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Sofía Reyes
Alucinación
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Videotape Eyes

Un remolino mezcla
Los besos y la ausencia
Imágenes paganas
Se desnudan en sueños.

[A whirlwind blends
Kisses and absence
Pagan images
Undress in dreams.]

— Virus
Imágenes paganas
Vivo (1986)

As a device for representation in motion, film has always served as both a vehicle and a metaphor for modern transport. In *Weekend* (1967), for instance, Jean-Luc Godard marks out an itinerary for the decomposition of the bourgeoisie by staging a roadway odyssey riddled with accidents, corpses, and broken speeches. Decades later, David Cronenberg's *Crash* (1996) revisits the automobile collision as the core of an erotic experience that turns the impact into an interface between bodies and technology. Thirdly, in *Holy Motors* (2012) Leos Carax reinterprets the car as a roaming dressing room that holds and releases bursts of pure gesture, a form of acting deprived of any referent or origin. Lastly, Godfrey Reggio's *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982) inaugurates a cinema that does away with words, characters, and storyline. By splicing urban, industrial, and natural images, either sped-up or slowed-down, the film assembles a visual symphony about the imbalance of modern life.

These four films, although divergent in tone, context, and style, comprise a polyptych about the end of linear narrative, the decomposition of human identity, and the critique of spectacle as the dominant mode for the production of sense in late modernity; they are also useful sources for reflecting on two short films by Sofía Reyes Guevara, *Masses* and *Autotransfusión* [Self-Transfusion].

The End of the Bourgeois Road

In *Weekend*, Godard orchestrates a fierce satire of the French bourgeoisie in the form of a highway odyssey that gradually turns absurd and violent. Automobiles pile up in never-ending jams, corpses adorn the roadsides, and cinematic language shatters into fragments: the characters break the fourth wall, the dialogues are crammed with literary quotations, the montage unhinges. Here, the automobile is a symbol for both modern comfort and its structural violence. The road-trip allegorizes a social class speeding towards self-destruction, unable to read the signs of its own decadence. Time numbs down, space overflows, and—seemingly forward—motion proves to be terminal. In *Masses*, the camera's placement and the decision to shoot the south-to-north lane register the social and economic standing of the drivers. We catch sight of an occasional truck, but they are noticeably empty: their supplies have been unloaded somewhere in a city store and they are now

on their way out. The camera homes in on the car lane and Sofía's gaze tracks the manifold contortions performed by the drivers and their copilots stuck in traffic. Auto masses and human heaps: this equation yields nothing but a dense layer of smog, which amounts to over seventy percent of carbon dioxide emissions worldwide.

Vorsprung durch Technik

In *Crash*, Cronenberg transfers the car crash motif to an erotic and post-human dimension. Based on the eponymous novel by J. G. Ballard, the film's characters experience sexual pleasure through the collision of bodies and machines. The scars, prostheses, and wreckage are not symptoms of trauma but rather zones for swelling desire. In this universe, the automobile is no longer a tool for moving around: it is a fetishized extension of the body, a technology for the intensification of pleasure. As this mutation plays out, Cronenberg takes on the role of the cold documentarian: no longer a closed unit, the human body is now a surface pierced by technology. The car crash emerges as a new ritual that embeds the body in a symbolic order depleted of soul or sense and populated by interfaces alone. This is a good moment to refer to Sofía's photo series *Yo te hubiera querido hasta el fin* [I Would Have Loved You 'Til the End, 2019], which comprises eight identical copies of a bumper bash close-up. In her repetitiveness, Sofía echoes Vaughan, a character in *Crash* who is obsessively driven to re-experience the bountiful pleasure of auto collision.

Collapse of Identity

In *Holy Motors*, Carax casts a limousine as a travelling theater; its dweller, Monsieur Oscar, steps into and out of his mobile greenroom as he takes on an assortment of identities throughout the day. There is no storyline or character arc; the protagonist is in constant shift, playing the roles of a father, a murderer, an elderly woman in her death throes, an outlandish creature… he plays each of these parts with no context, motivation, or a visible audience. The limousine replaces the home, the dressing room, and the stage; rather than a path for self-discovery, this road-trip leads to self-dissolution. The actor no longer represents: his embodiments lack an origin and a fate. The spectacle has been devoured by experience. Carax presents us with the looped existence of a subject that is merely the residue of his roles, an image without a body, a performance without an audience. *Masses* works likewise, as the subtitles present us with conversations that may be unfolding in any (or none) of the automobiles that we see rolling by—imagined lives that exist only through montage.

Mobility and World Ruin

The literal sense of the Hopi word "koyaanisqatsi" is "life out of balance." In the film, city traffic, factories, skyscrapers, and alienated faces all flow into a landscape wherein time has been colonized by efficiency. Of course there are cars, their repetition and speed are ubiquitous, but they drive neither desire nor narrative: they simply join in on a soulless choreography. Unlike the other films, *Koyaanisqatsi* discards all human drama to present the world as a system moving too fast to understand itself. There are no outstanding characters, there are only surroundings; there is no tragedy or moral, only the relentless flow required to sustain the productive cycles of capitalism. In a way, we see the same thing in *Masses*, but now in slow motion: the stranded vehicles provide an establishing shot for mobility as alienation. We may even be watching the beginning—and the end—of a disenchanted road movie.

Many are more than willing to endure the martyrdom of commuting from downtown Bogotá to the city's peripheral suburbs, and to make the same drive back in reverse the next day, in the early morning, hitting and releasing the clutch for hours on end. Although Bogotá's road grid capacity is

already maxed out, the vehicle fleet grows by 20,000 per year. Sofía seems to suggest that there may be something *quasi-therapeutic* about spending so many hours inside a car: locked in their uncomfortable, warm cabins, drivers and passengers wonder how to desire someone, how to leave someone.

