‘It’s a sad and beautiful world’: The Poststructuralist Conception of Communication and Jim Jarmusch’s Films

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Contents

Abstract

The thesis describes the main elements of communication from a poststructuralist vantage point and explores the implications for the theories of interpersonal, interlingual and intercultural as well as mediated communication. It also examines the theme of otherness and communication with a stranger in the poststructuralist literature. The research extends the prior work on the relationship between communication theory and poststructuralism. I argue that poststructuralists' contribution to communication theory has been underappreciated by some scholars in the field due to either ascription of the poststructuralist authors to different communication traditions or due to misinterpretations of their works. Showing that Jacques Derrida's works are at the heart of poststructuralism, I dispel the main misinterpretations of deconstruction, including the misjudgement of the Derridean take on objectivity, intentionality, and meaning, to name a few. I reconstruct his and Roland Barthes' as well as Julia Kristeva's insights on communication applying Harold Lasswell's construct, demonstrating the underlying similarities in their ideas, and re-evaluate the poststructuralist theory of communication using five criteria appropriate for interpretative cultural theories. The results show that the theory meets all the standards of a 'good' theory, except the community of agreement – owing to the misinterpretations of poststructuralism that this thesis dispels. Drawing on poststructuralist ideas, I explore communication in Jarmusch's films as well as encounters with and responses to otherness within them. The thesis looks at the main elements of communication in Jarmusch's films from the poststructuralist perspective and especially focuses on how's and when's of 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' communication between the characters. The analysis leads to the conclusion, stemming from both poststructuralists' works and Jarmusch's films, that communication carries the trace of otherness, i.e., miscommunication, in itself and that structurally every interaction with the other is a subject to 'failure'. Therefore, miscommunication should not be treated as a negative outcome of the process of communication. Furthermore, it should not be seen as a problem that has to be solved but rather as a paradox that needs to be managed. Perhaps, the thesis suggest, the aspiration of successful communication is related to the mentality that the dominant neo-liberal ideology 'naturalises' and enforces on us. This assumption might be addressed in future studies.

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1. Introduction

In the film *Down by Law* (1986), Bob (Roberto Benigni) who is an Italian tourist in America approaches a local stranger Zack (Tom Waits), drinking whiskey and humming a tune under his breath. Willing to start a conversation with him, Bob loudly pours out the words '*Is* a sad and beautiful world' in a strong Italian accent. Zack approves of the profound philosophical insight of the foreigner but, after having had a tough night, prefers to be left alone. He rudely responds to the alien, telling him to 'buzz off'. Bob thanks his interlocutor politely, believing he said something like 'good evening' and/or 'nice to meet you', and adds 'Buzz offa to you too'. Zack replies to this with a note of irritation in his voice 'No, buzz off' and, realising that the foreigner has not mastered English yet, indicates he go away with a hand gesture. Bob turns around, takes out a pen and a notebook full of English expressions from his pocket and enters a new phrasal verb to his widening vocabulary: 'Buzz off'. Yet, the meaning he has 'understood' and recorded was incorrect.

This is an epitomising comic situation in Jim Jarmusch's films. It is typical in at least two ways. First, it involves a foreigner, the other, who turns up, stirs up the locals and infuses fresh air into their lives. S/he usually resurrects and reconnects the natives by showing them a different angle of interpreting, seeing and perceiving their own world. At first, the locals struggle accepting the foreigner and they all have trouble communicating, but especially the foreigner. However, ultimately, a stranger and the natives reconcile and get along. Second, it revolves around the problems and possibilities of language, including its interlingual and intercultural, verbal and non-verbal aspects, such as body language. As a rule, the conversation is pervaded with miscommunication and misunderstanding that constantly recurs between the characters.

This thesis is concerned with such typical situations underpinning Jarmusch's films, arguing that, if explored thoroughly, they can provide us with new insights into human communication and especially misunderstanding – a common theme in the work of poststructuralists. For this and further reasons, I argue that the poststructuralist conception of communication is reflected in Jarmusch's films. I will come back to the topic of poststructuralism and communication in a few pages. First of all, I would like to discuss in greater detail different types and aspects of communication Jarmusch portrays and explores

in his films and elucidate why it is important to study them. I will then justify my choice as well as the merits of studying communication in the medium of film and independent movies in particular. The remaining part of the introduction proceeds by providing the rationale for why the poststructuralist approach is the most suitable theoretical framework for this work. Finally, I outline the aims and research questions of the thesis and introduce the structure of the work.

It has been noticed and indicated by scholars and critics (Villella 2001; Thiltges 2002; Wood 2003, p. 345, Suarez 2007; Richardson 2010a; Tasker 2010, p. 208; Piazza 2015, p. 14; Platt 2015; O'Meara 2018, p. 62) that the problems of language and communication in general, but especially miscommunication and misunderstanding, are the keynote in Jarmusch's movies. However, this topic is still insufficiently explored in scholarship, a research gap that this thesis seeks to fill. In one interview the director admitted that he himself feels 'inarticulate', and that in his films, 'the dialogue is so minimal and often there's – well, *always* – there's some kind of communication problem between people' (Jarmusch and Shapiro 2001, p. 64)[1]. Elsewhere, he emphasised being 'drawn to humour, miscommunication, and things that arise out of misunderstanding' (Jarmusch and Andrew 2001, p. 193). All of this may seem quite obvious if one has seen at least one of his films. Interestingly, the phrase with which I began – '*Is* a sad and beautiful world' – uttered by Benigni's character in *Down by Law* was also the result of some sort of misunderstanding. To be more exact, it was Benigni's mistake that fitted the story, the surroundings, and the atmosphere of the movie so well that the director decided to keep it:

> In a way, [Roberto's line] describes the whole world', Jarmusch says in a phone interview from his office in New York City, adding that Benigni was supposed to say 'sad and beautiful song' but kept botching it. 'But being in New Orleans, I thought it just struck the right note cosmically, by accident – especially for New Orleans, and the movie being in black-and-white, and what was going on with the story (Jarmusch and Lee Simmons 2002, n. p.).

[1] Although some critics might argue that, from a poststructuralist position, one should not focus too much on what an author has to say about their intentions outside of their own texts, I believe such a position is too simplistic. I respect and attend to Jarmusch's stated intentions and therefore regard his interviews as lucrative sources of information.

In this interview, Jarmusch did not go into detail, explaining why the line 'describes the whole world' but he did – at least implicitly – in other interviews. So, what is so sad and beautiful – about this story and this world?

