

Dr Luc Peters

## STEAM DREAM

“Ideas come along in the strangest way when you just pay attention. And sometimes things happen on the set that make you start dreaming (Lynch, 2006, 77)

“I don’t like jargon” (Michel Serres, 1995, 25)

## MOVERS

Dreams are these ungraspable and incomprehensible appearances that can be more real than real. They are free floating and tend to come unannounced. After moving through uncharted territory, they can leave the dreamer in a cold sweat lacking any shred of evidence. The dream decides what directions will be taken, leaving the dreamer in a state of dependence. Still these dreams have a considerable impact on our acting and might turn into ideas or even obsessions. These can be shaped into physical form and become real and maybe even corporeal. So, it is the non-corporeal dream that is an actant moving the dreamers into undisclosed territory. The dream is thus a non-corporeal mover that can metamorphose into the corporeal, into matter.

This chapter is a philosophical investigation into the concept of the non-corporeal-actant. It is the actant that has no physical form or body, as opposed to the corporeal actant. It cannot be physically grasped in other words. It lacks matter. Considering the corporeal we can think of humans, trees, churches, clothing, umbrellas, or even books. The non-corporeal can be things like sounds, noises, visions, dreams, trauma’s, smells or images that move before our eyes, like film images of images on video screens. While sound or smell can be detected by the senses, visions, dreams or traumas remain inside our heads and can only be explained in words or images by the person experiencing the vision, dream or trauma. Obviously, many more examples can be thought of, but the argument is clear.

As a philosopher I like to be moved by whatever touches me: film, architecture, literature, music or any other art form. These not only enhance philosophy, but can be considered a prerequisite. Philosophy needs art and vice versa. Without these “movers” nothing is really set in motion I believe. In these movements, dreams play an intriguing part. The artworks evolve out of ideas, experiments of

dreams, out of non-corporeal actants, after which they are molded into a physical form, and thus into the corporeal. Then they shape images that demand interpretation and through this metamorphosis they become non-corporeal, again. What once has been a dream is shaped into various dreams.

In the ancient Greek times, the polis, the city, was the main object of philosophical investigation. The reason might be attributed to its dominance in the life of the Greeks. Everything was happening in the polis in other words. This role has now changed and it is noticeable that nowadays the dominant object in people's lives are organizations. Therefore, I believe that philosophy's main object of investigation should nowadays be organization(s).

When considering organizations I argue that these are caught in clichés.<sup>1</sup> Dreams, nightmares, traumas, or visions have a paradoxical relation with clichés. Where the dream is free-flowing, unpredictable and more or less steers our thoughts and adventures into uncharted territory, the cliché does the opposite. The cliché limits our thoughts and even makes them obsolete. So, the cliché freezes the free flow of thinking and fantasizing. In other words, it boxes up dreams. However, it seems obvious that organization needs dreams and especially room to dream, although these dreams might end up as traumas. It is also clear that dreams as well as clichés have a tendency to materialize and thus metamorphose the non-corporeal into the corporeal.

We are thus confronted with a twofold scenario where the non-corporeal as cliché can box us up, or as dreams can provide space or room to dream and think. The question is how we can get an impression of this twofold non-corporeal scenario, in other words how can we make it visible, and thus corporeal.

Film, according to French philosopher Gilles Deleuze is the only form of art that has the potency to visualize the cliché and in this way create a shock to thought (1989, 1986). This shock to thought can kick us awake and out of our cliché-like catatonic state and make us think again. This can be considered another and inverted metamorphosis where the non-corporeal, the shock evoked by the image becomes corporeal through the possible subsequent action. So, in order to gain insight in the non-corporeal actants like dreams, trauma's, visions, but also clichés we need a corporeal actant like film or the corporeal things, like architecture, portrayed in film. Therefore, I will describe 3 examples of films that help us gain insight into the peculiarities of the non-corporeal actant. The first is *Maps to the Stars* (David Cronenberg, 2014), the second is *Bottle Rocket* (Wes Anderson, 1996) and the third is *The Saddest Music in the World* (Guy Maddin, 2003). But first I will describe an example of a cliché and how it works.

## BOXES

“Why that of all things happened to pop into my mind I have no idea. It just did.” (Murakami, 2003, 44)

---

<sup>1</sup> See my book *Cliché & Organization, thinking with Deleuze & Film* for an extensive elaboration.

