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Silent (Un)Becoming Song: Poetic Adventures in History, Memory and Identity in *Papusza* and *Song of Granite*

Elzbieta Buslowska

Abstract: Song of Granite *(Pat Collins, 2017) and* Papusza *(Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze, 2013) could be described as unconventional film "biographies" (of the Irish folk singer Joe Heaney and Polish-Roma poet Bronislawa Wajs, respectively). In these films, poetry and philosophy come together in what I call the silent (un)becoming undoing the stabilities of (hi)story, identity and memory. Crossing different aesthetic and geographical territories between fiction and documentary, they speak through the power of a song/poetry, telling a story of fragmentary encounters where histories are invented in the gaps of memories (personal and cultural) and identities disappear in other (be)longings. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of the refrain as both the question of the native (home) and the "other" (the unknown homeland), and Maurice Blanchot's notion of a disaster, the article will attempt to think with the films' poetic "remembering" that is not narrated through the linearity of a storytelling but sounds silently in the vastness and motionlessness of the landscape, the creative treatment of the archive footage, materiality that remembers past from the outside of remembering and in the emotion of the song repeated in the black and white poetic expression of the refrain. The films' cinematic force of (un)becoming will be considered as a question of the disastrous longing (for silence) which cannot be known or named but which sends life and thinking towards other memories-potentialities.*



Figure 1 (left): Ficowski (Antoni Pawlicki) tells Papusza (Jowita Budnik) that she is a poetess in Joanna and Krzysztof Krauze's *Papusza*. Argomedia Productions, 2013. Figure 2 (right): Joe Heaney as child (Colm Seoighe) listening to the landscape in Pat Collins's *Song of Granite*. Amérique Film, 2017. Screenshots.

Pat Collins's *Song of Granite* (2017) and Joanna and Krzysztof Krauze's *Papusza* (*Doll*, 2013) are biographies that narrate through the inventiveness and imagination of a song or poetry rather than factual history or chronological presentation of the protagonists' lives. They jump through different periods where major events are often omitted or mentioned in passing, and where the emotions and fragmentary encounters, rather than factual or fictional linear narration, form the main concerns. In these (hi)stories, granite sings, the beast tells the story, and the future is read from the shape of the clouds. The stories of cultures, of struggle, of hardship, of exile and survival are collaged together through the enigmatic lives of their characters. Cultural and personal memories are reinterpreted, edited and invented as a

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cinematic memory—forgetting where the archive rejects the unifying practice of the past's one vision.[1] The landscape and singing, or silence, are the protagonists, the events are not "explained", songs are not subtitled, and characters are not "developed". In a quite liberating, quietly radical sense they challenge the conventions and expectations of (biographical) filmmaking.[2] Thus, rather than focusing on the films in the context of biopic documentaries, the article will examine creatively the ways in which both films defy the conventions of filmmaking and viewing.

Song of Granite, "a bold and imaginative approach to presenting an artist's life and work", is a tribute to Joe Heaney (1919–1984), the practitioner of *sean-nós*, a traditional unaccompanied Irish singing (Concannon). In roughly chronological and cyclical fashion, weaving the archival footage, monochrome photography (by Richard Kendrick) and singing, the film accompanies Heaney's unpredictable life from boyhood in 1940s Connemara, through the trials as a labourer in Britain, to fame and exile in North America from the mid-1960s, to his death. The endless, almost still, long takes, interrupted by moments of singing and the archive footage, suggest that Pat Collins is more interested in Irish identity and cultural legacy (the landscape and the sparse dialogue largely in Gaelic) than in biographical details. Forgoing the work of narrative and character development in favour of a striking, elliptical style, the film focuses on singing (and its intense emotion) and on how important it is. In fact, it is the singing (also universally) and the landscape that are the real protagonists of the film, as Collins has observed (Concannon).

Papusza is both a "portrait" of an artist, Bronisława Wajs (1908–1987), better known as "Papusza" ("Doll" in Romani), the first Roma Polish poet, and a snapshot of her Roma community. Jumping from one point in time to another, the film is a journey navigating through the second decade of the twentieth century, the Second World War to Roma forced settlement in the People's Republic of Poland. Filmed from the Roma perspective with most dialogues in the Romani language, the multilayered, fragmentary narrative tells a story of a vanishing culture through the life of a woman who never considered herself a poetess, but rather a cursed Gypsy whose biggest mistake was to learn how to read.[3] Papusza's confrontation with the traditional community, her refusal to stop reading and writing, which led to her expulsion for what was felt as the betrayal of her community and language (the bilingual collection of her poems was published in Romani and Polish), depicts both a personal tragedy of a brilliant mind and the complex, proud and secretive culture she could not leave. The tangled plot moves back and forth to the rhythm of the Roma life on the road, delineating their inbred fatalism, their fierce independence, and their love of music. The music and poetry/song define the style (which is also the content) and the character of the film, while the spectacular black-and-white camera work (by Krzysztof Ptak and Wojciech Staroń) and the archive photographs of the landscape "bring back" the Polish Roma world, which no longer exists. The film is a visual poem, rather than a biographical portrait of the main character.

