

MYTH-HERMENEUTICS OF HOLLYWOODIAN FILMS ACCORDING TO THE IMAGINARY OF GILBERT DURAND

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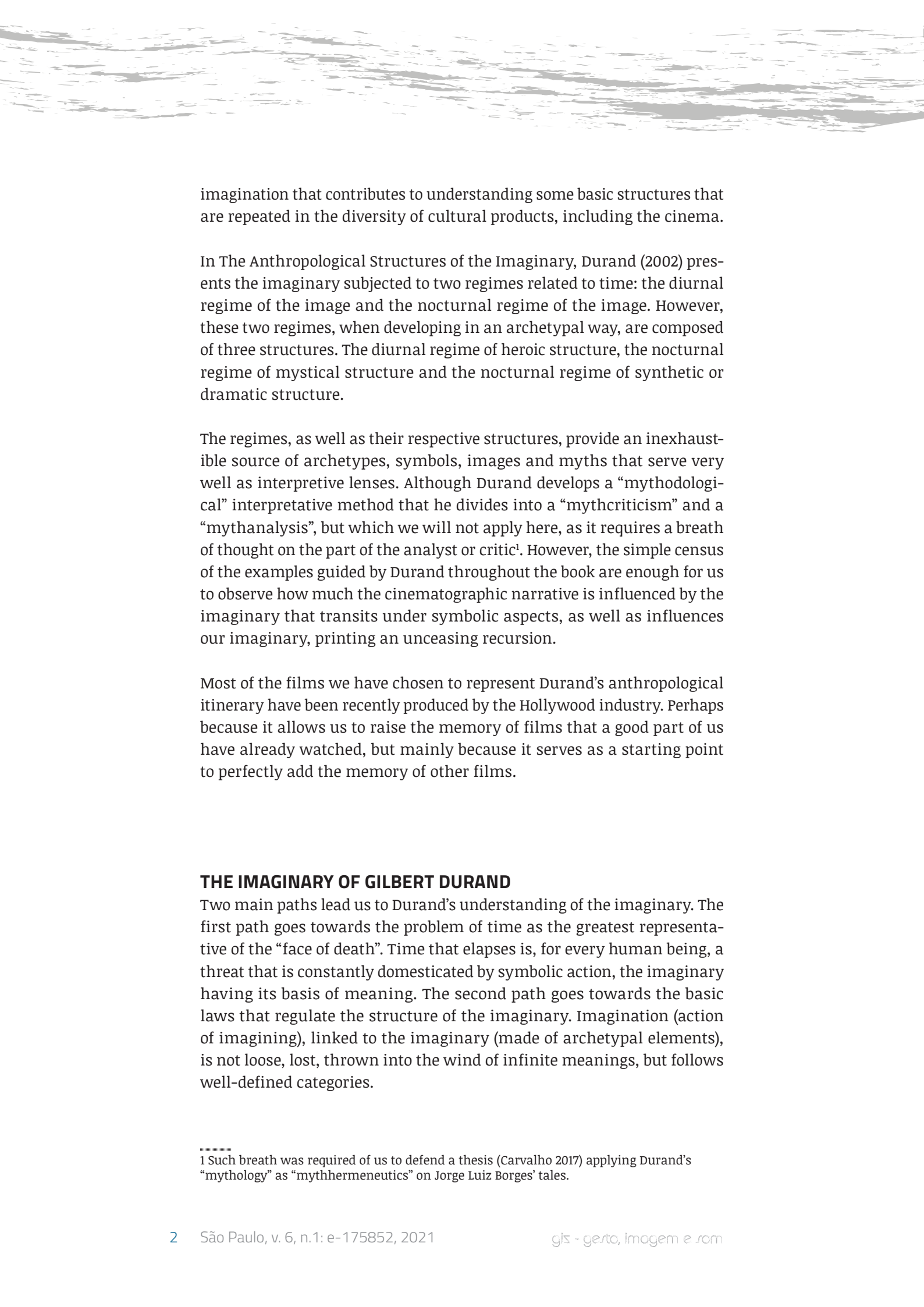
ABSTRACT

This text aims to present an anthropological interpretation of the imaginary of cinema, specifically in films mostly produced in Hollywood. To this end, we will apply a mythological hermeneutics developed by the anthropologist Gilbert Durand, which configures three archetypal imaginary structures that serve as a kind of guide. The itinerary must follow the imaginary regimes thought by Durand, which are the diurnal regime of heroic structure, the nocturnal regime of mystical structure and the nocturnal regime of synthetic or dramatic structure.

KEYWORDS
Cinema;
Anthropology of
the imaginary;
Myth-
hermeneutics;
Imaginary regimes;
Gilbert Durand.

INTRODUCTION

Cinema is one of the most current languages to fuel our imagination in the universe of the arts. If, on the one hand, it inspires and dynamizes imagery already explored in other arts, on the other hand, it uses an open discursive strategy for many possibilities of anthropological interpretation. For this purpose, we use very specific hermeneutics, called “myth-hermeneutics”. In particular, the mythology of Gilbert Durand brings to the horizon of interpretation the imaginary connected to the symbolic and archetypal aspect. In a sense, Durand created a “guide” of the anthropological



imagination that contributes to understanding some basic structures that are repeated in the diversity of cultural products, including the cinema.

In *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary*, Durand (2002) presents the imaginary subjected to two regimes related to time: the diurnal regime of the image and the nocturnal regime of the image. However, these two regimes, when developing in an archetypal way, are composed of three structures. The diurnal regime of heroic structure, the nocturnal regime of mystical structure and the nocturnal regime of synthetic or dramatic structure.

The regimes, as well as their respective structures, provide an inexhaustible source of archetypes, symbols, images and myths that serve very well as interpretive lenses. Although Durand develops a “mythodological” interpretative method that he divides into a “mythcriticism” and a “mythanalysis”, but which we will not apply here, as it requires a breath of thought on the part of the analyst or critic¹. However, the simple census of the examples guided by Durand throughout the book are enough for us to observe how much the cinematographic narrative is influenced by the imaginary that transits under symbolic aspects, as well as influences our imaginary, printing an unceasing recursion.

Most of the films we have chosen to represent Durand’s anthropological itinerary have been recently produced by the Hollywood industry. Perhaps because it allows us to raise the memory of films that a good part of us have already watched, but mainly because it serves as a starting point to perfectly add the memory of other films.

THE IMAGINARY OF GILBERT DURAND

Two main paths lead us to Durand’s understanding of the imaginary. The first path goes towards the problem of time as the greatest representative of the “face of death”. Time that elapses is, for every human being, a threat that is constantly domesticated by symbolic action, the imaginary having its basis of meaning. The second path goes towards the basic laws that regulate the structure of the imaginary. Imagination (action of imagining), linked to the imaginary (made of archetypal elements), is not loose, lost, thrown into the wind of infinite meanings, but follows well-defined categories.

¹ Such breath was required of us to defend a thesis (Carvalho 2017) applying Durand’s “mythology” as “mythhermeneutics” on Jorge Luiz Borges’ tales.

To follow the path of mortal time, Durand followed Heidegger's epistemological footprints. When Durand develops his theory about the power of the imaginary as an antidote against fatal destiny, in the face of mortal time, it is impossible to avoid the notions outlined by Heidegger in *Being and Time*. As the philosopher, Durand did not want to lose sight of the finitude of the human being in the face of time and implied "existential anguish" as a driver of meaning, as a kind of "engine" of anti-destination. The threat to the being requires sometimes a fight against time, or sometimes an escape from time. Be it combat or flight, the domestication of time by imagination works as a way to make sense of destiny. Imagination is, by the rules and regimes of the imaginary, the "standard" way that the human being "discovered" to play against the fatal destiny.

Durand called symbolic action, sometimes subjective, or sometimes objective, an "anthropological path": "the incessant exchange that exists at the level of the imaginary between subjective and assimilating drives and objective ultimatums that emanate from the cosmic and social milieu" (Durand 2002, 41). The imaginary is what provides the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, between the subject's assimilating reactions and the emanations of the objective environment². "The imaginary is this anthropological crossroad that allows one aspect of a given human science to be clarified by another aspect of another" (Durand 2002, 18).