A popular contemporary cliché is: “thinking out of the box”. Why is it that this phrase has become popular and gained a certain dominance in our work lives. When dissecting the phrase, there are two main elements: thinking and box. The first element obviously concerns thinking. What is this something which is referred to as thinking? In answering this question, we can consult Martin Heidegger, the famous philosopher from the Black Forest who spent much of his time in his own hut, indulging in “Hütten-Dasein”<sup>2</sup> Heidegger thought about thinking extensively and makes a distinction between two kinds of thinking.<sup>3</sup> The first is calculative thinking which basically revolves around numbers. This thinking should lead to a certain desired outcome. In other words: wishes should come true. It is not totally free but encaged by numbers. It constructs a box. Opposed to this Heidegger suggests contemplative thinking. The latter is supposed to be free floating and not restricted by any boundaries. When we return to the phrase thinking out of the box, it can be reasonably assumed that it refers to contemplative thinking. Otherwise it would imply a box to get out of a box. This paradoxical impossibility makes no sense whatsoever. Or to put it differently: it exceeds our thinking capacities.

Then there is the idea of the box itself, that apparently has to be escaped. What kind of box could it be? Could it be a physical box? The next question then is: could thinking escape a physical box? The answer is yes. Thoughts are not solid matter but are ‘matterless’. They have no physical form. They are non-corporeal. Whenever you are in a room, you still have the capacity to think of things outside this room. So, the matterless can escape the matter, or in other words, the thought is capable of escaping the physical box. But what if it doesn’t refer to a physical box, but to a matterless box, a made up or thought of box. Then it becomes pretty blurry. Thinking gets in trouble if it tries to escape a matterless, a nonphysical, box. The physical box might be noticed but the nonphysical constantly escapes our attention. It can move anywhere without us being able to follow its ephemeral movements. It might move in the exact same way as the thought that is trying to escape. So, the idea of escaping something which is not really present or known creates an unsettling enigma. I would even like to argue that it shapes a non-sensical idea.

This means that thinking out of the box would imply contemplative thinking and physical boxes. Apparently in organization(s) boxes are needed to contain thoughts. The idea is to metamorphose thoughts into some sort of matter that is not able to flow freely, but to remain stable, inside the box. This means that thinking results in certain thoughts that are solidified and put in boxes. An advantage or a necessity for doing this is that thoughts can be distributed and while doing this these thoughts do not

---

<sup>2</sup> For an extensive elaboration on the concept of Hütten-Dasein, I refer to the book *On Mirrors! Philosophy Art Organization* (Peters & Yue, 2018) in which one chapter is dedicated to this concept.

<sup>3</sup> See eg. *Gelassenheit* (1959), *Was heißt Denken?* (1954) or *Beiträge zur Philosophie* (2003)

change. In organization this seems necessary in order to share ideas and see that these remain comprehensible.

Apparently, this is not good enough resulting in the cliché: “think out of the box”. This implies that thoughts should be made matterless, again, in order to be able to escape these boxes. We are now confronted with a situation in which thoughts are transformed into matter, after which they have to be made matterless again. However we also know that thoughts *are* matterless and therefore cannot really be grasped and thus put into boxes. Again we are confronted with a non-sensical idea. Nevertheless this is what organizations try to do when popularizing the idea of thinking out of the box. Having said that: this doesn’t imply that thinking out of the box is a bad idea. It is not about good or bad, but about what is really going on and being able to make that usable or not. Before I discuss the popularity and dominance of clichés I move to the first film.

### ***Maps to the Stars***

The first movie I want to discuss is *Maps to the Stars* (2014) by Canadian director David Cronenberg. His films like *The Brood* (1979), *Videodrome* (1983), *Crash* (1996) *eXistenZ* (1999), or *Cosmopolis* (2012) can be considered works of art and thus break through clichés (Peters, 2016). In other words, they tear boxes apart. In this Cronenberg creates room to dream for himself but also for his audience. His films are driven by dreams, traumas and obsessions, by the matterless in other words.

*Maps to the Stars* is a highly complicated film, that shows the stubbornness and incomprehensibility of living while chasing dreams. It sketches the desire of being someone, of getting attention, of getting wasted, of getting laid, and how all this fuels the urgency to cross invisible and maybe even non-existent borders. It also shows how people cling on to dreams and get stuck in their sheer desire to realize these dreams. In this medication, drugs and psychological disorders play a decisive role. These become non-corporeal actors through their use or through not using them. The title suggests that any map to whatever star is an impossibility, and the dream of stardom is allergic to any kind of map or pre-fabricated scheme. Even if such a map would exist, its use would be devastating. There is no happy ending.