Crossing different aesthetic and geographical territories, blurring the lines between documentary and biographical drama, both films speak through the power of song and poetry, telling stories where histories are invented in the gaps of memories (personal and cultural) and identities disappear in their universal singularities of other (be)longings: Irishness in the multiple "voices" of the song and the landscape, and Roma in the everyday struggle of survival, dignity, and freedom. Through the unruly call of the remote (the disaster) in the flight of the refrain, each in their own way undo the stabilities of memory, (hi)story and identity.

Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the refrain as both the question of the native (home) and the "other" (unknown homeland), and Maurice Blanchot's notion of disaster, the article will think with the films' poetic remembering—the (un)becoming, a concept inspired by Eleanor Kaufman's discussion of Blanchot and Deleuze's rendition of ontology and temporality in relation to being and becoming (106–7). This will be a matter of disastrous longing, the silent and passive force of the (in)outside that cuts across time(s), space(s) and bodies sending life and thinking towards other memories–potentialities, pulsating within the unknown power of the refrain where duration and intensity, rather than action or perception, delineate the sonic and cinematic space-time (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 343). The Deleuzian concept of the time-image as a direct presentation of time deterritorialising the movement of the narrative and space of representation will provide the context for the films' discussion. Long-takes, aberrant movement, any-space-whatever, characters as seers rather than actants are the elements that will enable the discussion of cinematic imagery. Responding to the affective rather than textural terrains of the film experience, the discussion will adopt a film-philosophical and poetic approach to writing as an exercise in thinking with the films' fragmentary (un)doings. It will attempt to sense or to hear what comes into being carried by the expression of the refrain (territory and sound), and the inexpressible of the disaster, the memory of becoming with and outside the territory, milieu, culture. The impersonal "trauma" which eludes interpretation, affecting through the cracks opening to unknown homelands, will frame the thinking.

A Refrain…

> A child in the dark, gripped with fear comforts himself by singing under his breath […]. The song is like a rough sketch of a calming and stabilizing […] centre in the heart of chaos. But the song itself […] is in danger of breaking apart at any moment. […] home does not preexist […] one opens the circle, a crack in the sonoric wall of protection […] launches forth, hazards an improvisation. One ventures from home on a tread of a tune. (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 311)

For Deleuze and Guattari, the refrain is "a sonorous" or "dominated by sound" assemblage, but also "any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes (optical, gestural, motor, etc.)" (*Thousand Plateaus* 323). It is both a territory and a song, the home and an expressive force where the claimed spatiality is "harnessing" forces of the cosmos. It is also a problem of deterritorialisation and of a distance: "What is mine is first of all my distance" (319). The child, comforting himself by singing, will be pulled by the thread of a tune and leave the familiar territory, assembling another circle. "In the dark" (forces of chaos), "at home" (forces of the earth), "towards the world" (cosmic forces) are the three aspects of assembling a territory (a home and unknown homeland) (vii). The function of the refrain is to manage the distance between chaos and clichés (Ingala 188), to prevent the self and a territory from stagnating into identities and the rhythm of the song from turning into a reproductive meter (Deleuze and Guattari, Thousand 314). The three aspects of assembling are not successive moments but aspects of a single thing—the refrain as a repetition of a difference—"less a question of evolution than of passage, bridges and tunnels" (322).



Figures 3 and 4: Heaney as a child (Colm Seoighe) wandering through the village (left) and as an adult (Michael O'Chonfhlaola) "remembering" the place of Connemara (right). *Song of Granite*. Screenshots.

The refrain appears on the edge, on the edge of the land, on the edge of memory, whispering in a language beyond language, opening other paths, to the other side, across the threshold—of past, of future, of space, of time, of sky, of earth; intruding between signs, between life and death, without the beginning and the end. As a (non)human polyphony of a song, it offers itself as a passage, the Natal, or Native—a little formula that seeks recognition and remains the ground of polyphony—the land and an escape; an intense centre to which territory is linked and a crack to an outside of home and the self which entails a deterritorialisation (*Thousand Plateaus* 312). In diffusing itself it alters… As both a territorialising and de-territorialising force, a matter and capture of expression (a home and style), it is always in a process of undoing itself.

The stony sound of granite that accompanies Heaney's life is heard during the work in the stones being laid, and in the granite covering the landscape, in the fog diffused over the sea, and in the "father's and grandfather's stories" (*Song of Granite*). It is expressed in a shy child's fascination and a grown-up man's eyes always set on the horizon. The "most beautiful song of the world" in which, as Heaney remarks in the film, dwelled "the most precious and most incomprehensible dreams of mankind", haunts the landscape and the soul of the singer as he wanders through the landscape of Connemara as a child and reflects on his past as an elderly man in Seattle; marking his distances with a ribbon on the bird's nest, with the intensity of the singing, and with the solitude of a man carrying "home" with him. The stony sound, as it pulls along the threads of narrative, offers itself as a passage.