The anthropological path does not happen by chance. Durand sought inspiration at the Eranos School³, which sees the need to recover the Gnostic-Hermetic tradition submerged in Western rationalization. The imagery, having an ambiguous character, totalizes the conception of truth: bipolarity is the hallmark of human representations.

For the valorization of the dimension of the imaginary as a mediation between subjectivity and objectivity in anthropological terms, Durand had as reference Henry Corbin, heir to Heidegger's hermeneutics and linked to Husserl's phenomenology.

Corbin applied hermeneutic and phenomenological principles to religious consciousness by studying the great texts of mystical and visionary experience of the Zoroastrian Persians and Muslim Shiites. He found that these traditions preserve the idea of an intelligible meta-historical world, made up of autonomous images that consciousness can experience. According

2 In addition to Bachelard, the notion of anthropological path is based on Bastide's conceptions of the relations between sociology and psychoanalysis.

3 The Eranos School was founded by Rudolf Otto and Karl Jung. In this school, developed in Ascona, Switzerland, from 1933 to 1988, issues related to comparative mythology, cultural anthropology and symbolic hermeneutics were discussed. Just to name a few, scholars such as Mircea Eliade, Joseph Campbell, James Hillman, G. Scholem, Jean Danielou and Henry Corbin participated.

to Corbin, the experiences are based on a hierarchy with three levels of reality: that of an intelligible world, of the divine One, that of a sensitive world, commanded by the body and an intermediate reality, through which the intelligible world manifests itself. Pure intelligence belongs to the intelligible world, to the sensible world only sensory perception, and to the intermediate world belongs the visionary imagination.

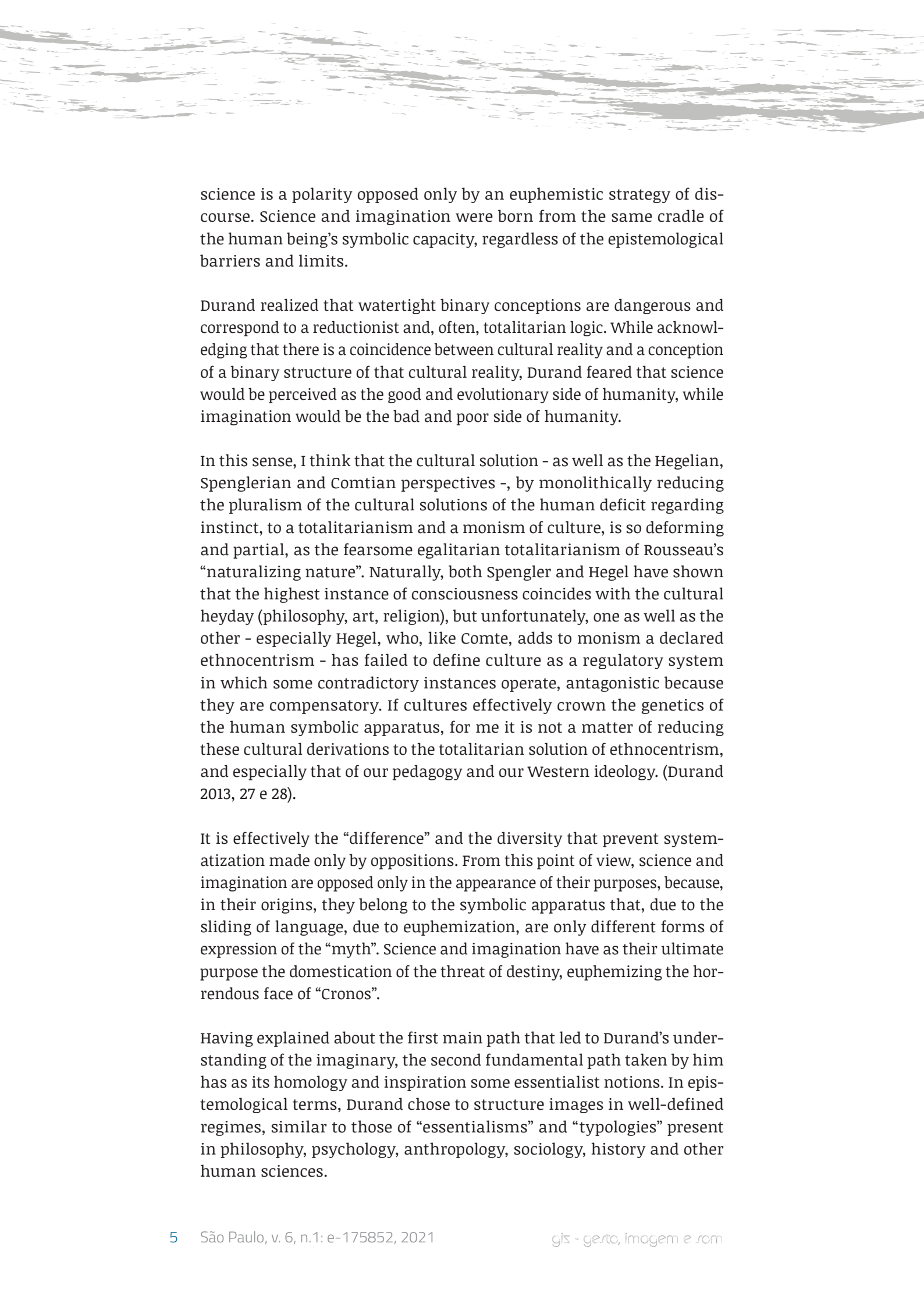
In the intermediate world, two types of images are produced: the images of the psychophysiological imagination and those of the creative imagination. The first is inseparable from our bodily condition, from sensory perceptions. The second is separate from the subject, autonomous, which allows offering pre-established representations to consciousness, far from any subjectivism. These are the images of the creative imagination that lead to the path of archetypes and are called “imaginal”.

These conceptions by Corbin are enough to realize that Durand has antecedents in the ideas he developed about the body being the headquarters of matrices of the imaginary, on the one hand, and archetypes, on the other. Durand's leap was to relate one to the other, that is, to link the dominant reflexes that are related to the body, to the schema-producing schemes of the archetypes. Here, in this universe, in this recursive dimension between body and archetype, Durand generated his foundations about the symbol.

Before Durand, Bachelard, on whom Durand also relied, perceived this ambiguity, this bipolarity of the nature of the discourse, governed by the imaginary. For the French epistemologist, the human psyche is oriented towards metaphorical representations organized in two poles: that of rationality, naturally opposed to the spontaneous course of images, and that of reverie, naturally assimilated by the spontaneous course of images. Thus, the imaginary can become effective through the negative path of science, which understands the image as an epistemological obstacle⁴, or through the path of poetic reverie.

Unlike his master Bachelard, however, Durand did not view science as the opposite polarity of the imagination. According to his intuitions,

4 Bachelard develops a “philosophy of no” in which he rejects the univocal notion of science by the principle of Aristotelian identity and by positivism. In this case, neither positivism nor negativism. The “no” designates the overcoming of the philosophy of science hijacked by axiomatic systems and ready for an opening of scientific thought. In addition, Bachelard, realizing that imagination and reverie create “epistemological obstacles”, that is, precede the creation of an empirical explanation, turns to investigations in the field of literature, especially poetry. Bachelard understands that before an empirical “a posteriori”, or even before a rational “a priori”, there is an imaginative desire that “dreams” the solution in the face of the obstacle that appears to the human spirit. For example, before the rationalization of the epistemological obstacle: “flying”, and its solution: “airplane”, it preceded an imaginative activity of “flight”, present in the daydreams of the human being in the history of literature, for example.



science is a polarity opposed only by an euphemistic strategy of discourse. Science and imagination were born from the same cradle of the human being's symbolic capacity, regardless of the epistemological barriers and limits.

Durand realized that watertight binary conceptions are dangerous and correspond to a reductionist and, often, totalitarian logic. While acknowledging that there is a coincidence between cultural reality and a conception of a binary structure of that cultural reality, Durand feared that science would be perceived as the good and evolutionary side of humanity, while imagination would be the bad and poor side of humanity.