In the film we see Agatha Weiss, a disturbed and mutilated girl in search for her brother, who has become a Hollywood celebrity. She suffers from dual disorder, which made her burn down her parents house, almost killing her little brother. She wants to reconnect, but the viewer never knows the exact reason. Is it because of the dual disorder, through the medication she takes, or are there other mysterious reasons. It is never clear how the non-corporeal moves the corporeal. For the viewer there is only one option and that is trying to interpret what is going on in the screen.

We also witness Havana Grand, a fading Hollywood celebrity and daughter of famous actress. She is obsessed with regaining fame, taken prisoner by the ghost of her mother who abused her, and addicted to pills and bizarre healing sessions. She hires Agatha as her new: “chore-whore”, seduces Agatha’s boyfriend and verbally abuses her, calling her: ‘a sick fucking pig’ and a ‘scary little animal’. Agatha beats Havana to death with one of her trophies/awards, implying the brutal end of a career. This happens after Agatha has flushed her own pills against the dual disorder down the toilet. Meanwhile her little brother Benji, who is in a strict rehab program uses GHB and shoots his friend’s dog after an act of Russian roulette. Again the viewer is driven to interpretation.

The film shows how all these dreams of the actors who chase their stardom end in trauma’s or death. We see how they are all driven by that which cannot be grasped, the non-corporeal. We see that whatever box they try to escape they are always lured in again. They are never thinking out of any box whatever, but their thoughts are always boxed-up by their unfulfilled desires or their nightmares. Substances cannot change this but only enhance the ungraspable nightmare which they can never escape.

## **MATTERLESS**

“Certain kinds of information are like smoke: they work their way into people’s eyes and minds whether sought out or not, and with no regard to personal preference.” (Murakami, 2003, 197)

"Sometimes ideas, like men, jump up and say, 'Hello!' They introduce themselves, these ideas, with words – are they words? These ideas speak so strangely. All that we see in this world is based on someone's ideas. Some ideas are destructive, some are constructive. Some ideas can arrive in the form of a dream. I can say it again: Some ideas arrive in the form of a dream." (Twin Peaks series 1 episode 2, Log Lady intro)

The question that becomes dire is how these fixated and molded dreams and traumas become so dominant? Referring to this phrase “Thinking out of the box”, how has it become so popular? Why is it that something which makes no sense is so widely used. This brings us to the cliché.

The cliché can be regarded as a thought turned into matter and thus solidified. A cliché is a copy, something of which at one time an original has been made, although this is not always necessary. After the mould has been cast, the only thing left to do is copying. The copies can then be widespread, knowing that these are always identical. It is like the massive McDonaldization of thoughts. In this case management thoughts. These molded thoughts are opposed to thinking. Why certain thoughts become popular remains unclear. It cannot be prophesied what will pop up next and become the new number one in dominant management phrases.

As thoughts are molded and turned into matter, they make thinking impossible and even render it obsolete. So, any dreams, or traumas are eradicated. In other words, clichés rule out thinking.<sup>4</sup> This means that the thinking that should be out of the box, is to be contained in another box. So, thinking out of the box then means: thinking in another box. This means that the original box is considered inferior to the “other” box, the new cliché, whatever that is. This informs us that organizations do not want to think out of the box, but somehow have gotten the idea that the use of another, a new cliché should be better for organization.

A question that then pops up is where this obsession with boxes comes from? Why is organization obsessed with containers? We all know the container as that which is “schlepped” along highways and interstates by big trucks. Trucks that carry the containers along, just like the ‘west-warding’ of wagons in the old days. These old days were driven by the so-called American dream. Maybe it is here that the fusion of dreams and containers first popped up. Whatever the case may be, it informs us that dreams run the risk of being boxed up. This is something that film director and artist David Lynch strongly opposes to. He considers the dream necessary to get in touch with our twisted world. Therefore the dream should not be boxed up or restricted in any way, but needs to be free-flowing.

In a documentary on the 2017 series Lynch is seen in anger as he doesn’t have enough time to dream in a designed set before the shooting of certain scenes. Apparently he doesn’t know what will happen and needs this dream, as the free-flowing ‘boxless’ ideas that come to him as soon time feels ready for it. Lynch needs patience as the dream cannot be programmed or calculated and therefore conflict with tight rational shooting schedules that are fixed like business plans. Lynch needs the dream in order to be able to shoot what he doesn’t have in his mind yet, but of which he knows that it will appear, sometime, probably pretty soon. He needs his thoughts to be disrupted by the ungraspable and unannounced matterless. With these dream-fueled scenes he can fulfill his obligation towards the producers of the series, who nevertheless want him to hurry up and finish the job.