The Story…

> The pre-story [a scene], "the flashing circumstance" whereby the dazzled child sees […] the happy murder of [herself] which gives [her] words' silence. The tears are also a child's. Tears of a whole life, of all lives, the absolute dissolution which, be it joy or sorrow, the face, in its invisibility childish, lifts up, in order to shine in this dissolution and keep shining all the way to emotion that gives no sign at all. Immediately banally interpreted. (Blanchot, *Writing* 115)

The "flashing circumstance" is present in Papusza's child's face as she is dressed to wed her twenty-years older and unloved step-uncle to whom she was sold by her father, a face that foretells all the beauty, magic, anxiety and grief in a life of a poet's patient waiting, one bearing witness to the world she defied but did not question. As she sings in the language that will betray her people, the "thread of traditional tales, […] is carried out by in a tangle; anarchical, cyclical, unrepeatable and impossible to measure" (Blanchot, *Writing* 58). The

silent exteriority, which is also a home, that which "has never began and will never finish" (57), is already present in the child's orphaned gaze—a measure of extreme pain and extreme joy. With no origin to remember by opening of memory, it keeps watch: the night, the sounding of the disaster. Horror stories and fairy tales, mixed in the disastrous refrain: "sometimes, sometimes, sometimes". The disaster, as Blanchot writes, "is not our affair and has no regard for us" (2).



Figures 5 and 6: Papusza (Paloma Mirga) being dressed for the wedding and reading the newspaper (Jowita Budnik) where her poems have been published for the first time. *Papusza*. Screenshots.

The Song…

> We are spoken by our spaces, by the effects of territorializations, which pre-exist us, but never absolutely. […] One ventures from home on the thread of a tune, but home *is* the thread, a line and not a point. […] It is neither an originary point to which we may return, nor an end point (a telos) at which we will eventually arrive. We are always in-between. (Wise 303, 306)

Histories of fragmentary encounters are presented in singular moments and "heterogenous blocks" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 313). Singing at school and in the pubs, dancing, walks on banks of the river, night fishing, children's games, reading lessons paid with a stolen chicken, fortune telling at weddings, stories and conversations by campfires, and silences of winds and forests, are happenings "purged of historic events" (Wall 83).

Rituals, rites, and the ordinary, insignificant happenings come together in a strange kind of "geomorphism", inhabiting and opening the space-time for a moment of encounter-event from within joy, sadness, pain or fascination, hatred, jealousy or love (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 318). "Something in the world forces us to think," Deleuze writes:

> This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter. What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed. In this sense it is opposed to recognition." (*Difference* 176)

Captured by the irrational logic of the time-image and released by expressive force of the disastrous refrain, these encounter–events deterritorialise the sense of chronological time, action and History in favour of nonsonorous and imperceptible forces, duration and intensity. They demand attention by their insignificance that "takes time" (duration) and refers us to the

unhistorical (intensity), of "the other of all tenses" (the disastrous outside) (Blanchot, *Writing* 85). The Second World War, the persecution of the Roma during the Communist era or poverty in Ireland hover in the background, while the roughness of wind-driven snow, the shadow of the feeble sun, and the hunger and wars' devastation, are glimpsed between narratives that blend reality and fiction. These histories, invented between personal and cultural memories, cannot be communicated but, as Blanchot writes, are sensed in the language "always deported", residing in "the forgotten (and thus remembered) chamber of silent and still patience proper to the poetic" (*Writing* 78).

The "pockets of enchantment" in the midst of empty landscape and the still photographs of non-existing spaces carry the outside of forgetting.[4] Forgetting which, according to Papusza, saves the Gypsies, who have no memory from dying of sadness, and allows them to begin again. Forgetting that sends a man to look for all the knowledge at the bank of the river and to invite a child to make a poem (*Song of Granite*).



Figure 7 (left): The imaginary conversation between the child and his older self across the river in *Song of Granite*. Figure 8 (right): Polish Roma caravans travelling through the winter landscape in *Papusza*. Screenshots.

Here the facts are undone in the silent, intense presence of landscape and in brief, fragmentary encounters; in the memory of the people who could speak the language of birds, and the impossible love "answering with an always already to a never yet" (Blanchot, *Writing* 35). In a distant memory of a disappearing world forged by music and open road, and in visually captivating monochrome images defining the journey. In a tear of a young girl and in the madness of an elderly woman living in poverty despite her literary fame. In the nonlinear structures, which zigzag through the characters' lives, jumping back and forth to disconnected vignettes in different decades. In the intensity of songs, in the stony materiality of the invisible forces and in the empty time-image. In the silent materiality that sings its own song caught in multiple voices and in the passive, remote existence of the characters. In the clenched singing faces interlaced with the open landscape where the Irish history is "housed," and in the Gypsy unsettled soul. In a territory which, like the unknown homeland, is the "terrestrial source of all forces friendly and hostile, where everything is decided" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 321). In between words (dis)connected and strangled sometimes by the distance of impossible simplicity.