In this sense, I think that the cultural solution - as well as the Hegelian, Spenglerian and Comtian perspectives -, by monolithically reducing the pluralism of the cultural solutions of the human deficit regarding instinct, to a totalitarianism and a monism of culture, is so deforming and partial, as the fearsome egalitarian totalitarianism of Rousseau's "naturalizing nature". Naturally, both Spengler and Hegel have shown that the highest instance of consciousness coincides with the cultural heyday (philosophy, art, religion), but unfortunately, one as well as the other - especially Hegel, who, like Comte, adds to monism a declared ethnocentrism - has failed to define culture as a regulatory system in which some contradictory instances operate, antagonistic because they are compensatory. If cultures effectively crown the genetics of the human symbolic apparatus, for me it is not a matter of reducing these cultural derivations to the totalitarian solution of ethnocentrism, and especially that of our pedagogy and our Western ideology. (Durand 2013, 27 e 28).

It is effectively the "difference" and the diversity that prevent systematization made only by oppositions. From this point of view, science and imagination are opposed only in the appearance of their purposes, because, in their origins, they belong to the symbolic apparatus that, due to the sliding of language, due to euphemization, are only different forms of expression of the "myth". Science and imagination have as their ultimate purpose the domestication of the threat of destiny, euphemizing the horrendous face of "Cronos".

Having explained about the first main path that led to Durand's understanding of the imaginary, the second fundamental path taken by him has as its homology and inspiration some essentialist notions. In epistemological terms, Durand chose to structure images in well-defined regimes, similar to those of "essentialisms" and "typologies" present in philosophy, psychology, anthropology, sociology, history and other human sciences.

Durand understood that the imagination, to express itself, to gain a “body”, is subject to a “transcendental fantastic”. At this point it is worth mentioning that the principles used by Durand regarding the symbolic that comes from the Neo-Kantian Cassirer. Principles that are very well elaborated in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.

Indeed, the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms is, according to the author's own comment, a phenomenology of knowledge, and is, by no means, intended to be a metaphysics of knowledge. The term knowledge is defined in the broad sense of human “apprehension” of “world”, never passive apprehension, always mediated by the spontaneity that shapes the human mind. In the broad sense used by Cassirer, the term knowledge does not apply only to scientific understanding and theoretical explanation, but refers to all spiritual activity in which “we build a ‘world’ in its characteristic configuration, in its order and in its’ being -so ‘...” Thus, the philosophy of symbolic forms “does not intend to establish, beforehand, a certain dogmatic theory of the essence of objects and their basic properties, but aims to apprehend and describe, on the contrary, through patient and critical work, the modes of objectification that characterize art, religion, science”, above all, however, language and myth. (Cassirer 2013, 12-13).

For Durand, the notion of “shaping mind”, inspired by Kantian philosophy, with a strong intensity in the idea of active imagination in Bachelard, will be a challenge of alignment between the phenomenology of knowledge and the symbolic.

In this way, Durand defines a first moment or starting point for symbolic action, which he called “schemes” (*schèmes*). At the starting or origin edge of the symbolic apparatus are the “schemes” and at the arrival or destination edge are the myths.

In this sense, the notion of schemes is very close to Freud's notion of “psychic apparatus” and to actuarial models⁵, such as Jung's.

Schemes are the referential capital of all possible gestures of the species *Homo sapiens*. This is what Bergson intended in the archaic presence of our *Homo faber*. But, by placing the scheme at the root of the symbolic figuration, I use the Jungian theory at the same time, which places in the last part a reserve of archetypes elaborated in a collective unconscious, and the reductions of the symbolic figure, both Freudian (reduction to the *symptom* from a single libido obsessed by the orifice, digestive and genital) as Lacanian (reduction of this pre-linguistic language to the syntax and

5 Actuarial models can be defined as archetypal matrices of a culture, generally related to verbal schemes of a culture.

word games of a natural language). With Mauss, I firmly think that the first “language” is “verb”, it is bodily expression. And I don’t ask myself questions like Faust, who was supposed to read Derrida to find out if the verb was the action of what was “in the beginning”. Because the verb is a specific action, and not only under the exclusive caption of the verbs to *cover*, *accumulate*, *fill*, *swallow* etc., but also in the very important field of motricity and limbs, postural addressing, and, first of all, the hand. (Durand 2013, 19-20).

In the search for dominant gestures present in the body that serve as matrixes for the archetypal schemes or nuclei, Durand relates his anthropology to the reflexology of the Leningrad School. This school established the conception of dominant gestures or reflexes, with anatomophysiological and ethological studies, more specifically through the observations of Betcherev, its research base. Inspired by reflexology, Durant proposes three dominant gestures: postural, digestive and copulative. These three dominant reflexes will form the matrices in which human representations naturally converge and integrate.

Resuming the conception of an anthropological path, the bridge that connects the subject to the world and the world to the subject in this path is made by schemes, archetypes and symbols. The scheme (not a sketch, but an interior and dynamic movement), means the junction between dominant sensory-motricity gestures and their respective representations.

In the search for verticalization, after a long time in the horizontal, a baby, for example, experiences the repetition and standardization that the body and brain offer in the construction of the scheme of rise and fall, rise and fall. These schemes, in turn, coupled with symbols, undergo an archetypal valuation, which is characteristic of our anthropological condition, of *Homo sapiens*.

Sapiens is inseparably a living being, if not cultured, at least immersed in a culture. The human animal, with its “big brain”, is, as it were, functionally cultivable. It is what radically differentiates the human child or the mentally ill from the monkey or the dog: society - and its “conscience” which is culture - is for man a symbolic form doubly demanded by the social characteristics of the human animal, so devoid of survival instincts, and the qualities of reflexive mediatization of their “big brain”. (Durand 2013, 26).

Thus, Durand proposes that the human being is an unfinished being and capable of being developed, “cultivated”, educated. Despite a “big brain”, the brain is immature and incomplete and, added to a body equipped only with basic survival devices, it remains for the human to symbolize.

In a kind of “human neoteny”, that is, unfinished, Durand puts us in a dead end and makes us claim that the power to symbolize works as an evolutionary strategy for the maintenance of the species that, by “coincidence”, is called as *sapiens*.

Archetypes are mediators between the schemes and the images perceived in the environment. The dominant gestures, manifested in schemes and in contact with the environment, originate archetypes. Constituting the bridge between the imaginary and rational processes, they prove to be universal and, therefore, adequate to the scheme. “For example, the ascension schemes correspond to the archetypes of ‘summit’, ‘sky’, ‘tower’, ‘hero’ [...]” (Turchi 2003, 28).

While archetypes are universal, symbols are multipurpose. Archetypes have a constant, but symbols, manifestations of these archetypes in culture, are re-signified according to the social environment. For example, “the ascension scheme and the archetype of the sky remain immutable, however, the symbol that marks them out changes from a ladder to a flying arrow, a supersonic plane or a jumping champion” (Turchi 2003, 28).

Let us not lose the sequence: dominant or dominant reflex gestures originate schemes, which have an archetypal nature. From that point, Durand moves on to symbols. In order, the sequence is: dominant gestures → schemes → archetypes → symbols. Symbols converge to archetypes; archetypes converge to schemes and schemes converge to dominant gestures.

To reach this structural configuration, Durand used a convergence method that shows an isomorphism of converging symbols. The convergence process is done by homology and not by analogy, by the semantics of the symbols and not by the syntax. This means that symbols follow their archetypal nature, preventing them from being lost and scattered in their cultural and social functions and discourses etc., or, on the contrary, from being trapped in a rigid structure and bearing sedimented meanings.

In addition to Jung’s notion of archetype, Durand was faithful to his preceptor Gaston Bachelard, to whom he attributed the pioneering spirit of designing an archetypal structure made up of symbols or four elements of the “material imagination” (earth, water, air and fire). Bachelard called it material imagination because our daydreams, in the act of active imagination, follow rules and laws similar to those that matter follows by the laws of science, such as Physics. Bachelard himself (1990, 14) states that “we are drawn to the imaginary search for fundamental matters, for imaginary elements, which have idealistic laws as safe as experimental laws”.