It is probably for this reason that he named his 2018 autobiography: *Room to Dream*. This room is different than the before mentioned box or container but is a translucent space where any walls can dissolve or materialize without prior announcement. The dream has its own bag of tricks, while remaining ungraspable. It cannot be contained or boxed-up

French philosopher Michel Serres refers to the dream as a syrrhèse. This is: “... a confluence not a system, a mobile confluence of fluxes. Turbulences, overlapping cyclones and anticyclones, like on the weather map. Wisps of hay tied in knots. An assembly of relations. Clouds of angels passing” (Serres & Latour, 1995, 122). This is the way dreams are shaped, move, metamorphose, and therefore can hardly be contained. The living body seems to refer to the corporeal, but then it is the dance and the ungraspable and often incomprehensible movements of the body that shape the dream.

---

<sup>4</sup> For an extensive elaboration on clichés and their connection to film, architecture and organization, see: *Cliché & Organization, thinking with Deleuze & Film* (Peters, 2016).

When I mention the word dream it immediately brings the word steam to my attention. Why? This is a mystery to me. Sometimes while thinking or writing, things can pop up without any apparent reason or announcement. They just show up as uninvited guest. Now an uninvited guest might be a nasty surprise or might be a welcome intrusion. Something unpredictable and beyond the borders of regulation. It is something which cannot be contained in other words. Nevertheless, it's there, somewhere. Apparently thinking and dreaming have their own ways without really explaining these to us. Nevertheless, the notion of steam intrudes while musing about the dream.

This means that my mind wanders off while thinking and dreaming, without me being able to control this. Dreaming is thus uncontrollable and retrieves results that might be unexpected and even unwanted. So despite plans, ideas or boxes, dreams flow and shape themselves freely. Whenever we try to contain them, uninvited guests might show up and they might not have good intentions. These thoughts bring us to the second feature film.

## ***BOTTLE ROCKET***

Contemplation isn't a very big thing for Dignan, the protagonist from the film *Bottle Rocket* (Wes Anderson, 1996). All his thinking is directed by his '75 year plan' that should make him successful. He knows that he cannot do this alone and therefore needs his companions Anthony and Bob. Dignan's catchphrase works: 'Let's get lucky' works like a dream for him, although it easily turns into a cliché. It becomes meaningless, and while it fires him up, it dumbs the others. They hear it, but no reaction is appropriate because the meaning is lost.

The film starts with Anthony escaping out of an insane asylum, through the window although this is completely unnecessary. Dignan shows him his 75-year plan, with specific goals, and a picture of 'his crew'. The picture supposedly should work as an inspiration. Something that should connect Dignan's dream with Anthony's dreams. We see them putting on gloves and burgling a house, which turns out to be the house of Anthony's parents. They meet up with Bob, who is the getaway driver. There Dignan explains his worked-out plan for the robbery of a bookstore to Anthony and Bob, but nobody really pays attention. Bob grabs the gun that's on the table, which freaks out Dignan, who tries to act as their leader. This leads to the following discussion:

Bob, please don't interrupt me man, because I'm trying to stay focused on this stuff (Dignan)

...

God dammit, you're not paying attention if you're messing around with the gun!

Now quit (Anthony takes the gun)

Anthony, keep the gun on the table

Dignan Relax (Anthony)

I can't focus unless the gun is on the table  
I paid for it (Bob)  
Shut up, man! Shut up! I'm warning you know (towards Bob)  
Be quiet, please.  
It's true Dignan. I paid for the gun (Bob)  
Say it again, say it one more time. Repeat what you just said.  
(Anthony silently signals Bob not to answer)  
I paid for the gun (Bob)  
He's out. You're out too (pointing at Anthony)  
And I don't think I'm in either.  
Calm down, just calm down (Anthony)  
No gang  
(Anthony and Dignan leave the room. Bob picks up the gun again)  
You two just don't give a shit. When it comes right down to it, you don't care.  
...  
(Dignan and Anthony return and take place at the table again)  
I apologize, that was poor leadership  
I'm under a lot of pressure right now, and ...  
I don't feel like the team is jelling the way-  
If I can even use that word, because I don't even know if we are a team.  
Hey we are a team (Anthony)  
Yeah, a team (Bob)  
(they resume their meeting to rob a bookstore)

