aim was to examine and evaluate the films' potential to account for the non-anthropogenic world beyond representation. Building upon Deleuzian thought frameworks, I've turned towards these films from the standpoint of form and have taken a deeper dive into navigating their articulations of plasticity. Thinking beyond the Anthropocene, I attempted to assess the merits of mobilizing epistemologies that refrain from conceiving non-human entities through the scope of subjectivity. Leaping into the domains of forces, rhythms, gestures and expression, the process I've laid throughout this research brought us to think these films beyond narrative engagement. Tangentially, it also brought us to mobilize considerations of these elements across disciplines standing beside the moving-image.

My first chapter on Geoartistry took a musical turn. My analyses of the territory in both films brought us to think them in relation to speed and rhythm; motifs and counterpoints. Exhuming the musical qualities of the territory through the conceptual scope of Deleuze's *ritournelle*, we came to understand how the territorial formations in both works were articulated as becomings. Through our findings we've assessed that the audio-visual effects deployed in both *Sombre* and *Un Lac* frame the territory as an act. Rather than being transcendently fixed by taxonomical bounds, its shape is informed by variations entailed by the expression of anthropogenic and non-anthropogenic entities at once. As such, this chapter brought us to venture from our initial concern of accounting for the non-anthropogenic world beyond subjectivity to examine the following hypothesis: can film account for the expression of this world we commonly refer to as

‘Nature’? Our analysis here shows that film not only has the potential to map out this expression, but also points to the degree of complexity with which it can account for our material relationship with the non-anthropogenic world as well.

With the second chapter, we shifted towards the painterly. To move beyond narrativity in accounting for the non-anthropogenic world, I’ve applied some of Deleuze’s formal consideration for painting to our analysis of both films. Rather than inscribing the formal gestures and articulation of Grandrieux’s cinema within a logic of illustration or abstraction, I’ve attempted here to understand the ways in which they pertain to the broad realm of sensation. More precisely, with this analysis I’ve come to show how certain sequences in both *Sombre* and *Un Lac* inform their own logics of sensation. Churned through a series of plastic deformations, the non-anthropogenic world depicted in both films renders the forces that affect it as they affect it. Through their figural consideration, both films articulate their potential to render the plasticity of the non-anthropogenic world through profilmic reality without relying upon illustration and narration.

With this research, I sought to inscribe my findings on *Sombre* and *Un Lac* within the research that has been and is currently being done within the field of film studies as it pertains to the Anthropocene. Throughout this analysis, I attempted to shape an account of the processes through which *Sombre* and *Un Lac* manage to frame and conceive the non-anthropogenic world. Tangentially, I carried on with this task attempting to consider and assess the complexity and nuances characterized by those processes. Nevertheless, I believe that there’s significant potential to expand upon the findings we’re currently presenting with this project. Namely, I

haven't touched upon the notions of dialogue and performances. Also, while I've tasked myself with conducting this research mobilizing epistemologies drawing from selected texts from Deleuze and Deleuzian scholars, I believe that there are many other works within Deleuze's oeuvre as well as across the thought tradition he inspired that could be used to revisit Grandrieux's film from the standpoint of sensation. Within the scope of Grandrieux's filmography, the director also produced a series of short gallery films, *Grenoble* (2006), *Met* (2006) and *L'Arrière-saison* (2005) that characterize a more explicit turn to nature. According to Gregg Hainge, not only do these films showcase varied imageries of nature, but they articulate potentially more intense formal manipulation than those we have described throughout our analysis. (Hainge 100) Analyzing these works as such, would entail mobilizing epistemologies that pertains to the mode of reception entailed by their gallery format. With this work, I've hoped not only to encourage further scholars to look into Grandrieux's works as a means to study the relationship in between his films and Deleuze's philosophy, but also for the potential they mobilize in thinking the cinema and moving images beyond the Anthropocene.

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