The film, that at least by 1992 was the absolute favourite of his movies for Jarmusch himself, in his own words, 'is ultimately about, that he [Bob, who is Italian and speaks very little English] is robbed of this basic element of communication' (Jarmusch et al. 2001, p. 78), i.e., the English language. Bob, who is trapped with two Americans, Zack and Jack (John Lurie), in cell of a Louisiana prison, constantly attempts to communicate with his fellows but his communication often 'fails' either because his interlocutors do not want to communicate or because Bob cannot express himself freely in their mother tongue. Although many funny situations emerge due to this fact, it is rather sad that, being in the same space, they cannot talk and understand each other perfectly. They can communicate – for better or worse – to some extent, but Jarmusch seems to suggest there would still be *something missing* even if Bob spoke English fluently. Being from different 'tribes', Jack and Zack's duo and Bob would never perceive things the same way due to the structuration of their languages. This is why Zack is so surprised when he finds out that Bob reads American poetry in Italian: 'Robert Frost, in Italian?' he asks Bob frowning, as if adding with his eyebrows a sceptical 'Really?' For Zack, poetry appears to be truly appreciated only in the original. Indeed, even the subject of their conversation, Robert Frost, claimed that poetry is 'what gets lost in translation'[2]. Jarmusch has the same opinion:

> I admire poets more than any other artists. You can't translate their work, it is bound up entirely with the character of their culture and language. Poetry is a very abstract thing, very tribal, because only the poet's own tribe can appreciate the music of their language – it's the opposite of music or silent films, they are universal, and in another way I think they are higher forms. But you can't translate poetry, and that's why I respect poets the most (Jarmusch et al. 2001, pp. 78–79).

This example of untranslatable poetry can be related to Jacques Derrida's idea that translation is both necessary and yet in some sense impossible (Derrida 1985; 2001). Jarmusch continues to abstract and generalise the problems of language:

[2] It should be noted that the phrase is only attributed to the poet. Scholars fail to find out the source of it and argue that it is likely an inaccurate citation and interpretation of Frost's actual words (Yang 2008).

> Problems of language make this planet so beautiful and strange. We all live on the same planet but we can't all talk to each other, and that's also the reason for the sad fact that certain ideological solutions which have been introduced throughout history, like that of Marx and Engels, can never actually work. They only work theoretically, in a way, on a global scale, but we can never break free of that tribal feeling we have. The problems of language are to me the most sad and beautiful thing. That we think of things in different ways because the structures of our languages are different is what makes everything interesting (Jarmusch et al. 2001, pp. 78–79).

I do not want to overload the reader with a hasty analysis of examples that I will treat later in the analytical part of the work, but one strong visual metaphor illustrating this point can be seen when Bob, gifted with a 'talent' for happiness, positivity, and the naivety of a child, draws a window on the wall of the prison. 'Excuse me', says Bob, asking for some attention from Jack, 'Do you say in English, "I look *hat* the window," or do you say in English, "I look *hout* the window"?' 'Well, in this case, Bob', explains Jack, 'I'm afraid you gotta say, "I look at the window"'. The scene speaks volumes about the transformative and productive power of imagination and how, thanks to this ability to simulate the mind, Bob is a free spirit that cannot be confined by the physical walls of the prison. It is also clear that Bob is the one who provides and maintains the hope of freedom in the cell. However, there is so much more in this scene.

The same cell, at least for the purposes of illustrating Jarmusch's point, can be interpreted as the space that different nations are sharing; it is a small representation of our planet, whereas the window on the wall is language. The play on prepositions, then, reveals that speaking in different languages is like looking *through* different windows that shows different views of the world. When a foreigner uses a foreign language, he can only look *at* the window of the locals, but never *through* it, which is sad. However, there is something beautiful in that: that we can still be together and communicate with each other without being able to speak the same language and view the world the same. There is also something beautiful in the fact that we can still interpret the signs of the foreign language or culture without fully comprehending them. To some extent, these signs become empty, as Roland Barthes argued in *Empire of Signs* (1970), and can be filled with new meaning. On multiple occasions, Jarmusch stressed that he appreciates the state of uncertainty when he is unsure whether he interpreted an unfamiliar language or culture in the right way as well as the benefits of a possible misinterpretation (Jarmusch et al. 2001, p. 78; Jarmusch

and Mordue 2001, p. 82, p. 86; Jarmusch and Andrew 2001, p. 193): first, interpreting an unknown language or culture 'helps your imagination' (Jarmusch and Mordue 2001, p. 82); second, a possible and probable misinterpretation 'brings something new' (Jarmusch and Mordue 2001, p. 86). It is true that the Tower of Babel is 'simultaneously the symbol of a utopia of communication and of the disastrous consequences that followed when attempting to build that very utopia' (Boni 2016, p., 41). But the curse of the Tower of Babel, after all, is also a blessing, Jarmusch suggests.

Maybe we do not always need to know and use the same language system to understand each other. Sometimes even silence speaks louder than words. Our communication can be compared to a dotted line: we tend to notice and reflect on the dots of it, but not the spaces. Jarmusch seems to be equally interested in both the dots and the spaces. He pays special attention to sometimes comfortable because relaxed ('positive'), sometimes not so comfortable because awkward ('negative') silences. He himself claims, that pauses for him are often more important than words: 'Often the *calm moment* when people aren't saying anything is much more important than the dialogue. Because it's true in life' (Jarmusch and Shapiro 2001, p. 60, emphasis in the original). Jarmusch therefore appreciates 'the moments between dialogue when you understand what's happening between people without them saying anything' (Jarmusch and Keogh 2001, p. 106). Thus, as much as Jarmusch is fascinated by language and languages, he appreciates the ways we communicate ourselves and our emotions in other ways: 'Language is very important, but it is not necessarily the primary way of knowing what someone is feeling' (Jarmusch and Andrew 2001, p. 185); 'People express their emotions in a lot of ways other than just by language' (Jarmusch 2001, p. 144); 'You can read how people feel or where they're at emotionally, without knowing what language they speak' (Jarmusch and Rosenbaum 2001, p. 125). His analysis of his film suggests that communication starts taking place not when the characters speak, but, on the contrary, when they lapse into silence.