Apparently focus is important while working in a team on a fixed plan. The robbery however is successful, and they celebrate in Bob's house, the John Gillin Residence in Dallas Texas, designed and built by Frank Lloyd Wright. Anthony shows Bob the picture of Dignan's 'crew', which turns out to be a landscaping firm called: the Lawn Wranglers. Dignan adores Mr Henry, the mysterious chief of the crew, although Dignan tells Anthony that Mr Henry fired him. However he dreams of regaining Mr Henry's adoration by showing his skills as a gangster. Dignan comforts Anthony's unease of the whole situation by stating: 'don't worry about your future man, cause I'm thinking'. However his thinking is boxed up in his 75 year plan.

They hide in a motel where all of them get carried away by various things. Dignan struggles constantly to get his leadership acknowledged. Bob gets carried away by the fact that his brother was arrested and thrown in jail for Bob's crop of marihuana. Anthony getting carried away by his love for the chambermaid Inez. When Dignan and Bob return from going to a local barber to change their appearance, they find Anthony partying in their hotel room with Inez and a bunch of friends, or colleagues of Inez. Anthony is making banana daiquiris.



All of them get carried away but are also bonded by their wish to belong to something whatever it is. As soon as something else pops up, unannounced, like Inez, they immediately swop the one dream for the other. In this case the dream of becoming a gangster for the dream of love. Dreams are apparently what drives all of their behavior. The dreams of escaping their current situation to whatever what. Corporeal actants play only a minor part, even if their name is Inez. Just like they have a getaway car, they want to get away from their pointless and incomprehensible lives. The fact that Anthony went 'nuts' as he explains in beginning of the film implies that it somehow becomes too much. Too much to handle which drives them over the wall and makes the 75-year plan, which functions as a box or frozen dream, become impotent. It is there, but nobody really believes in it, maybe not even Dignan who just wants to show off as a leader, probably in order to impress Mr Henry in the end.

Dignan at last manages to reacquaint with Mr Henry and his gang and proclaims happily: 'Now we are in the real world'. Mr Henry gives Dignan the freedom to do his first 'job' by himself and 'mastermind' the plan for the robbery of the Hinckley Cold Storage. Robbing the Hinckley Cold Storage unfortunately goes completely wrong. This is due to malfunctioning walky-talkies and Anthony tells Bob that he really doesn't want to do this robbery. Neither do I, says Bob. As Anthony and Bob leave their positions, Dignan freaks out. 'Keep your head in the game', he says. Then everything goes off the rails and their only option left is running away. Dignan gets caught and beat up by the police. Meanwhile Mr Henry robs Bob's FLW house and takes everything inside. Anthony and Bob visit Dignan in jail, where the latter reveals that he has CRS disease, meaning he 'Can't Remember Shit'. Dignan says: 'Isn't it funny how you used to be in the nuthouse, and now I'm in jail'.

Despite their dreams they are not really capable of escaping boxes. These dreams, these non-corporeal drivers move them in all kinds of unexpected and unwanted directions. They appear to be willing victims to the peculiarities and unpredictability of these dreams. However, these never make a real difference, maybe because they do not really believe in them and only move along with what the rest is doing. Dignan's cliché-like mantra: 'let's get lucky' seems to be crucial in this, especially as they never get lucky.

In the end they remain in their boxes, or containers, realizing that in their case, dreams are just dreams, and while these can move them, they are never what they really believe in. Maybe they believe in nothing, which makes the matterless fruitless. Maybe they lack contemplative thinking that could connect them to their real dreams.

## STIMMUNG

“I had wandered in silence through the gloomy labyrinth that spread out between illusion and truth.” (Murakami, 2003, 443)

‘Das ist ja eine Bomben Stimmung’ (undisclosed attendee at the Oktober fest in Munich 1944)

So contemplative thinking is needed to connect to their real dreams and not to the cliché like boxes which nobody really believes in. This brings us back to the thoughts of Deleuze who argues that it is only film as a form of art that can unleash the potency to think (1989, 1986), and to the thoughts of Heidegger on thinking. But also, to his notion of: *Stöße der Zeit* (2003), which can be translated as: the pushing of time. Time pushes us in other words, and not in a regulatory fashion, but irregular, unexpected and maybe even unwanted. Time pushes us around, more or less in a poetic way. Where: “[t]he great function of poetry is to give us back the situation of our dreams.” (Bachelard, 1994, 15). So the poetic might help us out here, whether in written words, sounds, or moving images (see also Hart & Peters, 2016).

