Black suns in gold: an essay about chaos, art, and life

What is the relationship between chaos, art, and life? It always impressed me how some writers and artists articulate excess in their lives - creativity, madness, impetuosity, vitality. In David Lawrence’s *Chaos in Poetry* essay, the author talked about chaos as something necessary not only for artistic productions but also for all human life due to consequences of sense and order. I consider this essay as a reference to assert how language connects the chaos present in the art to life.

According to Lawrence, the knowledge produced by humanity is an “umbrella” to protect us from the wild sun of chaos. When people face an issue, the solution becomes common over time - such as a parasol to defend them from unreliable situations. After putting away the storm of the problem with a solution, it is incorporated into human life and used to keep people safe from tribulations.

Nevertheless, fatigued with their lives, human beings make slits underneath the umbrella to pass a few sunbeams. This sunlight is the chaos responsible for *re*signifying life, and poetry the tool to tear the umbrella.

Hence, we can say art modifies life, or rather: art offers elements that might be used to look at life in another way, for example: The series of paintings *Montaigne de Sainte-Victoire* by Paul Cézanne are not equal - they belong to Cézanne, therefore nobody ever will look at that mountain the same way, as mentioned by Gilles Deleuze. Something similar to the sky of Van Gogh. Could there be a sky deeper than his *The Starry Night*?

When I saw the sea for the first time, I thought: “An infinitude of noisy water in permanent movement. How beautiful! But I had already seen poems better than this.” My comprehension of the sea was due to a couple of poems that condemned me to look for a sea that I will never find. My understanding of the sea is beyond common, and my understanding is a derivative of poems that I have read - other perceptions I have seen. However, it seems to bring an immediate problem: stereotypes.

A matter of limits: insufficiency of expression

Those who have tasted wine professionally may have heard of the expression of *drinking stereotypes*. This expression exists because people without refined taste who want to grab it, try to drink wine to feel flavors yet mentioned. To feel these stereotyped flavors is a condition to taste the wine, otherwise, you have not a refined taste.

On the other hand, when we talk about perceptions that modify our interpretation of the world, we do not refer to stereotypes, but to creativity. When there is not the right way to feel the world or a specific flavor to taste, we have to try another way. However, we got used to a safe state of mind and refused to use it to look outside from our once inventive way, such as the point where Lawrence desired nonsense and chaos among sense and order to wake up humans of a lethargic state. Only the art that does not respect the bounds of life would wake up people.

The movie *This Side of Paradise* by Jonas Mekas was filmed when President Kennedy was murdered. Jonas Mekas took his family to distract them on that occasion. A silly movie, we would say. Just normal things made by a family in holidays. If you consider the whole movie without any information, or maybe if you watch it knowing the context, it is probable that you would still not like it. For me, the camera lens cannot capture all the magic of that movie because it broke the limits of cinema. It is not enough just to watch it, considering that the lens is not enough to seize the film, it is necessary to go beyond the movie.

Henri Michaux said poems kill poetry. When one writes a poem, borders and guidelines limit their poetry, so it is necessary to make poems in other ways, seeking an end for the common shape of poems. If with Mekas we have the insufficiency of artistic expression to contain the entirety of the event, with Michaux we have the impossibility of the event might be properly expressed by artistic expression.

The relationship between poetry, life, and chaos made by Lawrence is only possible because art is a matter of limits. Art does not obey limits, on the contrary, art pierces limits. However, there is a determinant point: If art breaks the borders, it is due to art to mark its borderlands. Art is such as the surface of an unexplored land determining its proper edges. But to understand it, it is interesting, at first, to observe Maurice Blanchot’s concern about Surrealism and Antonin Artaud’s disruption.

The crack-up

Surrealism was an artistic movement founded by André Breton and Phillipe Soupault in the early XX century. This movement was responsible for giving another meaning to art by employing new methods and experiments, such as *automatic writing* in literature, and the incorporation of dreams in paintings with Dalí and Magritte - also in cinema with Buñuel and Cocteau. According to Blanchot, Surrealism was an affirmation of multiplicity because artists and their productions are not aligned to only one method. However, Artaud, a component of that movement, made the surrealist’s multiplicity turn around against itself: When Breton related the meaning of the word revolutionary present in surrealism to political partisanship, Artaud was not able to bear such reduction.[[1]](#footnote-1) It was too much for Artaud to give up on his impotence and solitude - the appliances of his language. But what if in a certain way it was the possibility to be understood or better accepted? For Artaud, to locate his thoughts outside himself would hinder the existence of his art, such that it was necessary to keep himself away from the blow of his thoughts.

According to Deleuze, the erosion of thought that Artaud cannot give up is related to Scott Fitzgerald’s words: “All life is a process of breaking down.” Fitzgerald sees a crucial relevance in the process of breaking down because this crack-up, this flaw, is exactly what enables him to produce. After all, as sustained by Deleuze: health does not suffice, it is necessary to flirt with the crack up. Artaud could not abandon his suffering, likewise, once it was not possible for Fitzgerald to stop drinking alcohol because both would end the possibility of their arts.