Durand, for his part, understands that the imagination follows rules and laws that put the imagination in a structure of the imaginary. He unveiled this by linking images to dominant gestures, schemes, archetypes and symbols.

There is also a bipolarity in Bachelard's theory of material imagination, a "oneiric" ambivalence. The four elements have a semantic pregnancy related on the one hand to the dreams of the will and on the other hand to the dreams of rest⁶. As Bachelard, Durand also understands that the structure of the imaginary is ambivalent and demonstrates this by relating, both the dominant postural gesture, of the diurnal regime, and the dominant digestive and copulative gesture, of the nocturnal regime⁷.

In proposing the basic rules and ambivalence that guide the imaginary, Durand formulated his general theory of the imaginary that he called "figurative structuralism", consistently exposed in his work *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary*.

However, the anthropologist's structuralism does not follow traditional patterns. In fact, "Durand tries to reconcile the dispute between Lévi-Strauss's formal structuralism and Ricoeur's existentializing and historicizing hermeneutics, rejecting neither structural synchronicity nor hermeneutical understanding (*gnosis*)" (Turchi 2003, 25).

To put it another way, Durand understood that the structure must be a dynamic, intuitive and organizing space, and not as a static and emptied form of meaning. Durand, for example, sees that the German term for symbol (*Sinbild*) is the best term to define the balance between the polarities of the imagination.

Including in its etymological composition the sense (*Sinn*), an integral element of the recognizing and formative consciousness, and the image (*Bild*), the creator's substantial raw material, located in the collective unconscious, the symbol has a transcendent function and is the basic formula of the individuation process. (Turchi 2003, 25).

In short, we can recognize two antagonistic regimes marked by time: diurnal and nocturnal. Related to body rhythm and archetypal tendencies, human beings represent the world and configure the historical context.

⁶ Bachelard develops these ideas in works such as *Earth and Reveries of Repose: An Essay on Images of Interiority* and *Earth and Reveries of Will: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*.

⁷ Durand is based on the works of Georges Dumézil and André Piganiol to classify the images in a bipartition: the diurnal and the nocturnal regime.

This archetypal tendency is specified in the *Sinn-bilden* of an era manifesting itself through the language of art, scientific systems or religion.

Durand's fantastic is nothing more than the anthropological "trajectory"⁸ that begins in the body and transcends symbolic schemes, in a structure that narrates through the semantics of myth. In the same tone proposed by Novalis, Durand pursued a "physiology" of the imagination, as if the imagination were an apparatus intrinsic to the human being. The "function of the imagination is motivated not by things, but by a way of carrying things universally as a second sense, as a sense that would be the most universally shared thing in the world" (Durand 2002, 378).


This way of carrying universally, as if they were "categorical imperatives" of the imagination, therefore "structurable", is revealed in the world and in its cultural manifestations by a certain "pedagogical" or historical pressure. This "pressure" functions as an eon (*aion*)⁹, as if it were a mentality, similar to Jung's archetypal images or elements, however, imprinting an imaginary force in history.

In fact, one can think, with Jung, that a socio-historical typicality will replace psychological atypicality and edit the preponderance of this or that image regime. However, it is necessary to explain well what we mean by historical pressure: it is only the pressure that occurs in the ideologies of an instant of a civilization, and to mean that pressure we prefer to call it "pedagogy" more than history, because this last term brings confusion, in the mentality of the last two centuries, precisely with a messianic and progressive myth. (Durand 2002, 384).

In this way, it would be possible to match works of art, such as cinema, with the psychosocial motivations of an era. On the other hand, the pedagogical pressure of an era can frustrate the emergence of a contrary pressure. A dominant imaginary regime would exercise a negative pedagogy, that is, it would use methods of repressing an opposite regime. That is how an imaginary regime remains and creates its survival mechanisms, until the opposite regime, little by little, gains its space and equally imposes itself.

This is what would explain the diastoles and systoles in the history of the imaginary as Guy Michaud shows them through the history of French

8 Durand uses this term sometimes to represent the anthropological path that originates in the body (dominant reflexes) and ends at the symbol. The concept behind the word "trajectory" differs from "path". While a path presupposes a starting point and an ending point, "trajectory" is recursive, feeds back and, therefore, is not linear, it is cyclical.
9 "Era" or "life force".



literature. A “journey” of imaginary becoming would be about two generations of 36 years each, one diurnal, “idealistic”, the other nocturnal, “realistic”, noted for the more frequent use in both and the other reciprocal case of the “theme of the night” and the “noon theme”. (Durand 2002, 386).

As Durand uses a pedagogical vocabulary, that is, which allows us to deduce that a regime “educates”, cultivates souls and minds, it is not absurd to understand that:

[...] every culture instilled by education is a set of fantastic structures. The myth, writes Gusdorf, “is the conservatory of fundamental values”. The practice is initially taught in an extreme theoretical way: in the form of apologists, fables, examples, select places in literature, in the museum, in archeology or in the lives of illustrious men. And the games are nothing more than a first rehearsal of myths, legends and tales. (Durand 2002, 397).

Bearing this in mind, Durand imposes himself the task of elaborating a methodological tool that can read or carry out hermeneutics supported by the imagination, the symbol and the myth, a “mythhermeneutics” or a “mythodology”.

First of all, it would be a question of rehabilitating the study of rhetoric, an indispensable compromise for full access to the imaginary, and then trying to start literary and artistic studies from historicizing and archaeological monotony, in order to replace the work of art in its convenient anthropological place in the museum of cultures and which is the hormone and support of human hope. (Durand 2002, 431).

Therefore, Durand’s general archetypology, based on a fantastic transcendental of symbolic and mythic nature, structured in an anthropology of the imaginary, allowed the development of a loyal critique of the myth.

CINEMA UNDER THE DAY REGIME OF THE HEROIC STRUCTURE IMAGE

Faced with the faces of death and its characteristics of temporality and destiny, the diurnal regime assumes verbal schemes of distinction, that is, narratives of denial of time and darkness. With a dayiretic attitude (towards the daylight), it projects itself upwards and beyond, in the timeless. The negative instance, that is, the anguish of death, and which obviously must be rejected, is represented by teriomorphic symbols (animals), nictomorphic symbols (darkness) and catamorphs (fall and abyss).

It is not by chance that the heroic structure is very well represented by the “hero’s journey”, so explored by literature or cinema. The hero or the king is dressed in light and, wielding his sword, knows no other way to overcome the threat of death than through combat. Death threat often embodied by symbols at the same time teriomorphic, nichtomorphic and catamorphic, such as a dragon, a vampire, or any model of a devouring monster.

Durand realized that the teriomorphic scheme “slips” into the symbolism of the bite, of the devouring monster. This, can be represented by any number of animals and beings, a complete bestiary inserted in the dynamics of the devouring threat, of death: bogeyman, ogre, wolf, lion, dragon, vampire, or even villains who, in some way, represent the threat of death.

The nictomorphic symbols have a negative isomorphism of the most original psychological nature. The darkness of the night is one of the first symbols of time. “The night gathers in its malevolent substance all the preceding negative valuations” (Durand 2002, 92), which leads us to understand why so many villains and enemies of heroes in theaters have their origins in darkness, in the dimension of darkness. From current villains like Darth Vader from the *Star Wars* film series and Lord Voldemort in the *Harry Potter* film series, to “villains” or older nictomorphic beings like the Werewolf. The latter became a film as *An American Werewolf in London* (1981); *The Howling* (1981); *Silver Bullet* (1985); *Teen Wolf* (1985); *Wolf* (1994); *Underworld* (2003), which puts us in the middle of a war between lycans (werewolves) and vampires; *The Wolfman* (2010). Also, vampires like the famous Count Dracula in *Nosferatu* (1922); *Dracula* (1931); *Dracula* (1979); *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992); *Dracula Untold* (2014); the amusing films about Count Dracula from Hammer Film Productions made between 1958 and 1974, with Christopher Lee as the protagonist. The Mummy in films like *The Mummy* (1932); *The Mummy’s Hand* (1940); the trilogy *The Mummy’s Tomb* (1942), *The Mummy’s Ghost* (1944), *The Mummy’s Curse* (1944); the most current trilogy in *The Mummy* (1999), *The Mummy Returns* (2001), *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor* (2008). These three beings, the werewolf, Dracula and the Mummy, along with Frankenstein’s monster and the Invisible Man, have their rights held to the cinema by Universal Pictures, which created a label called “Dark Universe”.