It is a well-known claim that over half of our information is transmitted through the body language[3] the *conventions* of which may vary from culture to culture, but generally it is the language everybody 'speaks' regardless the cultural and linguistic differences. The

[3] I refer to the famous 7–38–55 percent communication rule that comes from Albert Mehrabian's studies conducted in 1960s. He (1971) claimed that only 7 percent of our communication is verbal, 38 percent is vocal and 55 percent is non-verbal.

non-verbal aspects of communication have been essential for the medium of film since its silent genesis. Allan Pease points out that Charlie Chaplin along with other silent movie actors excelled at body language; 'they were the only means of communication available on the screen' (Pease 1984, p. 5). Non-verbal communication was the sole criterion of their craft: 'Each actor was classed as good or bad by the extent to which he could use gestures and other body signals to communicate effectively' (ibid.). Jarmusch claims that 'The language of acting is not primarily spoken language' (ibid.). Nicholas Ray, with whom Jarmusch worked as his assistant, once compared acting to playing the piano: 'The dialogue is just the left hand, the melody is in the eyes' (Ray, cited in Jarmusch and Andrew 2001, p. 185). One might add that it is the 'melody' we can recognise and relate to. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty remarks, films 'directly present to us that special way of being in the world, of dealing with things and other people, which we can see in the sign language of gesture and gaze and which clearly defines each person we know' (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p. 58). Film has this power to show us *how* we are in the world, *how* we are next to each other and capture our bodily reactions to each other when we interact in social situations. Oksana Bulgakova (2017) sees cinema as a sort of an archive of the corporeal, the 'document of somatic history' (Hedberg Olenina and Schulzki 2017, n.p.). If we accept such conceptualization of cinema, Jarmusch's films are great contributions to these chronicles.

Jarmusch is a director who does not overemphasise the importance of dialogue and words in general. Sara Piazza rightly observed that he is one of a few filmmakers who take up in their works the battle against verbocentrism (Piazza 2015, p. 178). That does not mean that he intentionally avoids verbalisation. Yet, in his films, the director uses various techniques of relativisation whereby speech is inscribed, as Chion explained, 'in a visual, rhythmic, gestural, and sensory totality where it would not have to be the central and determining element' (Chion 1994, p. 5). Plainly put, Jarmusch decenters speech in film. In my view, he not only battles against verbocentrism, but also against logocentrism, fighting hard not to allow the spoken word to have power over the written word. One of the ways that Jarmusch decenters speech is simply by paying attention to writing. If a character quotes from a book, then the text is presented on the screen in both written and spoken form. If a character reads or writes poetry, we see the verses on screen in addition to hearing them recited in voice-over. However, that is not to say that Jarmusch prioritises the written word over the spoken word. Rather, he keeps a representational balance and

artistically explores the relationship between the two. Though the importance of written communication varies by degrees, it is always a significant factor in many of Jarmusch's movies. Sometimes, writing is emphasised as a means of communication; other times, it is emphasised as just a way of life; and yet other times, it literally transforms the lives of his protagonists.

In his films, one can notice a lot of mediated communication (using carrier pigeons, mailing letters, talking on a landline phone, etc.). At the same time, one can observe the avoidance of new communications technology (mobile phones, smartphones, computers, social media, etc.). Jarmusch sometimes juxtaposes the old media and the new media. The director also explores the possibilities of very alternative and questionable communication forms, such as communication by distance where no physical interaction and sensory channels are involved. Or, for example, communication with animals – hearing them 'speak'. Such communication is, however, not under the scope of my thesis, as I am interested only in common ways of human communication through (at least once) traditional channels and media. In any event, the plethora of communicative means and wide spectrum of associated problems present in Jarmusch's films deserve an assiduous scholarly attention not yet in evidence.

One might nevertheless ask – why on Earth, should one study communication in film? How can we understand anything about the 'real' human communication while looking at the construct of it, i.e. in the communication between the characters in films? In line with poststructuralist theory, I am convinced that all communication is structured by the figure of discourse and is, in a way, constructed[4]. Therefore, studying cinematic communication might be just as informative as studying real linguistic and non-linguistic exchanges. Furthermore, abstracting various phenomena, deriving theories from the study of art and especially literature is a common practice of many poststructuralist authors whose works I focus on[5]. All of them, in one way or another, draw on the founder of

[4] Michel Foucault proposed in 'The Order of Discourse' (1970) that communication is one of the 'great myths of European culture'. As Nelson comments, 'For Foucault, communication is a historically constructed and differential concept, not an eternal and independent feature of human nature' (Nelson 1985, p. 5).

[5] Roland Barthes, for example, analysed and generalised lovers' discourse drawing on, among other creative works, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*; Julia Kristeva looked at the notion of a stranger and the experiences of a foreigner drawing on Greek tragedy, the Bible, and the literature of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment, and the twentieth century, etc.

psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud who argued that libidinal drives flow out into the creative works finding a form of social value and cultural acceptance (Freud 1991). If that is true, then studying art can inform us about the repressed in our unconscious.

The products of human imagination can be viewed as a kind of Pandora's box: some problems and tensions that we encounter in the real can be very accurately captured in creative works. Therefore, the imaginary word can inform us about those issues and make facing them easier. Similarly like Jeffrey St. John who argued that literature and postmodernist William Gaddis' novels specifically 'shine on communication a light … that reveals how imaginative confrontation with the realities of failure may strengthen our understanding of why, and with what effects, humans do or do not communicate with one another' (John 2006, p. 250), I believe examination of the problems of language and communication in Jarmusch's films can help us break free from 'the illusion of perfect communication' (Williams 2005, p. 14) and 'the perfect meaning' (Chow 2002, p. 128); studying them can provide us with deep insights on the phenomena of miscommunication and misunderstanding and teach us, instead of viewing these as problems to be solved, to accept them as a part of our everyday interaction with the other. Also, I acknowledge the socio-ideological value of cinema and think that it is a valuable medium that provides us with fascinating material to examine various crises. A prominent poststructuralist Rey Chow also observes that 'film is always a rich means of exploring cultural crisis – of exploring culture itself as a crisis' (Chow 2006, p. 171). As an example, she gives 'the suffocating existential portrayals of the breakdown in human communication in Italian and French avant-garde films' (ibid.) after the Second World War. Jarmusch's films as a whole, representing a gradual breakdown of human communication, can serve as another, newer example the analysis of which might illuminate the deepening crisis of communication in the modern world.

Jarmusch notices that 'films aren't realistic in general' (Jarmusch et al. 2001, p. 75); they represent a code that cannot be applied to reality directly. However, that is not to say that the codes found in cinema cannot *seem* realistic and/or be drawn from reality, and that studying them cannot reveal anything interesting about reality. While talking about realist novels, Adam Thirlwell claims: 'Of course the realist novel represents a code! Just as of course a narrative represents an artificial arrangement of facts! But this doesn't mean that novels can't also be truths' (Thirlwell 2012, p. xvi). In any movie, realistic dialogue is a

sign of well-crafted lines. While watching language-centered films, we can sometimes detect what Barthes calls 'figures' – those communicative situations about which 'at least someone can say: '*That's so true! I recognize that scene of language*' (Barthes 1990, p. 4, emphasis in the original). Even though filmic speech has undeniable differences and deformations from a real conversation (for the discussion of these deformations, see Kozloff [2000, p. 16]), some dialogues are more realistic than others and some films are more realistic in their representation of communication. Independent film, in contrast to Hollywood cinema, tends to show more naturalistic communication between people that is closer to real-life communication.