The actual archive footage and imaginative recordings, different in texture but seamlessly merged between documentary and fiction, challenge the representation in both the real-ness of the archive and "fictionality" of the fiction. For the Krauzes, the still photographs of places that no longer exist provide the "nostalgic" background to the dramatic narrative (Zelman); for Pat Collins, "the notion of showing other filmmakers' work" is a "conversation

across time" (Erickson). In a way, both can be thought of as an (infinite) conversation between times and spaces, silently unfolding in the elliptical narrative (*Song of Granite*) and nonchronological encounters (*Papusza*) with the displaced past. Here, the past and future sound the same, as in the Romani language and in the stony materiality of Heaney's untranslated singing. "A little time in its pure state" of the infinite instant in which change takes place, and a little (de)territorialising refrain where the past is neither remembered nor forgotten but repeated differently, are the ruptures that create and bridge the distances between unconnected places within the films (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 18). The impassionate passionate singing of life in the sadness of the "Galway Shawl" song and the night poems whispered by Papusza tell a story of (un)becoming: forgetting that remembers/remembering that forgets, creating a sense of other (be)longings where what one knows are (indivisible) distances (Pelbart 32). This memory–forgetting, rendered in the aberrant movement of the narratives and the stillness of space traversed by the sounds and silences of the song, taps into the collective experience of time immemorial which in the deep-focus photography, as Deleuze argues after Bergson, is "a sense of memory" or "adventures in memory" (*Cinema 2* 107, 108). It enables to sing new worlds into being. To dwell as a poet, not an assassin (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 345).

The truth of existence, of reality, of history is replaced by the false of affective expression which brings forth the insistent sensation of a homeland that belongs to nowhere and no one. It pierces through the vastness and motionlessness of landscape and is repeated to the rhythm of the nameless rustling of "fictive supposition (the scene that is not primal) outside history, experience, reality" (Blanchot, *Writing* 116). The train whistles of the future without caravans (*Papusza*) and the meeting of a child with his elderly self at the bank of the river (*Song of Granite*) belong to the events that cannot be interpreted or explained. The history, disaster, trauma interwoven into the nonlinear timelines, and the impersonal "mourning" of the past without hope of "knowing" the meaning of the strange hearing, is the "un-story" which bursts through the song. An experience of the Roma extermination during the Holocaust is dealt with by one of Papusza's best-known songs at the beginning of the film. But the film ventures into the war years only briefly. In *Song of Granite*, we never find out why Heaney has abandoned his wife and children. "Birds don't sing songs of glory. Ice wrapped wings. That's my story" is the answer written on the wall at the end of the film. Deterritorialised from the historical time by the "active forgetting," this un-story, "bereft of destiny, without presence" (Blanchot, *Writing* 85), pulls the narrative above its common-sense functionality into the liberating time-space of intuition and creating.[5] In this sense, as Deleuze and Guattari write, "what we make history with is the matter of a becoming, not the subject matter of a story" (*Thousand Plateaus* 347). Thus, the "generous effect of the disaster" as a different truth, a creative fabulation outside the sensory-motor logic of narrative, offers a possibility of different history. It is History where other space-times, other potential (unforeseeable) pasts and futures, are intuited in the fragments of broken stories repeated in the unknown of the immanence that the actual–virtual structure of the cinematic time-image unfolds; in the eternal return as a refrain which captures the "mute and unthinkable forces of Cosmos" (347).

The Image…

> Sound invades us, impels us, drags us, transpierces us. It takes leave of the earth, as much in order to drop us into a black hole as to open us up to a cosmos. It makes us want to die. (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 348)

The photographic still and silent enduring where what is being seen and heard happens through the cracks in between remembering and forgetting, past and future, actual and virtual in a strange space suspended and open, calls forth the cosmic forces of chaos. Here, the outside and inside coincide in the (unfamiliar) image, which puts mind in a direct encounter with imperceptible forces of perception, time and thought (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 20). The pensive mood and sombre tone of *Papusza*'s black-and-white shots, only livened up by the rhythmical sounds of a Romani orchestra, establishes enticingly poetic ambience that intensifies the experience. The vast landscape where the background and foreground (archive and fictional imaging) disappear into each other suspends meaning, "remembering" the events which never "are", which have just happened and are about to happen (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 73). The hypnotic and meditative singing of *Song of Granite*, which enhances the suggestive and perhaps cathartic function of the music, brings forth the disastrous longing as cinematic affect that obscures thought. Time undoes space and space, becoming any-whatever, makes time visible in "the hearing of strangeness", "the inevitability of there is" between being and non-being (Blanchot, *Writing* 116) where the power to act is replaced with the pre-personal, affective power to feel and to see (and hear) "properly" what "is" in the image (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 230).