The catamorphic symbols are united by the dynamics of the fall and the downward movement. Therefore, symbols related to vertigo (abyss, well, depths, precipice, etc.), have their place in the imaginary that preserves the negative aspects of death. The fall, in the sense of original sin, produces notions that permeate both the religious and the existential horizon: the fall also serves to mean sin as well as defeat. Depression is contrary to ascension, conquest or victory.

Well, it is not by chance that catamorphia is a characteristic that adheres very well to the psychology of beings of darkness and villains. We can cite any number of characters who justify their criminal actions by some catamorphic psychopathology, related to some moral or existential fall. This is the case with psychopathic characters such as the Joker, who appears in films like *Joker* (2019), or in the Batman trilogy as Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight*. Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991); the Green Goblin in *Spider-Man* (2002), or linked to the demonic aspect as Louis Cypher from the film *Angel Heart* (1987) and Sauron from the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001, 2002, 2003).

It is not yet possible to state categorically, even because we lack research and systematization on the prevalence of the imaginary regimes defined by Durand applied in cinematography. However, thinking about the cinematography of an industrial nature, mainly that one produced in Hollywood, it is possible to observe a quite large number of films that use the heroic structure of the image. Suffice it to mention that a good slice of films currently produced focuses on productions linked to the comic books of heroes from Marvel and DC Comics. Almost all the heroes, obviously, follow the “primer” of the heroic structure of the image, that is, combat and denial of death.

Several heroes explored in cinematography range from the “classic” characteristics of a primordial hero, who basically uses strength and weapon (Conan, Superman, Thor, Iron Man, Hulk) to more complex heroes who use other strategies (Batman, Ghost Rider, Hellboy, Spawn). The latter are not even heroes of the diurnal regime, they are heroes of the nocturnal regime, which we will explore later, and who have heroism with a mystical tendency. In any case, even with heroes related to a mystical regime, the narrative of the films is always based on the same scheme of combat, victory and “apocatastasis”, that is, the happy restoration of everything in the end.

Thus, diurnal imagination adopts a heroic attitude that reinforces the dark and evil aspect of “Kronos”. In an antithesis of death, he places the figure of the hero with his weapons, which usually ends with an ascetic and luminous teleology (the hero overcomes death, resurfaces and ascends to the luminous sky).

Since the diurnal regime is linked to the figure of the hero and the technology of weapons, ascension symbols will be of paramount importance in representing the post-combat effect. The heroic attitude, which knows no escape, only combat in the face of the threat of death, naturally pursues discourse schemes anchored in the rise and never in the fall. Defeat or failure does not fit in heroic language. It is in the victorious combat that the heroic attitude, of diurnal regime, unfolds in the representations of success, conquest and triumph.

Furthermore, the idea of the Promethean fire linked to technology and its consequences in modern conflicts is accentuated, reason which led Durand (2013) to interpret Prometheus as a myth that represents modernity. Modern science and technology, invariably, are anchored to the diurnal regime of heroic structure.

Cinema and literature approached the updating of the Promethean myth in different ways. In the 19th century, with the dazzle that technology provided, creatures that were victims of science were elaborated, such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, or Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. *Frankenstein* became a film in 1931 and 1994, and as *Victor Frankenstein* in 2011. *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in 1908, 1912, 1913, 1920, 1931, 1941, 2008. With the name *The Two Faces of Dr. Jekyll* in 1960; *I, Monster* in 1971; *Jekyll and Hyde* in 1990. It even yielded some comedies like *The Nutty Professor* (1963, 1996).

Likewise, in the Promethean trail we have names like H. G. Wells and Isaac Asimov in science fiction. Wells' books that became films: *The Time Machine* (1960 and 2002); *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1996); *The Invisible Man* (1933, 2020); *The War of the Worlds* (1953, 2005). Asimov's books were also filmed: *Bicentennial Man* (1999); *I, Robot* (2004). By the same author, the famous *Foundation Trilogy*, will soon become a series on Apple TV.

Philip K. Dick is the name of current science fiction, which was also used by the cinema. Imaginator of a dystopian future, where science and technology are protagonists, he created the tale that gave rise to the film *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), as well as *Minority Report* (2002) and *Total Recall* (1990 and 2012).

The Promethean risks of technology have been addressed by countless films, such as in *The Matrix* trilogy (1999 and 2003); in *The Terminator* franchise (1984, 1991, 2003, 2009, 2015 and 2019), in Ridley Scott's film, *Prometheus* (2012), who addressed the questioning of creatures to their creators in a very direct way.

Rise and ascent to the hero's sky provides the imagery connected to the light. Because of the light, we have dayiretic symbols, that is, linked to the day. That is why the heroic figure has its rise against darkness or against the abyss. The solar hero uses his "bladed weapons", like the gladius, which, in its phallic action, reinforcing an obvious sexual allusion, gives a feeling of power, of dominance. It is what we see in cinema with the exploration of Arthurian legends and its unfolding in the heroic action of the male who, under the culture of patriarchy, dominates the attitudes of the prince charming, liberator of the kingdom and the virgin, even when ironic in an animation like *Shrek* (2001).

So it is with films that highlight a society of men like most military cinematographies, or the circles of the sages as *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (2015) and *Kingsman: The Secret Service* (2015).

Rarely does Durand cite the heroic structure directly related to the woman or the feminine, except to enhance the masculine aspect. However, the necessary update shows us that the diurnal regime of heroic structure can also be explored in the female dimension in cinema, both in the “traditional” heroic figures of use of force, power and weapons such as *Wonder Woman* (2017) and *Captain Marvel* (2019), as well as in complex heroic figures like Hermione Granger from the *Harry Potter* films, Princess Leia from the original *Star Wars* trilogy and Lieutenant Ellen Ripley from the *Alien* franchise (1979).

The diurnal regime, in a way, prepares the nocturnal regime (mystical structure), as this is at the same time the opposition of the diurnal regime and its symbols, and its adaptation (synthetic structure).

THE NOCTURNAL REGIME OF THE IMAGE OF MYSTIC STRUCTURE

The nocturnal regime of image transmutes the negative aspect of death, capturing the vital and beneficial forces of becoming. In an attitude of assimilation, it converts death and darkness into acceptable images and symbols. Thus, the nocturnal regime is divided into a mystical structure, which converts and euphemizes death, and a synthetic structure, which reconciles the desire to become with the eternal return.

In the mystical structure, the ascent and the light become descent and darkness to penetrate the depths. In a taste for secret intimacy, it seeks the cavity, the return to the mother’s breast and becomes a symbol of primordial rest. If in the diurnal regime the threat of death is denied and combated, in the nocturnal regime the threat of death is assimilated and mitigated. The horrible face of Kronos, the attack of the devouring monster, the dominion of darkness and the fall into the abyss are euphemized. Time is dramatized, as in passage rituals and fertility services, marked by astrobiological calendars; the monster is domesticated and sometimes gains a less threatening or controlled profile; darkness becomes a resting place for death and a space for mystical actions; the abyss becomes a desire for the secret intimacy of cozy havens, such as the tomb or the chthonic “houses”.

While the heroic structure is based on combat, the mystical structure is based on refuge. By avoiding combat as much as possible, the mystical

dimension makes use of other strategies and “technologies” to deal with the threat, such as the perspicacity of anti-heroes, the pacification of the refuge (house, castle, cave, lair), magic or the miracle”. In fact, many narratives make use of an ancient artifice typical of the mystical structure, which is the miraculous, magical solution of a *deus ex machina*.

The nocturnal regime imposes the symbols of the inversion of the symbols of ascension and light of the diurnal regime. It will give preference to the techniques of descent and penetration to a center, as in the technologies of excavation and, contrary to celestial gods and sovereigns, it will follow clues left by the fertility goddesses and by matriarchal and feminoid schemes¹⁰.