It should be noted that the labels 'the independent movie' and 'the Hollywood movie' are already out-dated. Jarmusch, whom everybody calls an independent filmmaker, himself does not like the term: 'I'm getting really annoyed at even hearing the word. When I hear the word independent I reach for my revolver. At this point, what the hell does that mean?' (Jarmusch and Baumgarten 2001, p. 174). Indeed, today the word independent can only refer to the type of production and distribution, but no longer to the film's content or style: the lines between the alternative and the mainstream or 'high' and 'low' culture, etc. are blurred. However, about a quarter of a century ago, the differences could have been more clearly distinguished, some of which can still be observed in new films. Petković and Vuković (2011), for example, argue that Jean-François Lyotard's (1984) distinction of grand narrative(s) and little narrative(s) can be useful in describing the Classical Hollywood cinema and American independent cinema. The former 'uses a mode of storytelling that is dominant and recognizable, it makes us, its viewers, formulate probable hypotheses, appealing to everyone (ibid.) whereas the latter, '[Post]modern American independent film, with Jarmusch as one of its leading representatives, presents us with stories that disrupt the clear unified and causal structure of Hollywood films, thus resembling the pattern of Lyotard's 'little narratives' (ibid.). These 'little narratives' can be developed by certain means, one of which is the construction of dialogue.

Todd Berliner's study contributes to developing this idea further. The scholar (Berliner 2013, p. 106) observes that the characters in Hollywood movies are inclined to flawless speech. Moreover, they 'communicate effectively and efficiently', usually listen to one another and easily grasp the meaning of what has been said (Berliner 2013, p. 104). What is more, they seem to understand each other's feelings or ideas. In other words,

rapport in Hollywood movies is a norm (Berliner 2013, p. 105). Therefore, Berliner claims, Hollywood movie dialogue does not follow regular conversational conventions (Berliner 2013, p. 104). However, the dialogue in independent film, as the results of Berliner's research suggest, approaches closer to a real conversation with all its imperfections. The speech of characters is 'as inefficient and rambling as real speech' (Berliner 2013, p. 108), they 'readjust and re-focus their sentences as they speak' (Berliner p. 109), misunderstandings occur, etc. All these features are observable in Jarmusch's films. On this basis, I argue that the dialogue and communication between the characters in his films put one in mind of real communication and therefore is worthy of thorough study.

Studying communication in film can have both practical and theoretical implications. Films can direct our gaze to our body and be a means to study it, thus better perceiving the drives that move us, or, to use Kristeva's terms, 'the semiotic' at work. Furthermore, film can be a useful pedagogical tool. Research shows that, the discussion of movie clips is one of the most motivating and captivating educational activities (Kavan and Burne 2009, p. 436). They can be extremely functional in many disciplines and subjects while explaining what in pedagogical literature is called 'threshold concepts' (Cousin 2006). Films can be invaluable in helping us teach communication theories more effectively (for how films can be used as instructional resources in interpersonal communication courses, see Proctor and Adler [1991], Proctor [1995], Thompson-Hayes and Moore [2012]). But I am also sure that they can also assist in theorising communication as well as philosophising about it.

Kyle Barrowman (2019) perceptively observes that recently scholars have widely discussed the questions as to how films can 'be' or 'do' or 'be used for' philosophy. Barrowman explains that from a 'be used for' perspective, films are regarded as examples or 'jumping-off points to philosophy "proper"'; from the 'be' perspective, films are treated as philosophy, 'as simply another form of philosophical argumentation'; and from the 'do' perspective, films are seen as examples or illustrations of pre-existing philosophical ideas, positions, or protocols (Barrowman 2019, p. x). Per Barrowman, I believe that we can approach film from any of the three perspectives; we can also combine two or even all of them. In this thesis, however, I will analyse Jarmusch's films from the 'do' perspective: the dialogues in Jarmusch's films and communication between the characters in them will serve as (a) perfect example(s) of the poststructuralist conception of communication.

I also contend that his films have added value to the poststructuralist theory. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, it is necessary to stress that I do not think Jarmusch is familiar with the poststructuralist authors reflecting on communication. However, he might be. He once considered a career of a writer – with the appreciation of 'post-post-structural fiction and the deconstructed narrative and all that stuff' (Jarmusch and Shapiro 2001, p. 62). Nevertheless, I do not claim that he writes his screenplays consulting the poststructuralist literature to be found on his desk. In other words, I do not think that he creates and directs his films consciously and intentionally drawing on the poststructuralist ideas, all the more, wishing to develop them further. Yet, his creative work, disrupting 'clear unified and causal structure', as I have already pointed out, can be regarded and classified as postmodern and poststructuralist, since it is also a feature of the poststructuralist creation. And not only the content of his movies but also his views on creating them make Jarmusch a poststructuralist author.

Barthes viewed the author (or, to be more exact, a modern scriptor) as somebody who creates a text from multiple quotations taken from various sources of culture. In the context of music, that is the work of a music producer or DJ, especially in hip-hop culture. Éric Gonzalez (2004) studied the aesthetics of sampling, which is the foundational technique of hip-hop music, in *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999). The film was very suitable for such analysis, as its soundtrack is composed by RZA, a famous hip-hop music producer and member of the Wu-Tang Clan. However, if the notion of the aesthetics of sampling is considered in a broader sense, it can be observed in pretty much all of Jarmusch's films. Just as DJs and record producers of hip-hop music encode sounds found in other music (or elsewhere, for instance, martial arts films) and reuse them in their musical compositions, Jarmusch encodes various cultural artifacts, reusing them as little portions of his cinematic compositions. His films are very allusive and referential to various products of human culture: from other movies, literature and music to philosophy and science. Some scenes could be even called 'quotations' of other cinematic texts. Just like Quentin Tarantino, Jarmusch likes remaking the scenes from the films he admires. For example, the scene when Ghost Dog shoots Sonny Valerio up the drain-pipe is a remake of Japanese yakuza film *Branded to Kill* (1967) directed by Seijun Suzuki. Picasso once said that that 'bad artists imitate, great artists steal', and Jarmusch seems to be the latter. In Picassian spirit, the director encourages other artists purloining *everything* that inspires them and filtering it through their imagination:

> Nothing is original. Steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels your imagination. Devour old films, new films, music, books, paintings, photographs, poems, dreams, random conversations, architecture, bridges, street signs, trees, clouds, bodies of water, light and shadows. Select only things to steal from that speak directly to your soul. If you do this, your work (and theft) will be authentic. Authenticity is invaluable; originality is non-existent (Jarmusch 2013, n.p.).