Figure 9 (left): The Polish Roma community welcoming the arrival of a new harp in *Papusza*.
Figure 10 (right): Heaney writing on the wall at the end of the film in *Song of Granite*. Screenshots.

But it is also a question of the expressive in the rhythm and melody of the refrain, a question of a style which, as aesthetic territory, liberates the image from the narrative allowing neither identification nor distantiation. What we have instead is a fascination, a sympathetic resonance of "being one with […] in sympathy", neither subjective nor objective perception but an affect-thought which holds the viewer captive by the intense expression in time (image) (Bergson 69). Painterly compositions, moments of superstition which make perfect sense, historical facts that run from commentary, betrayals and friendships, beauty and horror are all filmed with the same "(dis)interested" perspective which shatters our expectations. This is the style (not separate from the content) forged for nothing but "the immanent movement" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 337).[6] It refuses the good and common sense of communication, the reproductive meter of the refrain and "order-words" of assassination (314, 79). Often cruel and violent ways of conservative, patriarchal Roma culture, as well as Papusza's seemingly passive submission rendered in the silent breathing of the captivating audio-visual assemblages, incite no judgment. Rage with which Wajs (Zbigniew Walerys), a loving but violent man, beats his wife and destroys his last caravan, or the pensive stillness of Papusza's withdrawal, are moments as ethically challenging as they are exquisite. Heaney's elusive and inconspicuous life resonates with the ostentatiously beautiful, remote landscape which sets the mood of the film and sings silently into the rhythm of the film's fragmented narratives, interlacing the space and the singer's solitary moments of existence, confusing times

and places, merging individual and universal. His singing "'An Tiarna Randall' with eyes closed and clutching [another] man's hand tightly as if to stop himself floating away" (Coyle), is a "pure optical and sound situation" bringing out the real, "the thing in itself, literally" and as such, by emancipating the senses, resists habitual (sensory-motor) reaction (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 20). The space of silence and stillness that underlies the song and poetry in the style of inaction opens a passage to the unknown past–future, the unity of life and thought. "Modes of life inspire ways of thinking; modes of thinking create ways of living. Life activates thought and thought in turn affirms life" (Deleuze, *Pure Immanence* 66). In being forced to think (unable to react), the mind, as Joshua Ramey observes after Deleuze, confronts not the terrors of existence, but the strange ecstasy of being burdened with "the alterity of other human beings, the murmurings of animal flesh, the vibratory patterns in mineral or microscopic levels" (128). With child-like "second" innocence of being close to the ground and open to cosmos, harvesting what is in "the work," it thinks and creates with/ "towards the world," in this milieu, opening up to other milieus. The (un)becoming song of the disastrous refrain brings the outside in and inside out into the longing of the beyond without beyond where, as Blanchot writes, "there is perhaps no cause to distinguish between to be or not to be, truth and error, death and life, for each refers back to the other" (*Writing* 89). Art comes from "somewhere else" and thought affirms life in the style of the art for nothing but immanent movement (*Thousand Plateaus* 337). The ecstatic moments of affect-thought outside the binary oppositions of joy and pain evoke life which, as Deleuze and Nietzsche remind us, cannot be judged. The moments of poetic aesthetic of the landscape and song that merges life and art is the un-knowledge we can trust: whispering of the forests and territories, winds, train whistles and campfires, the deterritorialising rhythmic blocks in the Natal as musical and poetic notions of undoing rather than origin (*Thousand Plateaus* 332). These kinds of images, as Deleuze proposed in *Cinema 2*, while disorienting, are also "therapeutic" to the extent that they enable thought where one can no longer react (172). This is a question of ethics rather than morality, a style of incorporeal transformations, of becoming with the image-world and of inventing new possibilities of life, "a style of life" (Deleuze, *Negotiations* 100).