Just as the hero needed his protective weapons, his shields and helmets, the descent also needs protection, whether from the armor of an aqualung, the stomach of a fish or a whale. At the heart of protective intimacy, such as the uterus or the mother's cervix, the fall is not to be confused with the rapid descent to death, but is transmuted into the typical descent of the gestures of swallowing and digestive activity. “The imaginary return is always a ‘ticket’ more or less cenesthetic and visceral” (Durand 2002, 201).

The “Jonas complex” (Durand 2002, 202), for example, is disseminated not only by the myth of the prophet swallowed by the fish, traveling in protective entrails, but by the Christ in the sepulcher, traveling in the entrails of death and hell, as well as by the Trojan Horse, as well as by giant swallowers, or, homologously, to the “soul egg”.

Swallowing giants are beings exploited in countless films, as in the film *Ulysses* (1954), in which we see a cyclops devouring and swallowing humans; in *Jack the Giant Slayer* (2013); in the *Harry Potter* film series with a Basilisk and a Mountain Troll; in movies about dragons. Regarding the “soul egg”, we must mention again the film *Angel Heart*, from 1987, by Alan Parker, which is a reinterpretation of “Faust”. In a curious scene, it shows the character Louis Cyphre (Lucifer) charging the protagonist Harold Angel for the payment of his soul, while devouring a boiled egg.

In the night regime, the euphemistic strategy allows a double that approaches the threat to the threatened as a solution to the conflict: the thief is stolen, the deceiver is deceived, the devouring monster is devoured. In a kind of paradox, ethical acumen, trickery and the use of symbols of death against death itself are preferred. It is not by chance that some “anti-heroes”, which we prefer to call “mystical heroes”, use techniques

¹⁰ We avoid the word “feminine” or “feminist” because of the limited scope of terms for Durand's use in his text. Although the author uses “femininity”, many examples are of an androgynous and hermaphroditic nature such as Hermes and “male-female” gods.

and strategies based on intelligence, on cleverness, with the use of magic, “cheating”, enchantments, rather than typically heroic combat weapons. We can mention some, which even became films such as *Constantine* (2005), *Hellboy* (2004, 2008 and 2019) and *Spawn* (1997).

The double is isomorphic with the idea of refolding: the fish swallows another fish, which in turn is swallowed by another, so successively and indefinitely. The maze is made up of a corridor that doubles in others and this in other bifurcations. A vestibule opens into a gallery, identical to the first and all other galleries. Which leads us to remember the film *Inception* (2010), and the film *Doctor Strange* (2016), which “play” with this idea of unfolding and refolding. In the first film, these developments take place in a dream world and in the second film in a mystical world. The possibility of choosing other outcomes and paths in a narrative, as if it were “unfoldable”, is noted in several cinematographic works such as *Being John Malkovich* (1999), *Big Fish* (2003) and *Stranger than Fiction* (2006).

The double and the refolding lead us to the mirror, a simulacrum that dominates literature and Western cinema in works of horror and fantasy like *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (2016), *Us* (2019), or the unpretentious *Mirrors* (2008). As well as miniaturization, which reveals the possibility of fitting the small into the big: mirror games, Easter eggs.

Miniaturization fantasies will haunt scientists in their microscopic models in biology, chemistry or physics. Perhaps the most popular film with this idea is *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* (1989), followed by *Ant-Man* (2015) and *Innerspace* (1987).

Miniaturization takes us to the processes of “gulliverization”, that is, the intrinsic relationship between gigantism and smallness, between the very big and “small thumbs”, or, if we want, in the miniaturization of Alice in Wonderland. “Gulliverization” inhabits the fantasy world of dwarves, fairies and goblins and creates the dimension of the little one as a kind of secret universe, far from the eyes of the combatant hero of the diurnal regime.

Swallowing, miniaturization, “gulliverization” and refolding establish fantasies of the universe within the other, such as the “universe within the shell of us”, or the “mind-drawer”, as illustrated in the film *Being John Malkovich*, or the “universes- drawers” cabinet that appears in the film *Men in Black 2* (2002).

In the nocturnal regime, we observe all the richness of precious stones. “The fantasies of the night descent naturally imply the colorful imagery of paints (teintures). Coloring, as Bachelard notes about alchemy, is an

intimate, substantial quality” (Durand 2002, 221). It is in the transmutation by fire, ancient alchemy, that food gains colors and textures, it is in the cauldron of vegetable mixtures that the mystique of old healers and magicians of vitality works. One of the reasons why in so many films that focus on food, colors and passions are exalted as symbols of vitality: *The Mistress of Spices* (2005), *Babette’s Feast* (1987), or the excellent Brazilian film *Estômago: A Gastronomic Story* (2007), or the famous *Like Water for Chocolate* (1992) and *Ratatouille* (2007).

But also the magic of healers is manifested in characters from cinematographic fiction such as Severus Snape from the *Harry Potter* film series or in witches’ potions, or even in the illusory eating set up by the witch of “Hansel und Gretel”, so often filmed. The most current example is *Gretel & Hansel* (2020), in which the witch Holda does not let the children go because she keeps them full with her colorful banquets.

In the diurnal regime, water determined the symbols of purification, but in the nocturnal regime, water is the vehicle for paints and colors. In Jungian doctrine, in the unconscious, where the soul lives (anima / animus), the primordial water is confused with the mercury of alchemists, often represented by old Hermes. Old Hermes who can be seen as a wise old man, androgynous or not, like Dumbledore, wizard in the *Harry Potter* film series, wizard Gandalf from the *Lord of the Rings* films and Master Yoda from the *Star Wars* films.

From pagans to Christians, religions have known how to take advantage of the figure of the “primeval mother”, the “madonna”. Morgana is linked to the water element, just as Aphrodite is “born from the sea”. The “Virgin Mother” has an evident union with the Great lunar and marine Goddess. In fact, Durand informs us that in liturgy, Mary is often called “spiritual moon”, “star of the sea” (*Stella maris*), “queen of the ocean”. The symbolic of the mother linked to the symbolic of the waters, due to isomorphism, slips into the notion of protection of sailors against the deadly arms and hair of the sea. If, on the one hand, the Melusian mothers, with their terrible hair, want to make men succumb to their maternal charms at the bottom of the waters, by euphemisation, they can also become protective mothers of drowning, of the disappearance among ocean waters.

Films that, in a certain way, approached this notion of water as a maternal, poetic or gestational dimension of life, can be seen in *Lady in the Water* (2006), *The Little Mermaid* (2018), *Aquaman* (2018), *Splash* (1984).

Some cultures maintain the habit of laying the baby down on the ground as a “telluric cradle” practice. Abandoned, but welcomed by the earth, a primordial element, they are now born under the auspices of heroic


destiny. A curious destination, because, on the one hand, his life will be overdetermined by the heroic actions of the diurnal regime, his birth was due to the nocturnal initiation of the “first-mother matter”. So, it is with the popular hero Superman, raised by an earthly mother after “abandonment”, or with the Christ born of the mythical virgin and welcomed by the tomb. Or even when we observe “pure” models of heroes who choose to “visit” their ancestors in the refuge of the “land of the dead” in a moment of deep reflection and decision, in films such as *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017), *Black Panther* (2018), *Superman* (1978), as in the most current *Man of Steel* (2013). In all of them the element of reflective refuge appears before the final battle.

In many initiation rituals, the chrysalis precedes the flight phase, or mummification preserves the future destination. In Candomblé, the starting point is the “belly” of the land, a place of death and rebirth. “There is a deep claustrophobia at the root of all the desire to preserve the corpse” (Durand 2002, 238). For Bachelard, all “insectoid” images suggest the safety of a closed being; carries his own grave. “Sleeping beauty” gathers folkloric images of rest and intimacy from popular tales, such as those collected by the brothers Grimm and reveals the character locked up in the castle chamber, awaiting her nuptial intimacy.