Since authenticity is so important to Jarmusch, he is very protective of his creative freedom and autonomy. As he puts it in one interview, 'The only thing that matters to me is to protect my ability to be the navigator of the ship' (Jarmusch and Macaulay 2001, p. 151). The director is well aware of the effects of the political economy of the cinema industry. The institutional structures of the medium of film, such as the bodies of finance, distribution and promotion, might attempt to influence the content of the final product and often succeed in doing that. However, according to Jarmusch, they should only perform their actual function (finance, distribute and promote) and should not regulate the creative process (Jarmusch 2013, n. p.). The director is careful not to allow the 'sycophants', as he calls the businessmen of the industry interested in profit, to intrude into his art and – with a dose of his own brand of humour: 'Don't let the fuckers get ya. ... Carry a gun if necessary' (ibid.).

According to Jarmusch, the artistic control over the film involves choosing the people to work with who become co-creators of his movies (Jagernauth 2016). Since Jarmusch believes that making a film is naturally a very collaborative process, he does not regard himself as the major force behind the motion picture. Therefore, on a couple of occasions, he stressed that he is not fond of the auteur theory (Jarmusch and Macauly 2001, p. 151; Jarmusch cited in Jagernauth 2016), arguing against a very centralised approach to the author:

> the auteur thing is nonsense. Film is so collaborative, and especially in my case, because I have artistic control over the film. That means I choose the people I collaborate with – we're making the film together. I use "a film by [Jim Jarmusch]" in the credits to protect my ability to choose my collaborators in this world of financing and using other people's money. But we're collaborating all the time, so the film is evolving each day we scout, and then each day we shoot, and then if we rehearse, whatever that might mean, it's just changing, changing, changing (Jarmusch cited in Jagernauth 2016, n. p.).

Sometimes the changes are so considerable that the director does not even feel the only one deserving all the credits for creating his films. For instance, the aforementioned quote 'It's a sad and beautiful *world*' became pivotal, the central idea of *Down by Law*, added some shades in meaning not only for the scene but also for the whole movie. As Ludvig Hertzberg, who compiled a book of interviews with Jarmusch, rightly notices, Jarmusch 'never fails to stress the important role played by the cast and the crew in *shaping* … the films he directs' (Hertzberg 2001, p. viii, my emphasis). Furthermore, he does not believe his intentions determine the judgement and interpretation of his films, as 'he regards other people's different interpretations of them to be at least as valuable as his own' (ibid). In a 1996 *Los Angeles Times* interview after *Dead Man*'s release, for instance, Jarmusch called the movie 'the story of a man forced to surrender to his own destiny', but added that other interpretations might be equally acceptable (Rice 2012, p. 39).

The motifs found in his work (the aesthetics of sampling, a rich intertextual network), his views and convictions (his disbelief in originality and his rejection of the position of being the central figure of the creative process and 'the father' of his films along with the appreciation of an open economy of readings of his cinematic texts) make him a poststructuralist creator. But the poststructuralist conception of the author is also reflected in his movies. On this basis, I contend that the analysis of communication in his films can contribute to the poststructuralist theory and even elaborate it.

Poststructuralism was once pronounced a dead tradition (Giddens 1987, p. 195). Reacting to similar claims, Cooren asks: 'Should we forget and bury Foucault, Lyotard, Lacan, Derrida, Baudrillard and replace them with Voltaire, Rousseau, or Diderot?' (Cooren 1999, p. 112). The obvious answer is 'no'. The variety of works on poststructuralism written in relatively recent years by scholars in the humanities and social sciences (Hiddenson 2010; Choat 2012; Howarth 2013; Dillet et al. 2013; Fagan 2013; Williams 2014) testify to its health. As David R. Howarth (2013) argues, poststructuralism, in philosopher's Alasdair MacIntyre's words, is still a 'living tradition' which continues to provide conceptual tools for dealing with basic problems in social and political theory in particular and social sciences in general (Howarth 2013, p. 3).

The question of poststructuralism has been widely debated among communication theorists who can be divided into two main categories. The scholars in the first one argue that poststructuralists with their de(con)structive ideas, such as, 'let's ignore the sender's

intentions', 'there is no such thing as objective meaning of the message', and 'all communication is miscommunication', have nothing to offer for communication theory and research, thus they should be ignored. As Nelson puts it, the question the critics often have is this: 'How do you communicate … when your paradigm denies the possibility of communication?' (Nelson 1985, p. 3). Furthermore, poststructuralism is accused of 'epistemological doodling, anti-realistic ecstasy and narrative *laissez-faire*' (Jensen 1995, p. 10). However, I do not argue that *all* communication theorists are against poststructuralism. Some of them acknowledge poststructuralists' contribution to communication theory but claim it is too small for poststructuralism to be considered a separate approach, therefore these scholars ascribe poststructuralist theories to other traditions or conceptions of communication (critical, semiotic, postmodern, depending on perspective and classification). Poststructuralists indeed argue that we should not focus too much on the intentions of the sender, meaning is not and cannot be objective, what is more, it is plural, whereas communication can always 'fail'. But in the view of the first group, their ideas are too simplified, radicalised and often misinterpreted. Whereas the second camp considers poststructuralist theories among other conceptions of communication inadequately, not accounting for the epistemological and other important differences.

Jim Boni observes that 'Communication studies have been characterized by the traditional binaries of communication versus miscommunication' (Boni 2016, p. 27). It seems that we cannot escape the axiological hierarchical oppositions and, therefore, metaphysics: in our culture, understanding, in contrast to misunderstanding, is held as something primary and superior, 'as negative to positive' (Culler 1992, p. 177). It is even reflected in language: the morphological system of English (but also of other languages, including my mother tongue Lithuanian – *susikalbėjimas*/*nesusikalbėjimas*) 'makes the second term [misunderstanding] dependent on the first [understanding], a derivative version in *mis*- of the primary term' (Culler 1992, p. 175). Misunderstanding, then, writes Culler, is an unpleasant 'accident', which sometimes happens to understanding, 'a deviation which is possible only because there is such a thing as understanding' (Culler 1992, p. 175). Not surprisingly, most of the theories explaining communication treat understanding as a positive result of the process of communication; misunderstanding is treated as a negative outcome. If the message did not reach its destination, its *telos*, communication 'failed'; if it 'failed', it should be fixed. Therefore, communication theory

shows hospitality to those theories that help to avoid and/or solve 'problem' of misunderstanding and are oriented to 'positive' outcomes.