Despite this, the flaw is not the problem. The flaw is what provides the ditch deeper and, at the same time, which permit reaches out the surface through the language and, occasionally - a language that nothing communicates.

A matter of language: worlds inside the world

Blanchot determines two types of words used to write: one immediate and another essential. The first one, the immediate word, regardless of the common use of language where there is no thickness between what we say and the object or purpose, the word such as a transparent crystal ever at disposal in our daily lives. For example: the word *flower* is immediately related to an image of a flower and not to the term flower as a language unresponsive references outside itself. In resume, the immediate word is used to communicate.

The essential word is when the language takes back its thickness and difference to the world. It is not related to communication because it is the language speaking by itself. As maintained by Blanchot, the immediate word is about representation and presence of something that is not here, whereas the essential word is absence once it creates new worlds and notions. Having no reference outside itself, the word flower is not related to a flower anymore; it exists by itself and might appear as *rwlofe* or anything else, not necessarily as our common notion of a flower.

The essential word devoids the language of any representation. As stated by Franz Kafka: a poem dies when it becomes a mere instrument of a message. What makes a poem that represents nothing to be defined like language are the worlds which it makes arise, such as little worlds inside this world.

If the ache is an opportunity of expression and somehow is not possible to enunciate it to this world, there is no language - the devastation of oneself becomes real. Fitzgerald stated: “The crack’s in me”; but by itself, it does not mean a great thing if the person who the flaw inflames cannot give it an *aperture* to the world. Supposing it is not possible to be turned into language, the crack threats any other possibility. Altogether: *Whether there is a depth, there is the surface*. The surface is not the language, but the reality, the common world. Some mad people pass life drawing or writing without relating their reality to their depth. The reason is the absence of language in their works, they do not define any difference, and do not develop any aperture to this world. Artaud was schizophrenic but established a relationship between his writings and the erosion of his thoughts which enabled him to not only keep the awareness but unfasten his work to the world.

Language connects art to the world. And it is not necessary to have something to say, as even Artaud declared: “I started out in literature by writing books in order to say that I could not write anything at all. […] All my works have been and can only ever be built on nothingness.” To write down something to say that there is nothing to say. Likewise, the filmmaker Eduardo Coutinho claimed something similar about making movies: “You do not need to have something to say to make a movie, you only have to know how to tell this nothing”. It does not matter if there is nothing to say since it is possible to assemble a language from it. If a work is understood as art, then there is language. Art is not related to art expositions or books for sale in a bookstore, or even comprehension, but an overture to the world: to be read or viewed, interpreted, and reinterpreted, also misunderstood and understood. The matter resides in embracing a possibility not found in oneself: the point in which any personal experience expressed becomes impersonal. Touch the language is to touch life, the reason Deleuze says that to write is always a question of health. All this process might demand the crack-up, but the openness to the world is nothing more than life.

Black suns in gold (A conclusion)

Considering a specific aspect between poetry and life, it is possible to view that art - without obeying bounds - seeps the senses of the understanding. With personal experiences, I reached a comprehension not aligned to a common notion of art; the reason for choosing *Poetry and Chaos* by David Lawrence as a reference. Lawrence determines life as not sufficient by itself - ever requiring new ways to look to the world. Although the issues force humanity to find other possibilities, it is through the poetry that people slit the parasol created to protect themselves from the sun (chaos), letting pass its frightful light.

From that, was exposed a conception concerning not only to poetry but to art as owning its proper limits, focusing on how it affects life. Thus, the language goes by to occupy the center of the essay - not to assert how it represents the artist, but to say how language escapes from the communicates function to pursue its own world. Then, settling down some writers as examples, my intention was sifting experiences lacking the function to represent, and not randomly, experiences related to sorrow, whose art emerges more as a violent movement to remain alive, than an aesthetic targeting. The chaos does not come from the sun in the sky, but from an inner sun consuming the body, demanding something else than staying at the same perception or understanding about the things. Such a move, though as a mistake, is exactly the way how art and life become possible.

Lawrence says that animals and humans were living in grace, but humans lost grace at the creation of order, only remaining a glimpse of the return to chaos - considering that umbrellas and parasols have become absolute, and we cannot see the sun gleaming anymore. If we glimpse the chaos throughout *sunflakes*, that is, around us in poetry, nature, and animals would be due to the impossibility of chaos to be contained. Hence, the world has true and real poetry, everything depends on how we react to that: to live camouflaged in our bodies and souls, or turn ourselves to the wild sun. And considering people once were like animals, Lawrence concludes: “All that we have to do is to accept the true chaos that we are, like the jaguar dappled with black suns in gold.”

Lawrence is grateful for the existence of poetry everywhere, in his own words: the “air at dawn, before it is light.” Concerning everything said, I just want to stay looking at the sky, remembering what Hart Crane once said: “There are no stars tonight, but those of memory.”

1. Afterward Artaud claimed in a friendly letter to Breton: “I have my own idea of birth, of life, of death, of reality, and of destiny, and I do not allow any others imposed on me or even suggested to me for I do not participate in any of the general ideas through which I could have with any other man than myself.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)