In fact, Bachelard proposes the imagination of the “universal house”, or that house where the ultimate meaning of life is found. For Eliade, the house connects earth and heavens, a center (*axis mundi*) of sacred source. This is what we see in the film *The Fountain* (2006), which explores the idea of an *axis mundi* that connects the protagonist to heaven and earth.

Better expression is the “favorite song”, which mimics the microcosm of the ancestors of the caves, as we observed in the film, in fact a cartoon feature film, *The Croods* (2013). In this cartoon, we see a clear opposition between the forces of the diurnal regime and the forces of the nocturnal regime. The diurnal regime appears notably in the protagonist’s ascension symbols, who climbs the rocks to see the last rays of sun, and in the day-iretic symbols of light against the dangers and threats of darkness, which allows the prehistoric family to travel, hunt and fight for life. The night regime, on the other hand, focuses on protecting the family under a cave, a place of rest, security and the development of art and mythic narrative.

Another good example in cinema that deals with the threat of death through escape to a safe haven is the film *War of the Worlds* (2005), directed by Spielberg. The story shows a father who tries to protect his children from the attack of aliens by avoiding to the maximum the combat and preferring to escape, unlike the adolescent son, who prefers to fight the threat by adapting perfectly to the heroic structure.



But, the refuge does not have to be enclosed by walls and ceilings. In addition to the labyrinth, we observe the mandala pattern in closed circles for protective purposes. This is the case with images created by fiction in enchantments and spells to keep demons and entities outside. That is why several horror films and series repeat the act of protection by drawing a circle, a star or a line with chalk or coarse salt to delimit a threshold between the space of protection and the demonic or ghostly threat. Likewise, the secret garden or the “center” garden of the kingdom follows the symbolism of the sacred circle, sometimes containing a sacred or life tree. This is what we see, for example, in the film *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, where a citadel called “Minas Tirith”, with a spiral design, has in its “mandalic” center a garden containing a tree of life.

In fact, the address is not necessarily attached to a fixed place. The abode on water is taken up by mythical images in ancient religions as well as in literature and cinema. Noah’s barge or ark, the ghost ship, the home of souls, or the mortuary journey of the boatman Charon, are examples. As well as the cradle for the transport of infant Moses. Similar to the romantic boat in romanticism, we now have the automobile: the car is a microcosm, an object that is so often anthropomorphized.

In this sense, usually in the horror genre, we can see a ghost ship (*Ghost Ship*, 2002), or a ghost town, as in the movie *City of Ghosts*, 2002, and the famous *Silent Hill* (2006), based on the video game *Silent Hill*. Anthropomorphized cars go so far as to become a “person”, as if they were alive, “dwelling in a soul”, as in the cartoon *Cars* (2006) or in the film *Christine* (1983), based on the book of the same name by Stephen King. At other times, the “basket-cradle” appears symbolized in a space cradle as in *Superman* (1978), as well as in the space module in *Gravity* (2013), or when the spaceship, in addition to a “survival address”, has the risk of becoming a death journey or “final home”, as if it were a tomb. We see this in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Apollo 13* (1995).

THE NOCTURNAL REGIME OF THE IMAGE OF SYNTHETIC OR DRAMATIC STRUCTURE IMAGE

The nocturnal regime of the image is not only antiphasic, that is, the reverse of the diurnal regime. In fact, since the night regime maintains its assimilation strategy, it has brought many diurnal expressions close to it. In this case, the night with the day are integrated into the anthropological structures in a synthesis.

[...] we have already seen that night symbols are not constitutionally freeing themselves from diurnal expressions: the valorization of the night is often done in terms of lighting. Euphemism and antiphrasis only act on one term of the antithesis and they do not follow the reciprocal devaluation of another term. The euphemism only escapes from antithesis to fall into antilogy. The night poetics tolerates “obscure clarities”. It overflows with riches and is therefore forgiving. (Durand 2002, 268).


In the synthetic nocturnal regime, the integration of the tragic attitude with the triumphant attitude of becoming is evident, converting them into a dramatic conception. That is why time in this synthetic regime is dramatized in related symbolic constellations and astrobiological dramas, agricultural calendars. Temporal flow, the terrible face of death, is integrated in a huge diversity of cyclical conceptions, ideas of progress and evolution, as well as in utopias.

Consequently, the “classic” symbols of the synthesis are cyclical or progressive, operating within time itself, in an attempt to domesticate becoming.

The cyclical pattern was, moreover, a constant concern for Eliade. For him, the mythological canons of all civilizations are based on the repetition of time, on the principle or myth of the eternal return. It is a repetition of creation or primordial mythic events, with an etiological constant behind it. The abolition of destiny as a fatality presupposes a new beginning, a new creation. The new year “annihilates” the chaos of the last days of the year, because the year (*annus*) is related to the ring or circle (*annulus*).

Durand draws attention to the binary, trinar and quaternary divisions and how they each form a constellational nucleus where symbols and myths related to these divisions will be attached. In binary symbols, for example, polarity and ambivalence are well documented in ancient cultures and folklore. The iconography underlines the ambivalence of deities or children of the gods: Heracles, Hermes, Jesus, Neith. It also accentuates the hybridity of certain beings such as the mermaids, centaurs or bicolor gods of Mexico. The theater is represented by the two faces of the mask of “acting”, Jano is “bifrontal”, which indicates the double character of time, as well as the double character very well represented in pop culture with “Two-Face”, Batman’s enemy in comics and cinema. In fact, Batman himself hides his double identity, as much as most of the heroes created by the comic book culture and taken to the cinema in superproductions like *Superman*, *Spider-Man*, *Hulk*, *Captain America*, etc.

The unification of opposites allowed the mythical drama of death and rebirth. “Poetry, history, as well as mythology or religion, do not escape the great cyclical scheme of conciliation of opposites. The temporal repetition,



the exorcism of time, became possible through the mediation of opposites [...]” (Durand 2002, 294). Thus, it is the cyclical symbolic of renewal that commands the myth of the flood, the historical revolutions, the reincarnation with its karma and the resurrection.

The constellational nucleus that concentrates many of these symbols is the “agrolunar drama”, overdetermined by the vegetable symbol that inspires the invention of gods and goddesses, elemental beings and characters endowed with some power coming from nature. It is what we can perceive either in literature or in the films in *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien explored the imagery of the plant cycle well, both in its main characters, the hobbits, in a specific character, which few pay attention to like Tom Bombadil, and in the Ents, ancient anthropomorphized trees. Still in cinema, the Popol Vuh twin who turns into a tree is portrayed in the film *The Fountain* (2006). This last film also explores the cyclical conception of life at the beginning of the eternal return.

The water cycle as a means of rebirth is very well portrayed in the film *Lady in the Water* (2006), and in the film *Big Fish* (2003). In the first film, a “water nymph” appears in the swimming pool of a hotel and, to be saved from a devouring monster, mobilizes all guests. Guests represent a kind of microcosm of peoples and cultures. Each one needs to play their part before the nymph called “Story” so that, in addition to it, everyone can rediscover their “identity”, a kind of rebirth. The entire movement is directed by the hotel’s caretaker, who stutters in a way that makes it impossible for him to tell his own story. When everyone is together and the caretaker finally helps “Story” to save himself, his speech returns to normal and he recovers the ability to tell his affectionate story. In *Big Fish*, a son finds it difficult to relate to his father because he believes his stories are lies. The father, on the other hand, does not abandon his exaggerated stories because they are part of his cyclical nature, of giving meaning beyond the fact. Like the hotel’s caretaker in *Lady in the Water*, the son in *Big Fish* not only understands why his father tells stories, but joins him to tell the ultimate story. At the end the symbols of the cycle are taken over, a fish and a wedding ring.

Similar to *Big Fish*, we have the movie *Life of Pi* (2012), which tells the story of a boy who had to reframe his sufferings experienced in a shipwreck. Instead of telling what happened, it presents a different and more “poetic” version of the facts, a euphemized version. In fact, this euphemization of painful facts, the anguish of death softened by “mythified” stories, is a very well explored literary and film technique. See *Pan’s Labyrinth*, *Life is Beautiful*, etc. All are stories of “rebirth” or “second chance”, typical of the possibility of dramatizing the time that we find in the synthetic or dramatic structure.