> I am the age of the old Hag of Beara
> The age of Newgrange
> The age of the Great Deer
> I have two thousand years of that stinking sow that was Ireland resonating in my ears, in my mouth, in my eyes, in my head, in my dreams. (*Song of Granite*)

What Is Ireland? Who Is Gypsy? Of the Song

The expressions of musicality in each voice evoking the spirit of the singer, and a communal history carried by the singing voices in *Song of Granite*, are as much about humanity or a universality vibrating in the unsubtitled Irish songs as they are about Irish identity, as Collins has explained (Concannon). *Papusza*'s poetry intuits the immanence of life in multiple becomings, where the boundaries between the animate and inanimate, human and animal, the living and the dead are rendered imperceptible. And both films are as much a question of the "hearing of strangeness". This is not, however, a question of giving a voice or evoking a memory, but of invoking "a people" that, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest after Paul Klee, do not yet exist. The poet (artist) who taps into the forces of the Earth and opens up to the Cosmos in order to harness its forces in a "work" imagines the people to come and calls forth the new worlds into existence (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 337–8). It is the "fascination that threatens" and does not make sense, that allows for the opening up of identities towards

the disastrous outside: the unknown past and ungraspable future, in the infinite conversation of the untimely return.[7] "What I'm realising from such an immense sense of otherness of non-belonging anywhere is that there is so much, so much intensity and potentiality for other ways, other words, other times in life", Heaney confesses. It is, as Pat Collins remarks, using what one knows and making it about singing universally (Concannon). The true sense of "belonging" seems to belong to poetry, to song—in the moments of affective sounding of Cosmos ringing in the soul: "For the Cosmos itself is a refrain and the ear also (everything that has been taken for a labyrinth is in fact a refrain)" (*Thousand Plateaus* 347). The raw emotion emanating from the arcs and tones of singing performances, rather than words, carries "little phrases within itself, the intense centre of Natal", where the potential for unforeseeable becomings germinates, becoming sonorous (321). It resonates with the cosmic memory of the refrain and forgetting of the disaster. It transcends any borders.



Figures 11 and 12: Heaney singing in the pub (right) and building a stone wall (left) in *Song of Granite*. Screenshots.

The vibratory force of music which permeates the landscape and humanity deterritorialises the voice and sound, making each resonate with a different set of vibrations than those (chaotic forces) the refrain attempts to ward off. The unpronounceable disaster of the song-poetry is expressing All: the solitary voice of the Earth and the universal silence opening to the Cosmos. The personal/universal, culture/nature oppositions are undone in the singing of the Earth and the Cosmos. "This ambiguity between the territory and deterritorialisation is the ambiguity of the Natal" (*Thousand Plateaus* 325). The inertia of being and the outside of becoming are folded in the silent secret of this emotion that speaks of unknown places and dreams to the rhythm of the nameless rustling murmur which is not a language but enchantment, the hearing of strangeness; to be forever lost, or re-found, or aspiring to the unknown homeland (331). The song of the Earth evoking the deep, eternal breathing of the earth and the song of the Cosmos intuiting the most beautiful song in life, come together in the expression of the Outside—the trauma of poetry and philosophy indistinct from one another (Blanchot, *Writing* 116). Here the language of the Natal, the "flashing circumstance," resounding in the silence of poetry and song takes on a force of its own as the "collective autonomous utterance": a-signifying voices of rupture in the dominant structure of communication (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 214). The meaning-less gestures of affect between an impersonal myth and a personal fiction are dwelling in the photographic raptures of cinema where the inactive style is setting itself up in the midst of unthinkable situation creating affective (un)becoming passing between "people who are missing" and the "I" of the poet.

Both Heaney and Papusza are outsiders who sing the stories of their lands from the cosmic opening of the unknown. Both are solitary wonderers "haunted" by their gifts. They are present and absent, passive and remote in their essential unknowability and their strangely

orphaned singing. They move as if by something outside themselves. “Do you feel homesick? But where is home?”, replies Heaney to the interviewer’s question. “And who is a poet?”, asks Papusza when Ficowski calls her a poet. While their situations are different, they are both what Deleuze calls the “seers,” rather than actants or agents of what happens to them (*Cinema2*). As visionaries or “cosmic artisans” they operate upon “transversal lines” that cross, and thus unite different structures of materiality, desire and affect, accessing the nonhuman modes of consciousness, which connects them to the “whole of the universe” (Ramey 154).



Figure 13 (left): Papusza burning her poems. Figure 14 (right): Papusza’s pregnant mother looking at the doll in a shop window. *Papusza*. Screenshots.

Papusza—a doll—enchanted into existence between pride and shame by her mother’s fascination with the image of the other is robbed of the power to give sense. [8] “Nobody understands me except the woods and waters”, she sings.

Caught in the lure of the disastrous refrain between yes and no, but also between the potential to be (or do) and the potential not to be (or do), she accepts the choice—which is also an infinite suspension of choice—and discovers “the strength to create found in a receptive, even nurturing power to endure” (Ramey 257). The gesture of defiance when she asks God to seal her womb, and the poet’s mind unhinged with what she takes to be her curse (Fainaru), evince she knows otherwise. By refusing to conform to the demands of ordinary perception, she undoes the identity of both the “desiring subject and desired object” and chooses the other poetic (mid)nightly desire to fall silent and disappear (Blanchot, *Writing* 34).[9] In this way she is a passionate and “private thinker” rather than a victim. Shaped by the myths, fables and songs of his upbringing, Heaney moves silently, almost anonymously, through the landscape and history embedded in the emotion of the song, carrying the undoing in his inexpressive existence. Shy as a child and a withdrawn, enigmatic figure as an adult—apart from few moments of archived concerts we do not see much of his fame—he is a sort of “emigrant Everyman” (Clarke). Papusza’s character is defined by the silence of her poetry sounding in the movement of Gypsy nomadic life; Heaney is a restless spirit in the remoteness of the landscape expressed by intensity of singing emotion rather than words. He was born at night; she was cursed by the power of her gift. Seers and hearers of a quiet passion of solitary existence rather than action, they facilitate communication beyond ordinary boundaries of sense and sensibility, a more authentic communication with the original silence underneath the historical of time and the ruling structures of language (Blanchot, *Writing* 31).