One of the main problems I would like to touch upon in this thesis is precisely this – the 'positivity fallacy' (Chang 1996, p. 183). The issue has been identified and discussed by some scholars (Natali 1978; Nelson 1985; Chang 1988, 1996). João Natali (1978), for example, argued that excluding the disorder, the noneconomic 'noises', the faulty logic of positivity supports certain ideology: communication theory serves the capitalist mode of thinking and the capitalist social system. According to the scholar, communication theory has sourced legitimation 'within the discursive tide where capitalist social formations fish for proofs of their legitimacy' (Natali, quoted in Chang 1996, p. 175). Thus, the problem can be traced back to the intellectual and institutional policy, the apparatus: how institutions shape our knowledge and echo hegemonic ideology. In any case, the positivity fallacy remains vital and, in the words of Chang, is 'plaguing' communication theory (Chang 1988, p. 588; Chang 1996, p. 186). As Nelson observes, 'poststructuralism would overturn' (Nelson 1985, p. 10) the deep-rooted hierarchy, where understanding is superior to misunderstanding. Therefore, it is not particularly welcome in the field.

Poststructuralists indeed reject 'successful' communication as a norm; however, they do not argue that miscommunication is normative. Rather, they argue for the acknowledgement of 'the essential and irreducible *possibility* of *mis*understanding' (Derrida 1988, p. 147). As Chang puts it, 'That the impossibility of communication constitutes its possibility means that communication knows no negativity' (Chang 1996, p. 226). But of course, a certain level of understanding is reachable: we communicate more or less successfully every day. However, simultaneously, communication can always 'fail' and quite often does. There are scholars going so far as to say that 'humans fail to communication far more often than they succeed' (John 2006, p. 250). This does not mean we fall into the abyss of miscommunication every time we open our mouths. However, it is true that we do not have immediate access to other people's thoughts and feelings, and, as we follow their articulations, we misinterpret their intent, misunderstand them until we reach at least the satisfactory understanding – if we do. Therefore, Jacques Lacan claims that 'misunderstanding is the very basis of interhuman discourse' (Lacan 1997, p. 164). Although his perspective is quite different from that of Derrida (in my work, I focus on and

support the latter[6], however, in my literature review, I briefly discuss the former), they explain miscommunication in different ways, but they both share the idea that misunderstanding is essential to understanding.

Thus, poststructuralism is not about railing against anything positive. As Williams once observed, 'Poststructuralism is not against this and for that – once and for all. It is for the affirmation of an inexhaustible productive power of limits. It is for the resulting positive disruption of settled oppositions' (Williams 2005, p. 4). In this thesis, I am concerned with how poststructuralists divulge the productive power of the limits of language and play havoc with the binary oppositions of communication/miscommunication and understanding/misunderstanding by showing that one is always in the other: the trace of the 'negative' is always in the 'positive'. Chow rightly points out that what poststructuralism brought in was 'the era of difference' or 'difference revolution' (Chow 2002, p. 128). This revolution manifested not only in Derridean *différance* with both differing and deffering, as Chow stresses, but also in showing the ubiquitous difference *within*. This thesis is all about showing the difference and otherness within communication. As Tugrul İlter puts it, 'Miscommunication uncannily resides in communication' (İlter 2017, p. 259). If that is the case, perhaps John is right arguing that 'We should be studying failure, not communication. If we were, we might learn something about communication that can be fathomed in no other way' (John 2006, p. 255).

In 2020, some scholars might still be sceptical about, but no longer shocked by poststructuralist ideas. As John Durham Peters observes, 'Conceptual variety or even incommensurability in definitions of communication seems no longer scandalous' (Peters 2014, p. 505), and recently 'communication studies has been especially hospitable to continental philosophy' (Peters 2014, p. 506). These two indications indeed show 'relaxed disciplinary maturity' (Peters 2014, p. 505). Nevertheless, from time to time, poststructuralism is still attacked, mocked and devalued in the domain of communication studies. Furthermore, if its contribution to mass communication theory is recognised, its implications on interpersonal communication are still not explicated and examined properly. For the above-mentioned reasons, in my thesis, I will dispel the main common misinterpretations of poststructuralism and show why the poststructuralist conception of

[6] Lacan explains the processes through the notion of void, Derrida explicates it through the notion of lack; the former argues that misunderstanding is the condition of understanding, the latter claims that misunderstanding is the structural possibility of understanding.

communication is different from the alternative ones in order to support the claim that the poststructuralist approach is to be considered as an independent approach in communication theory as a field.

Although this claim might sound like a reference to Robert T. Craig's attempt to unify communication theory (1999), I do not aim to incorporate poststructuralism as a separate tradition in Craig's metamodel, as I believe it has some flaws identified by other scholars. However, I believe that the poststructuralist theory deserves (re-)evaluation according to the accepted criteria. Therefore, I will (re-)evaluate poststructuralist theory in order to show that it is worthy of being in the field of communication theory. I argue that the poststructuralist conception of communication differs from other conceptions of communication because its foundation stone is (a possible) misunderstanding. I discuss the poststructuralist theories offered by Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, among others, reconstructing yet unspoken assumptions that are relevant to communication theory and especially, interpersonal communication.

The research study aims to:

1. evaluate poststructuralism's contribution to communication theory and describe the poststructuralist conception of communication;

2. analyse the communication between the characters in Jarmusch's films, applying the poststructuralist approach;

3. reveal the poststructuralist conception of communication in Jarmusch's films.

Principal research questions

In order to achieve the aims raised above the following questions will be answered.

RQ1: How do poststructuralists describe the main elements of communication and what is the poststructuralist conception of communication?

RQ2: What are the poststructuralist implications for theories of interpersonal communication, mediated communication, interlingual and intercultural communication as well as otherness?

RQ3: Should the poststructuralist approach be regarded as a unique approach in communication theory?

RQ4: What features of interpersonal, verbal and non-verbal, spoken and written communication are highlighted in Jarmusch's films?

RQ5: What do Jarmusch's films tell us about interlingual and intercultural communication as well as possible response to otherness?

RQ6: What aspects of mediated communication, communication through technology and distance are revealed in Jarmusch's films?

RQ7: What are the causes of miscommunication between the characters in Jarmusch's films and is misunderstanding as a result of the process of communication always negative?

Harold Lasswell's construct will allow me to outline the poststructuralist conception of communication and answer **RQ1**. The reconstructed poststructuralist theories will allow me to answer **RQ2**. The criteria chosen for the evaluation of an interpretive/postmodern communication theory will help me to assess the poststructuralist theory of communication and answer **RQ 3**. Along with methodology for film dialogue analysis, they will also serve to answer **RQ4**, **RQ5**, **RQ6** and **RQ7** and achieve the main aim of the work – to reveal the poststructuralist conception of communication in Jarmusch's films.

The overall structure of the study takes the form of six chapters, including this introductory chapter. Here, I outlined the relevance of the work giving a wider context of the thesis and indicating its problems. In the literature review, I discuss the literature analysing poststructuralism in communication theory and review the main works that focus on the communication in Jarmusch's films and the postmodern/poststructuralist features found in them. I discuss my research design and preferred research methods in the methodology chapter. I move on to the discussion of the poststructuralist conception of communication by reconstructing the theories offered by Derrida, Barthes, and Kristeva. In this chapter, I also re-evaluate the poststructuralist theory. I then provide the reader with my analysis of Jarmusch's films, focusing the main elements of communication and how

these are represented in his films. Finally, the conclusion gives a concise summary of the work and discusses the findings as well as areas for further research.

2. Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a context for my research. I will highlight exemplary studies in the fields of communication theory and film studies relevant to this particular thesis, show how my research relates to them, and indicate gaps in research. The first part of the review will delve into the intersection between poststructuralism and communication theory. I will briefly discuss the emergence of poststructuralism. I will also identify the most prominent and influential poststructuralist philosophers and discuss some of their positions with respect to the phenomenon of communication. However, I will reserve a full explication of the *chosen* poststructuralists' works until Chapter 4. Then the published work on poststructuralists' contribution and relevance to social sciences as well as communication theory and research will be examined. After establishing the links between poststructuralism and communication theory, I will investigate the reception of poststructuralism by the community of communication scholars, focusing particularly on the studies that endeavour to critique poststructuralist thought versus the studies that counter the objections most often raised by critics. I will also discuss relevant attempts to describe and conceptualise communication from the poststructuralist perspective. In the remaining part of my literature review, I will briefly review works that focus on dialogue and communication in film. I will then focus on poststructuralism, dialogue and communication in Jarmusch's films. As poststructuralism is considered part of the project of postmodernism, I will review the works that either recognise postmodern features in, or apply poststructuralist theories to, Jarmusch's movies. I will investigate the studies that examine themes related to this thesis: the characters in Jarmusch's films, alienation, foreignness, and otherness. I will finally investigate studies that directly deal with language as well as verbal and nonverbal, spoken and written communication in films by Jarmusch. I will conclude by summarizing what the literature implies and indicating gaps in research.

Definition and Boundaries of Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is a 'confusing and confused notion' (Culler 1992, p. 11). The term does not have one single clear definition (Bowman 2015; Dumont 2008, p. 13). According to Michel Peters it, 'displays an anxiety of naming. It names the new, timidly and without great confidence, only by distinguishing it from the past' (Peters 2001, p. 1). One could call poststructuralism the 'theoretical developments that have followed the wake of

structuralism and semiotics' (Brunette 2000, p. 89). However, since 'yesterday's structuralists are today's poststructuralists, doubts arise about the distinction, especially since it is so dubiously defined' (Culler 1992, p. 25). Distinguishing poststructuralism from its antecedents has indeed proven to be difficult, especially considering that one of the most common and oft-repeated 'definitions' characterises poststructuralism as at once an *extension* and a *critique* of structuralism[7].

Madan Sarup claims that structuralism and poststructuralism share some similarities: both to some extent problematise the human subject, historicism, meaning and philosophy (Sarup 1993, pp. 1–3). Nonetheless, the author identifies profound differences. First, poststructuralists reject the Cartesian conception of a unitary subject, a holdover, which was still discernible in structuralist writings (Sarup 1993, p. 3). Second, structuralists argue that the meaning is '"behind" or "within" the text' (ibid.) while poststructuralists claim that meaning is the outcome of contingent interactions between text and reader with the reader playing a far bigger role in poststructuralist accounts. As opposed to structuralists, poststructuralists consider meaning inherently unstable. In fact, they suggest that *all* structures are unstable. Culler distinguishes further differences:

> In simplest terms, structuralists take linguistics as a model and attempt to develop "grammars" – systematic inventories of elements and their possibilities of combination – that would account for the form and meaning of literary works; post-structuralists investigate the way in which this project is subverted by the workings of the texts themselves. Structuralists are convinced that systematic knowledge is possible; post-structuralists claim to know only the impossibility of this knowledge (Culler, 1992, p. 22).

In other words, structuralists think that knowledge can be found in structure (or systematic structures); but since poststructuralists argue that all structures are unstable, knowledge can only be fragmented, partial, incomplete, or, as Lyotard contends, elusive like a fractal (Lyotard 1979). Therefore, structuralists believe they do 'science', poststructuralists believe they write a 'text' (Culler 1992, p. 22).

[7] Philosopher Manfred Frank (1989) argues that poststructuralism is an inaccurate term for the movement because the prefix post- implies that the intellectual project unites the intellectual work subsequent to structuralism. Since poststructuralism, according to the author, is rather an extension of structuralism than the critique of it, he insists it should be called neostructuralism.

Poststructuralism is often referred to as a movement and such description is acceptable if one sees poststructuralism as a change in and development of the structuralist position. However, as Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott note, 'poststructuralism is not, strictly speaking, a position, but rather a critical interrogation of the exclusionary operations by which "positions" are established' (Butler and Scott 1992, p. xiv). Further complicating the question of definition, Peters claims that 'poststructuralism cannot be simply reduced to a set of shared assumptions, a method, a theory' (Peters 2001, p. 2). According to the author, the best option would be to call it a school of thought: 'Poststructuralism can be characterised as a mode of thinking, a set of critical practices of reading, a style of philosophising, and a kind of writing' (Peters 2001, p. 1). According to Clayton W. Dumont, poststructuralists no longer look for or expect to find 'truths' *within* things or the 'real' structures *of* things: 'The meanings of the objects of the world' are 'as varied and unstable' as the subjects interpreting them (Dumont 2008, p. 11). Meanwhile, to think or philosophise in a poststructuralist way means, on Dumont's account,

> No longer seeking to document the existence of structured, at least somewhat stable and eventually comprehensively understood social reality. It means to think and write at a point after the pursuit of a structured reality has lost its appeal. It means being part of a very different intellectual species (Dumont 2008, p. 13).

To add to the confusion, poststructuralism is also frequently discussed under the umbrella of postmodernism. Although the two terms are 'slightly related', one should not 'confuse and conflate them' (Bowman 2015, p. 1213). Dumont emphasises that 'the homogenization legislated in the creation of a mega-camp of "postmoderns" is a function of critics' perspectives and not a sign of agreement between theorists and their followers' (Dumont 2008, p. 13). However, he claims that these scholars, who mix up the terms, 'are doing poor scholarship. Lumping together such vast difference[s] certainly helps to dismiss a great deal of thinking in short order', so it is perhaps not the most productive route (Dumont 2008, p. 13). The source of confusion on this front is explained by Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss: poststructuralism is often seen as part of the postmodern project 'because it rejects the modern effort to find universal truths, narratives, methods, and meaning' (Littlejohn and Foss 2010, p. 60). Although poststructuralism shares certain ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions, they are not and should not be used interchangeably/synonymously (Baban 2010, cited in Sandu 2011, p. 40). Even so, some authors contend that the two notions are 'so closely linked that it is futile to try and

separate them' (Cayton and Williams 2001, p. 215). The problem here is that there is no explanation provided as to its alleged 'futility'. Contrary to Cayton and Williams, Ben Agger at least attempts to make a case for discussing poststructuralism and postmodernism under the same umbrella; to this effect, he distinguishes between the most prominent thinkers, from Derrida and Foucault to Barthes and Lyotard, as a way to clarify these two competing terms: 'Although most agree that Derrida is a poststructuralist … Foucault, Barthes, and Lyotard can be claimed by either camp and often are' (Agger 1991, pp. 111–112). This 'solution' is not without its own problems, but Agger's argument is instructive for further consideration of the two terms.