The Sound and the Fury

We don't see drivers or copilots handling digital devices in the films discussed above, but we certainly see it in *Masses*. With the arrival of entertainment screens—or even cell phones used to similar effect—the automobile has come to function as an information and entertainment hub for its provisional dwellers. If we reflect on urban space and mobility, we see the automobile playing multiple roles: it is a means of transport, but it can also be experienced as a transient dwelling. This is the kind of phenomenon that Marc Augé sought to capture through the concept of the *non-place*. Like the waiting room and the airport, an automobile can function as a transitional space that suspends the identity of a subject absorbed by the task of moving from one location to another. Unlike more conventional non-places, the automobile is a private space; a dimension of control and intimacy amidst currents of mobility. This double status—both a vehicle and a place—leads us to reconsider how we experience, produce, and narrate the territory. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) Michel de Certeau analyzed how, by moving about, we produce "rehearsed spaces" that differ from planned spaces. Although he was mostly interested in the practice of walking, his argument applies to the automobile: driving entails a particular experience of space, mediated by speed, the frame of the window, and our sense of physical disconnection from our surroundings. In the car, the city compresses into a personal narrative configured as a string of images, rhythms, and routes. Although he was not concerned directly with the automobile, Richard Sennet can be said to have developed another side of the same argument by examining how the city's physical layout and modern infrastructures condition forms of sociality. Read in this light, the automobile contributes to a shift towards the fragmentation and privatization of urban experience: the space wherein we move is a protected interval, isolated from social contact and the randomness of public space. The setting for *Masses* is Bogotá's distinctive rush hour traffic, specifically a spot close to the bifurcation of Carrera 30 into Autopista Norte and Carrera 19, where the city's "uptown" begins. Sofía scrutinizes the passengers' countenance—a bit like the character James Ballard in *Crash*, who peeps into highway traffic using a pair of binoculars—and uses the subtitles to interpolate verbal exchanges that read as though gleaned from a digital messaging platform. It is obvious by now that digital media have reconfigured our patterns of linguistic interaction. Succinct written messages have replaced the phone call, which is by now a nearly extinct practice. Ever-delayed replies generate intermittent, erratic exchanges, and the neglect of conversational thread-keeping has become the norm. The montage also reflects this fragmentation (or frustration); the sequences function as episodes that follow no linear order and the music alludes to the sounds of truck and bus air horns. This is reminiscent of Arseny Avraamov's *Symphony of Sirens* (1922), one of the most radical works of the post-civil war Soviet avant-garde. Conceived as an aural celebration of the first anniversary of the October Revolution, the work did not use a traditional orchestra; instead, Avraamov composed an urban sound mass out of factory sirens, ship horns, train whistles, cannons, machine guns, and workers' choirs, creating an encompassing soundscape that transformed the city itself into an instrument.

Eyes Without a Face

A large print bearing the image of two eyes serves as the backdrop for *Autotransfusión*. The piece is the kind of audio-visual collage for which Sofía is well known, an assemblage of sounds and *modern clips* collected (and fabricated) during her hours of digital anemia. Muscle cars skid and turn, exuding a toxic cloud: a mechanical rodeo cheered on by a crowd. Digital Asian females, voluptuous like chicken sausages. Plastic flowers puncturing an open sea. Moving heads—with a soul

of their own—spin their light beams over empty spaces. *The show must go on*.

The positioning of the screen might bring to mind a third eye, specifically the cinematic third eye once envisioned by Dziga Vertov. In Western esoteric traditions, this spot bears a lingering reminiscence of the pineal gland, the key of access to other dimensions of consciousness, holding the power to see beyond appearances, to conjoin reason and premonition, and to view the world with the certainty that each form bears a depth awaiting revelation. In Indian traditions, this is the pulsating site of the *ajna chakra*, the center of inner vision and mental lucidity. Shiva—one third of the trinity (Trimurti) that also includes Brahma (the creator) and Vishnu (the preserver)— brandishes it on his forehead as an eye of fire that destroys illusion or corruption to make room for regeneration and the eternal cycle of creation.

I close this brief text with a reference to the sculptural series *DAPHF* (2022—the sense of this acronym remains a secret), a set of ornamented walking sticks standing on rubber plunger cups. Sofía seems to give in to an animistic inclination to perceive these pieces as an army of tutelary spirits; we now find her working as a *bricoleuse*, with no predetermined plan or specialized resources, repurposing, combining, and adapting whatever is at hand to find new uses and meanings.

In his seminar on *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1964) Jacques Lacan argued that, beyond the reach of the gaze cast by a subject upon the world, something in every perceived object evades optical control: a dimension that returns our gaze and addresses us—a notion that he developed by introducing the concept of the *objet petit a* (the object as the cause of desire). Objects are never merely external: they bear an unconscious dimension that makes us feel uneasy, watched over or trapped by them. A frame, a reflection, an unexpected light can unleash the sense that we are not simply subjects looking out, that we are also being looked at from the field of the *other*. For Lacan, objects “look at us” inasmuch as they reveal our constitutive lack and desire. We learn from them that vision is not unilateral action, that it is traversed by the *other’s* gaze, embedded in worldly objects.

The sticks support your weight as you walk, and the amulets guard you as you wander. What do the plunger cups tell us? Perhaps they are ventouses that, through their function and materiality, carry us back to a past of colonial abuse—or its survival in a present of self-transfusion, in which we feed upon ourselves.

Nicolás Consuegra
(Translated by Tupac Cruz)