Just as baptism represents death before rebirth, “making the head” in Candomblé marks the death and rebirth of the neophyte, even with a seclusion ritual, as if he were being “born”. Often, such rituals are accompanied by sexual mutilation, euphemized by circumcision, or when the initiated are replaced by a doll that must be “shattered” or mutilated, celebrating androgynate.

The mutilation of gods and heroes often reminds them that they have undergone martyrdom or sacrifice, creating sacrifice rituals by isomorphism. Human sacrifices, for example, were very common where there was the practice of agrarian liturgies, as in the Aztec maize cult. Often the victim’s body was shattered and “planted” in the fields for fertility purposes.

Some characters from several films follow this symbolism of sacrifice, of life or of a part of the body, such as the god Odin portrayed in the *Thor* films, a Marvel Studios franchise started in 2011. It is said that Odin gave up one of his eyes in exchange for absolute knowledge. Unlike the blindness of the imaginary diurnal regime, which is perceived in a negative way, here it is welcome and, in fact, it is a “blindness that sees beyond”, because a “mystical eye” replaces a common eye. We can also see in another character like the Black Widow (*Avengers: Ultimatum*, 2019), who sacrifices herself for the salvation of the group and humanity. Or in Gandalf, the gray wizard from the films *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, who, after dying to save the Fellowship of the Ring, is reborn as a white and more powerful wizard.

In the film *Gravity* (2013), Dr. Ryan Stone, despite not sacrificing herself, is experiencing a kind of death and rebirth. Her trip represents the painful process of overcoming her daughter’s loss. After landing, being in fetal position, she exits the spatial module, a type of womb or uterus. Then she crawls, rises and walks, reminiscent of an evolutionary movement, typical of cyclical symbolism of transformation.

It is also what we perceive in films that reveal the transformation of characters such as Alice (*Alice in Wonderland*, 2010) and Claireece “Precious” Jones (*Precious*, 2009). Adolescents who need to go through the hardships of puberty and transition to adulthood, assuming responsibilities and taking their own lives. Although Alice lives in an enchanted world, where monsters and enemies are euphemized, and Precious lives in a real world, where family members are the real monsters, there is a symbol of cyclical transformation in both films: the butterfly. In Alice, the character encounters a blue caterpillar at the beginning of her journey, before entering Wonderland and, when she leaves, the caterpillar had transformed into a butterfly, representing her own transformation from a teenager to a responsible adult. In Precious, the transformation process



is symbolically portrayed by the movie poster in which the character appears with large butterfly wings.

The negative epiphany of the lunar cycle, with sacrifices, shatters, mutilations, has its apex in orgiastic rituals, in an attempt to return to chaos, to inform, from where everything can be restarted. As in a cycle, the renovation is preceded by a chaotic party, with the abolition of rules and laws. So are the New Year and Carnival parties that, at one time or another, resemble the parties of the bacchantics, worshipers of Bacchus. In fact, at this party, the bacchanal is accompanied by a lot of wine and broken members of curious men.

We have an example in the film *Midsommar* (2019), in which the character Dani becomes a queen of fertility after all her friends die sacrificed in the rural commune they visited. The film reveals agrolumnar elements related to fertility such as planting, harvesting, veneration of nature, circular dances, hallucinogenic drinks, and ritualistic sex.

The series of films that began in 2013, *The Purge*, goes back to the idea of purging all sins and crimes. On that night of chaos, rules and laws are abolished, to then allow the idea of a return to order.

Often botanical symbols and moon goddesses will be accompanied by a teriomorphic scheme, a complete bestiary. Hecate, Diana, Artemis are escorted by dogs. The caduceus of gods and heroes who bring renewal are flanked by animals. Other times these goddesses and gods turn into animals, or the transformation reveals the hybridity of the diurnal being that becomes a nocturnal being. Examples can be seen in the transformation of a human being (man or woman) into an animal, such as a dragon, a bear, a bat etc.

The fantastic literature, often taken to the cinema, created different characters with this hybrid characteristic in which at times it is a human being, at times it is an animal. Thus we find in Tolkien's literature and in the films of *The Lord of the Rings* a character, Beorn, who turns into a bear, or in the films of the *Harry Potter* series in which each wizard is able to invoke his *expecto patronum*, a guardian of positive energy that presents itself in the form of a light animal.

We also see in the book series *His Dark Materials* (volume 1, *The Golden Compass*, became a film in 2007) the souls of humans being transformed into companion animals called daemons.

In the 1985 film, *Ladyhawke*, a couple is unable to bond because they have been cursed. During the day the woman turns into a hawk and during the night the man turns into a wolf, in a clear allusion of opposition between

the diurnal and the nocturnal. Incidentally, the diurnal-nocturnal synthesis can also be seen in the film *Maleficent*, from 2014. In the film, Maleficent, sorceress from “Sleeping Beauty”, is a lady of nature, of the mystical world, of the universe that is sometimes controlled by night time, sometimes due to the cyclical time of vegetables. The future king, with whom she falls in love, is lord of the kingdom of heroes and knights, of the universe commanded by diurnal time, of the scepter and the sword. The redemption of this union was only possible through the intervention of synthetic mediation between darkness and light, that is, twilight. Note that at the end of the film, at dusk, redemptive death is performed by a child called “Aurora”, who stuck his finger in a needle on a distaff wheel (symbol of the cycle).

Various animals by themselves represent cyclical transformation such as the butterfly, the moth, the frog, the insects and the reptiles. In the 1999 movie *Magnolia*, after the characters undergo a redemptive transformation and the beginning of a new cycle, frogs rain. The magnolia flower is represented in the film’s poster as being in a spiral and in the concentric circles of water. A sign that the characters meet each other and enter a cycle of mutual aid.

In fact, the moth often symbolizes transformation through death and rebirth. This can be seen in the film *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), both in the poster, in which a moth appears (“skull sphinx”), representing the criminal’s desire for transformation, as well as in the cocoons of this moth that appear in the mouths of the murdered.

The cycle is already a symbol that involves a constellational nucleus centered on the technologies of the cycle such as the spinning wheel and spinner (the weave joins the separate parts), the mill wheel, the clock (symbol of “controlled” becoming). Therefore, the circle will be a symbol of temporal totality and the celestial sphere will appear in the zodiac in various civilizations such as Babylon, Egypt, Persia, and India.

It is not by chance that films explored the idea of a principle of eternal return that allows the protagonist a new chance. See *Groundhogday* (1993) in which a reporter gets caught up in the repetition of the same day in a city that, interestingly enough, is a tourist spot because of a groundhog that purportedly pointed out whether the winter would be long or not. Here, time, animal and cycle of the seasons mix.

Another film that addresses the repetition cycle is *Edge of Tomorrow* (2014). The film emulates the language of some video games that do not allow a check point, that is, a saving point in the game to start over. This means that the protagonist has to start from scratch and trust his memory, until he can reach the end of the cycle.

CONCLUSION

What we present in this text is not exactly a rigid method of interpretation, but a methodological path that allows for a hermeneutic exercise. To some extent, we were able to perceive indications of symbolic elements that are “fished” and integrated into most of the narratives explored in the films. Since these elements point to archetypal cultural expressions, it is wise to say that the examples linked to the cinematographic universe can be almost infinite. However, this does not mean that the examples overlap the structures. Quite the contrary, although the structures of the imaginary admit changes in their polarities, they are well delimited and follow rules that imply that symbolic constellations remain faithful to their archetypes.

This means that the images explored in the cinema have symbolic motivation, they are not there by chance. The narratives, imbued by their discursive nature, will inevitably stick to their archetypal, symbolic and imaginary aspects. Regardless of the theme covered by the film, we will always be able to interpret its symbolic elements with the small Duranian “encyclopedia” as a starting point.

Furthermore, since cinema is an art that reverberates with other arts, it is possible to pull the thread of the discourse in such a way that the myth-hermeneutical method is also applied in other expressions of culture. In fact, such a hermeneutic exercise allows both to start with cinema and to focus on other arts, with the guarantee that results will be very similar.

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