Film not only has the potency to kick us awake, but also to reveal the unpredictable and ungraspable poetic tendencies of dreams. It sketches how the dream always slips away, how it’s always moving, and how this is complicated by the fact that you can never tell whether you’ve arrived, or not, whether you’ve reached a goal or not. Should it be reached then it immediately slips away. It constantly vaporizes. Dreams are dreams and they stubbornly resist all calculative approaches. And as this is revealed there appears only one option and that is the contemplative, in other words: to again start thinking. As mentioned before this thinking is not a rational way of thinking, but a poetic, dreamy one. Thinking that carries us away out of the now and into the pushing of time.

Dreams have an attraction which makes it desirable to be pushed around, but which is difficult to grasp. In other words, touching the dream and trying to figure out what really moves us. Heidegger describes the non-corporeal notion of *Stimmung* (2003), or attunement, which implies: trying to adapt to something. He compares it to feelings (1983, 98) or atmospheres (1983, 100)<sup>5</sup>. *Stimmung* contains the German word *Stimme*, which means voice. There is thus a voice calling out to us, and the idea is that we try to hear that voice and try to get in touch with that voice in order to be moved by it. So, our ears should be susceptible to, and driven by the voice. We are constantly attuning to the voice of the dream in other words. This voice doesn’t need to make sound, it can be inaudible, it is a feeling or atmosphere. The *Stimmung* cannot be boxed-up, as sound or dreams can move through walls. So Heidegger argues that we are driven by this free-floating *Stimmung*.

---

<sup>5</sup> See also the thoughts of Swiss architect Peter Zumthor on atmospheres (2006).

However, he also argues that: “[t]he explanation of attunement never gives the assurance that the voice is really what it appears to be.”<sup>6</sup> So we never really know what is attracting us. We remain in the unknown, and maybe we even should remain in the unknown. He argues: “[a]n attunement cannot and should not be determined, even if could be determined.<sup>7</sup> Still it attracts us. Heidegger continues: “[a]ttunement is the weak, unstable, unclear and dull as opposed to the cleverness, the correctness and clearness and lightness of thoughts.”<sup>8</sup> In other words the attunement remains vague and ungraspable. It moves the senses and can only countered by contemplative thinking. So, the boxless dream needs to be thought through in a contemplative and poetic way to find out what it could possibly mean for us. It is this idea of being open, just like Lynch, to whatever is happening and what this could mean for us. It is about ripping the box apart in other words.

However: “[e]very design is storm, luck, swing, moment. Every realization is serenity, endurance, lack ... none of the two happens without the agreement of the other and both of them always from the necessity of a recovery or rescue.”<sup>9</sup> So design and realization or dream and realization are closely connected and one cannot exist without the other. Attuning is thus an extremely complicated thing when trying to shape it into something real. That is probably why it is also complex to see the difference between the dream and reality because they constantly move in a zone of indecipherability. Likewise it is the complexity of assembling the dream that really matters. Nevertheless we need Stimmung as the unannounced, uninvited, unpredictable that can help us connect with what going on. So we need Stimmung in order to think the matterless and get in touch with the unpredictable movements of the dream and move along.

## ***SADDEST MUSIC IN THE WORLD***

These thoughts take us to the last feature film, a film by Winnipeg director Guy Maddin, creator of enigmatic films like: *Tales from the Gimli Hospital* (1988), *Cowards Bend the Knee* (2003), *My Winnipeg* (2007) or *The Forbidden Room* (2015). His films turn our world upside down in every possible way. In

---

<sup>6</sup> “ ... Verdeutlichung einer Stimmung gibt nie die Gewähr, daß sie wirklich stimmt, ...” (2003, 15, italics in original).

<sup>7</sup> ‘Eine Stimmung läßt sich nicht nur nicht feststellen, sie soll auch nicht festgestellt werden, wenn sie sich auch feststellen ließe’ (1983, 97)

<sup>8</sup> “ ...Stimmung ist das Schwägliche, Schweifende, Unklare und Dumpfe gegenüber dem Scharfsinn und der Richtigkeit und Klarheit und Leichtigkeit des >>Gedankens<<.” (2003, 21, citation originally in brackets).