> … there’s a land
> where forgetting where forgetting weighs
> gently upon worlds unnamed
> (Beckett, “bon bon il est un pays”)

The (Un)Becoming…

By the power of the image-song enabling those darker, slow-motion encounters with all that is concealed beneath things and all that comes to the surface of competing consciousnesses, a poet who is hearing the inside–outside of immanence is capable to for-see its truth. The song of granite and whispers of the forests that can be heard visually in the stillness of the Connemara's landscape and the aerial shots of horse-drawn caravans moving across the space which no longer exists, are the forces of deterritorialisation, always finding new openings. The nomadic and anarchic refrain, resounded in the aesthetic consciousness of the aberrant movement, in the actual–virtual structure and in the timelessness of black-and-white photography, bears witness to the everyday struggles and unimportant events. It is heard in ordinary gestures and extraordinary "hopes" of survival repeated nonidentically.

"Magical knowledge, like the magic of a cinema able to access the crystals of time", is an intuitive knowledge resonating with the (dark) legends and ritual practices between culture and nature (Ramey 152). These unhistorical aesthetic experiments with the cosmic memory–disjointed times and disparate spaces of experimenting—can be the "true genetic element" of new worlds (152). Papusza and Heaney reject the established knowledge because they want to know for themselves, by the "natural light" (Deleuze and Guattari, *What* 62). The "stinking sow that was Ireland" and all the Roma troubles carried with the forests' winds, resonate in their ears, their mouth, their heads, their dreams. Remembering the night's hour, the song of homeland becomes other in the insatiable longing for other landscapes, for strangeness within this landscape. The poetess writes herself as she does not recognise herself, for she does not become conscious of herself. From the non-position of the other she hears the stories of the Gypsy soul singing its unbounded life and understands the unknown nature. Heaney's song is excluded from the facile, humanistic hope that by singing he would transform his dark experience into greater consciousness. "When you are focused on it, when you are in the emotion of the song, you won't hear or see anything else around you" (*Song of Granite*). It is granite that sings in the voices of emotion, in the porous walls of stones, in the fog and the chambers of the sea, in the details lingering on the edges of worlds and languages, in "thingness of things" and on the open road to nowhere. It is in the child's wonder, in a bird's song, in the story of the beast, in time where the past and future mean the same.



Figure 15 (left): Telling the old stories in *Song of Granite*. Figure 16 (right): Papusza visited by her husband in the mental asylum in *Papusza*. Screenshots.

Between the child's wonder and the adult's pensive longing, the "Irishness" and the poetry of "Gypsy life" are the destabilised and destabilising forces of the song which brings one home and sets one on the open road: the inside–outside, the gift and terror of a disaster. A life that resonates through the disembodied embodiment of emotion in song/poetry pushes forth

through the narratives of (un)becoming in the way of telling that is more real than reality, truer than the facts or fiction of biography. It is not so much that the singer/poet is a character in this story, but rather the spirit of a nameless community that creates and undoes the identity of their history that she/he brings into being. Neither the hero of the people nor of the earth, the non-hero, a solitary wonderer, the artist, poet, singer taps into and mobilises the forces of the history unencountered and the future of disaster which has already happened. In forgetting and in the unhistorical, "without the veil of which the man would never have courage to begin", the potentiality of the immanent future resides in the silence (of song) and in the (mid)night poetry (Nietzsche 68).

The refrain, the lullaby, the folk song, the war song, an immense song of the people in the raw emotion of the song brings into play affects and nations in the tragic intermingling of worlds—the home and exile, the I and the other, the Polish Roma woman poet caught in between cultural identities, the Irish singer equally unsettled at home and abroad. The memory of the refrain flows through the singing bodies and comes to the poet's passive patient waiting. The poet offers glimpses beyond language, and the language in which they are at home is a language of the other, always other outside of everything, between, where we know ourselves (not knowing this) to be others (Blanchot, *Writing* 79). And this is not a question of poetry's or songs' "grand" meaning but of their childlike simplicity—the beauty and simplicity of Papusza's poetry, reflected in the series of tableaus, postcards from nowhere, and in Heaney's detached, unknowable presence; in the gentleness of his child-like sensibility. An innocence of life, as Blanchot has it, that loses itself in an obscure intimacy, the whole reality whose spirit no image can represent (*Writing* 88).