<sup>9</sup> “Jeder Entwurf ist Sturm, Beglückung, Schwung, Augenblick. Jede Ausführung ist Gelassenheit, Ausdauer, Verzicht ... Keines der Beiden geschieht ohne die Mitstimmung durch das Andere und beide immer aus dem Grunde der Notwendigkeit einer Bergung.” (2003, 391, italics in original)

these clichés do not function anymore, because we are constantly confronted with the incomprehensible. No script for acting is appropriate. The only option is to roam through all the things going on and try to cope with its movements. Clichés are obsolete in other words, which automatically means that thinking, contemplative thinking as Heidegger suggests is the only option. The viewer constantly has to attune her- or himself to what is going on. The viewer has to open up and be susceptible for the heideggerian Stimmung.

His film *The Saddest Music in the World* (2003) is probably one of the strangest movies ever made. So much happens considering images, sounds, acting, dialogue and the constant disruptions in the movement of time that it is a hard act to follow. It might even be considered incomprehensible and thus needs many viewings to percolate its many essences. The film is cut and pasted in a way comparable to a roller coaster ride, constantly twisting, turning, speeding, slowing down, and almost going out of bounds. It's a constant fusing of real-time, memories, fantasies and much more. It displays a world in which boxes are completely useless, although the film opens with a shot of an 'ice-box' that is removed from a bigger chunk of ice. This box is used for a soothsayer who predicts protagonist Kent's future. No crystal ball, but a large cube of ice that ridicules the idea of the box. 'Let it rip' says Kent while his girlfriend, Narcissa, an amnesiac nymphomaniac moves her hand into Kent's trouser and masturbates him. The latter clearly enjoying this, while he is moved into a faraway memory in which he witnesses the death of his mother. We see Kent as a boy and we see an ice cube reflected in his pupils. The soothsayers message seems to imply: "[a]cknowledge your inner sadness or die ..." (Beard, 2010, 243). Kent is apparently upset but won't admit his misery.

The film then moves us to Winnipeg in 1933 at the height of the great depression. A contest is announced to produce the saddest music in the world, as Winnipeg is considered the world capital of sadness. 'If you're sad and like beer, I'm your lady', proclaims protagonist Helen. She has both her legs amputated, by Kent's father who, being a doctor has accidentally sawed off both her legs. This happened while being drunk and seeing double.

The contest is a string of battles between various countries, where the winner is slid into a huge tub filled with beer. One of the contestants is Kent's brother, Roderick, a sad cello player who keeps his son's heart in a jar immersed in his own tears. The contest starts and the crowd cheers and drinks beer. Kent's father meanwhile made glass legs filled with beer for Helen, the amputee. Roderick accidentally breaks the jar with their son's heart. We see a shard of glass sticking into the heart. Kent's father commits suicide by dropping into the big keg of beer. Meanwhile the contest goes on. 'Sadness isn't hurt one bit by a little razzle-dazzle showmanship', proclaims the announcer, and: '[w]e don't know if he's in a coma, or just very very sad'. Helen gets her new legs, glass filled with beer.

During the finale between Kent (USA) en Roderick (Serbia), Helen shows up on stage, showing off her new beer-filled glass legs. Roderick starts screeching his cello which make Helen's legs crack and

explode. Roderick continues his sad cello song. Helen is in tears. She has lost her legs, again. Helen slashes Kent with shards of glass from her broken legs, fatally wounding him and fulfilling the prediction of the soothsayer. Kent lights a cigar, falls down, and the cigar starts a fire. Roderick is still playing, and Narcissa joins in singing a song. Kent is playing the piano singing while the crowd panics for the exit. Kent dies in the fire while the soothsayer laughs.

This is what the film has shown. It is a film about dreams, trauma's in which it never becomes clear what is really going on. Constantly shifting from one assumed reality to the next and vice versa in never identifiable sequences, a chronicle that is not chronological, but shows the weird rollercoaster like cutting and pasting in and out of assumed realities.

Guy Maddin has a good reason to use film in this way, and explains: "... mythic truth is more important than facts anyway." (Holm, 2010, 177). So it is the power of the ungraspable, the matterless that is championed over 'hard' or rational facts. In this the amnesia, as displayed by Narcissa is a powerful and unavoidable device. Maddin argues: "Amnesia is a timeless storytelling device. Forgetfulness is a kind of anesthetic for the painful life we all live. We're forced constantly to think about the shameful things we've done, the painful things that have happened to us. We owe most of the feelings we have, as sensate beings, to shoddy memories. The sheer erratic nature of memory keeps life a lunar park." (Holm, 2010, 63). We need amnesia, the wiping out of reality, to make life bearable. The constant trauma's that haunt us, each in his own way. These personal journeys grasp us in ever unannounced and ungraspable ways. Apparently forgetting is the only way to survive.

This forgetting is opposed to knowing, to the fixed knowledge that threatens to fill us up and numb us. The fixed knowledge that captures us in clichés and makes us lose our dreams, but just keeps the traumas. As soon as the idea comes up to leave these boxes trouble raises its ugly head. It is for that reason that it remains a boxed-up cliché in which thinking is an unwanted guest. The last desperate attempt to escape is amnesia.

## **DREAMING**

"Imagining things here can be fatal." (Murakami, 2003, 584)

The films have shown how the non-corporeal, the matterless is apparently a decisive driver. This means that we are directed by the matterless, or the non-corporeal. The matterless as exemplified by dreams, ideas, or traumas moves us in unpredictable and sometimes unwanted direction. This is not to suggest that

the corporeal would not be a moving factor. Both move us in mysterious ways without a definite answer at hand, where only interpretation remains. However the matterless decides.

In order to control our movements, we display an urge to seek refuge in boxes. An example of this are clichés. These box up thinking into molded thoughts. These thoughts are uttered without there being any thinking involved. In other words, clichés make thinking obsolete. Apparently, this being caught, or boxed-up in clichés makes it impossible to escape. Therefore, we need film, as art, to break through these clichés and break out of the proverbial box, or maybe even a real box, made of glass, concrete and steel. So, film helps us to break out, to get away, to escape. It shows how the box basically works counterproductive to its uttered ideas.

So film, as the examples of *Maps to the Stars*, *Bottle Rocket* or *The Saddest Music in the World* have shown, is constantly destroying boxes and thus our frame of reference or our scripts for acting. Leaving us out on our own in a world that is boxless. It is therefore film that shows how non-corporeal actants like clichés function and basically do not work. But what does work? In answering this question, we are confronted with the Heideggerian notion of attunement, which helps us to stay in tune with our ever revolving world which constantly moves us into uncharted territories and paradoxical musings, forever drifting on an endless highway into nowhere. This is what film has shown and which offers the notion of surprise and excitement, but also disillusion or despair. No cliché will ever prevent that.

So when trying to make sense of non-corporeal actants, but corporeal as well, it is clear that there are various path leading to some sort of insight. These insights always become clear through interpretation. What words or theories are used for these insights is maybe even of a secondary importance. The point remains that whenever we try to make sense of that which cannot be grasped that some sort of medium is needed in order to clarify the ungraspable and incomprehensible, always knowing that the outcome will be insufficient. Still the urge to clarify remains and might even move into the uncharted territory of the political. As soon as that happens clichés are needed, again, running the risk that these box us up. Film has shown that it can open up these boxes and maybe even tear them apart in order to release the dream as dream and not as formula.

## REFERENCES

- Gaston Bachelard (1994). *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press
- William Beard (2010). *Into the Past, The Cinema of Guy Maddin*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press
- Gilles Deleuze (1989). *Cinema 2, the time-image*. London: Continuum
- Gilles Deleuze (1986). *Cinema 1, the movement image*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Chris Hart & Luc Peters (2016). Failing at History. *The Workplace Review April 2016 Issue*, 19-27
- Martin Heidegger (2003). *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klosterman

Martin Heidegger (1983). *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik, Welt-Endlichkeit-Einsamkeit*. Frankfurt am Main:

Vittorio Klostermann

Martin Heidegger (1959). *Gelassenheit*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta

Martin Heidegger (1954). Was heißt Denken, in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (1954). Pfullingen: Neske

D.K. Holm (ed.) (2010). *Guy Maddin Interviews*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi

David Lynch & Kristine McKenna (2018). *Room to Dream*. Edinburgh: Canongate

David Lynch (2006). *Catching the Big Fish, Meditation, Consciousness, and Creativity*. New York: Penguin

Haruki Murakami (2003). *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*. London: Vintage

Luc Peters (2016) *Cliché & Organization, thinking with Deleuze & film*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Luc Peters & Anthony R Yue (2018). *On Mirrors! Philosophy-Art-Organization*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Michel Serres & Bruno Latour (1995). *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

Peter Zumthor (2006). *Atmosphären*. Basel: Birkhäuser