When the child sings to herself/himself or cries without knowing (outside history, reality, experience) he or she, as Deleuze and Guattari suggested, has wings already, becomes celestial, enfolded in "the memory of an angel or rather the becoming of a cosmos" (*Thousand Plateaus* 350). The poet-child-philosopher who hears the strangeness of the longing, desiring without desire (for) and who in her/his passive attention to being becomes another other, undoes the self and the otherness of the other in the gaps of memories without memory. The cosmic force was already present in the material, the great refrain in the little refrains (350), little moments between possible dramas. Here, silence speaks in the interstices of language, nonchronological skipping between different times, in the spirit of the singer and the emotion of song repeated in the black-and-white expression of the disastrous refrain. The silence that needs to be kept silent cannot be brought to light by representation but must be allowed to dream, to sleep under memory's porous texture breathing gently or whispering silently, dreaming from the depth of time's surface, desiring, always desiring, forever pulsating with-in and resonating with-out in time unchanged. Heard in the unknown sounding of the Natal.

Thus, with the disastrous patient attention to the forces of poetic (un)doing, rather than to interpretation and representation, the films gift us with a chance of forgetting, and thus growing out of ourselves. This is an anarchic philosophy of living, where life activates thought and thought, in turn, affirms life. The trauma that calls for inventing other selves (a people) to come—impossible and radically unknown. The gift of experimenting not hope. In both films it is a power of song and of poetry that, by undoing history, identity and memory, creates life always to come: a tragic gift of a disaster repeated in the eternal return of "unavowable" secret. We cannot know what the consequences of the action will be until after it happens; and when nothing happens, in waiting, we are perhaps able for an instant to catch the poetic truth that cannot be said. To be silent with the other, with the landscape, with singing granite, listening to silences and solitudes in their songs, to respond in resonance, neither there nor here, being

together without assemblage (Nancy). Producing a deterritorialised refrain, of becoming with, as the end of music releasing it to the Cosmos—that is more important than building a new system (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 350).

This is the terrible power of disaster that disorients the absolute in the silent suspension between being and becoming where the (mid)night is "quietly asserting itself in its active inaction" (Kaufman 98). It is present, pulsating in the burning fires of celebration and assassination, in the mountains stretched to the heavens,

indecisive force
voice of no one
Where nothing is said, and nothing is kept silent.

Notes

[1] The writing on the subject of history in relation to memory, archive and intertextuality in film includes work by Robert A. Rosenstone, Mary Ann Doane, Ágnes Pethő, and Domietta Torlasco.

[2] Both directors voice their dislike of biopics and both films belong to the tradition of documentary that disregard its conventional filmmaking (Zelman; Concannon; Brown and Vidal).

[3] As a young girl, Papusza defied her family's wishes and learned to read and write at a time when Gypsy literacy was rare. After her talent was discovered by Polish poet Jan Ficowski, who encouraged her to write and publish her work, she was cast out for the transgressions against the norms of her community. Ficowski's translations, as well as his own work on Polish Roma, amongst whom he spent two years hiding from the state authorities, has been received as an ultimate betrayal ("revealing the secrets") by the Roma community.

[4] Enchantment is thought of here as a form of intuition similar to Bergson's sympathetic durational resonance or attentiveness as articulated by Jane Bennett as a "mood which requires a cultivated form of perception, and meticulous attentiveness to the singular specificity of things" (37).

[5] According to Nietzsche, we must know the right time to forget as well as the right time to remember; and instinctively see when it is necessary to feel historically, and when unhistorically. Petar Ramadanovic has written on the "active forgetting", which according to Nietzsche is paradoxically a form of forgetting and releasing, taking responsibility for the past. Intuition for Bergson is a method of thinking in the experience of the passage of time. By attending to the internal rhythm of one's own duration, Bergson claims we are able to move outward, and seek a sympathetic resonance with the rhythm of the objects, materials, and elements surrounding us (20).

[6] The artist, Deleuze and Guattari write, turns his or her attention to the microscopic, to crystals, molecules, atoms, and particles, not for scientific conformity, but for movement, for nothing but immanent movement (*Thousand Plateaus* 337).

[7] "What fascinates us," Blanchot writes, "robs us of our power to give sense. It abandons its 'sensory' nature, abandons the world, draws back from the world, and draws us along" (*Space* 32).

[8] A spirit at her birth predicted that Papusza would bring either great honour or great shame to her people and as the film presents it, she essentially did both.

[9] Midnight always to come, or always just past, marks a convergence between Deleuzian and Blanchotian formulations of an atemporal temporality, a state of becoming as opposed to being. As such, it marks both the repetitiveness and the perpetual displacement of time (Kaufman 98).

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