In this context, it is useful to define what 'postmodern' means, at least for this thesis. The term postmodern actually refers to 'that which follows the modern; after World War II; a phase of capitalism; a movement in arts; a form of social theory; that which cannot be avoided; undefinable' (Denzin 1991, p. vii), whereas postmodernism is 'living the postmodern into experience; a set of emotional experiences defined by ressentiment, anger, alienation, anxiety, poverty, racism, and sexism; the cultural logics of late capitalism' (ibid.). The theorists who reflect on postmodernism and postmodernity, such as Frederic Jameson or Zygmunt Bauman, are regarded in this thesis as postmodern thinkers. Meanwhile, the authors often associated (rightly or wrongly) with postmodernism, such as Barthes, Derrida, Kristeva, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, Lyotard, Lacan, to mention a few, are considered the most important (poststructuralist) thinkers for communication theory – are here called poststructuralists.

Nevertheless, it must be stressed that poststructuralism is not a homogeneous project. As Nelson (1985, p. 7) claims, 'there are many poststructuralisms', and not all the poststructuralists are unanimous in explaining the process of communication. In fact, a lot of authors regarded as poststructuralists have quite different views and often criticise each other (Bowman 2019). As Kristeva once argued, the work of such authors as Derrida, Foucault, Lacan are 'unique to them alone' and they do not, in her opinion, 'form a group' (Guberman 1996, p. 258). However, what provides justificatory ground for the 'poststructuralist group' is the fact that these authors 'participated in important upheaval of mentalities and theories concentrated in France between 1960s and the 1980s' (Guberman 1996, pp. 259–260). Poststructuralists attempted to escape, in their view, flawed 'identificatory thinking' characterised by the acceptance of 'the unity of man reduced to

his consciousness' (ibid.). For the reasons identified by Kristeva, the authors of *The Edinburgh Companion to Poststructuralism* (Dillet et al. 2013) posit as a definition of poststructuralism *an event*. They take into consideration a tense social and political climate in France in the 1970s, and thus propose poststructuralism as a 'social and political event in thought from the beginning of the 1960s (starting with the publication of Gilles Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy* in 1962)[8] until the mid or late 1970s (its original intensity fading around the time of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* in 1979)' (Dillet et al. 2013, p. 2).

Some authors nevertheless believe one cannot define poststructuralism. As Dumont insightfully observes, to try to define it misses the mark: 'I'm not just arguing that critics are mistaken about what poststructuralism is; I am saying that they are wrong *precisely because* they try to make poststructuralist thinking into a stable, containable "is"' (Dumont 2008, p. 14). Every 'is', for poststructuralists, can be changed by 'as'. As I have pointed out, poststructuralists reject the idea of stable structures, and a definition is nothing but a stable structure. Thus, 'poststructuralist thought *cannot* be reduced to structure [and] to attempt such a reduction is to miss a fundamental lesson of poststructuralism' (Dumont 2008, p. 15). Moreover, as Agger correctly observes, for Derrida, the main figure of poststructuralism and deconstruction[9], 'every definition "deconstructs" itself' (Agger 1991, p. 112) and 'needs to be defined and clarified in turn; meaning always lies elusively in the future' (Agger 1991, p. 113). However, simultaneously, a 'working', relatively stable definition is always possible, but it always serves a certain purpose and has certain effects.

Poststructuralism and Communication Theory

It should be noted that poststructuralism has always been received controversially. Moreover, it has been met with divergent reactions in different 'geographical and disciplinary "space"' (Bowman 2013, p. 448). For example, deconstruction was welcomed in the United States of America, but way more warmly in departments of literature than

[8] Other scholars (Littlejohn and Foss 2010, p. 60) trace the beginning of poststructuralism to Derrida's writings. In particular, they claim it started with a significant paper *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* published in 1966, whereas Paul Cobley contends that 'what might be called poststructuralist age proper was inaugurated by the publication in 1967 of three books' (Cobley 1996, p. 11) by Derrida.

[9] I agree with the prevailing opinion that poststructuralism 'must be thought of as deconstruction' (Williams 2005, p. 25), that deconstruction is 'essentially post-structuralist' (Sarrup 1993, p. 32) and that it 'may be regarded as a pinnacle of poststructuralism' (Bowman 2003, p. 446).

those of philosophy (ibid.). In the 1970s Britain, poststructuralism was much appreciated in the realm of film studies and found home in the *Screen* project (especially Lacanian psychoanalysis) (Cobley 1996, p. 15) but was not necessarily accepted the same in other disciplines. Toril Moi thinks that poststructuralist theory is now hegemonic and the 'poststructuralist understanding of language, meaning, and interpretation has become the unspoken doxa of the humanities' (Moi 2009, p. 802). I would argue that the poststructuralism is dominant in the discipline of the humanities and the arts. However, poststructuralists still work their way to the social sciences (Dumont 2008) and communication studies. In communication theory specifically, poststructuralism does not have an equal status with other theories. This is so, I believe, due to the criticism it receives from some communication scholars.

One could speculate that poststructuralism is not accepted in communication theory first of all because it pulled the rug out from under itself. As Wimal Dissanayake relates, 'Western communication theory, from its inception, has privileged understanding over misunderstanding, order over chaos, clarity over confusion, unitariness over diversity, linearity over circularity' (Dissanayake 2009, p. 779). Or, as Briankle Chang puts it, 'the selfsame over alterity, … dialogue over polylogue, and most important, … understanding and the determination of meaning over misunderstanding and undecidability' (Chang 1996, p. xi). Thus, poststructuralists turned everything upside down. They, according to Dissanayake, made communication scholars revise the axioms and presuppositions of communication by disputing the validity of the basic assumptions that provided the foundation for communication theorists before the emergence of poststructuralism:

> They [poststructuralists] have shocked us into a newer awareness of the problems and dilemmas of communication and pulled us out of the easy complacencies in which we have been ensconced. In a word, poststructuralism has had the effect of questioning what is often taken for granted in communication, turning it into a problem for investigation. Western communication theory rests on the notion of a solitary and self-contained communicative subject who is in control of his or her actions; this notion has suffered a severe blow at the hand of poststructuralists (Dissanayake 2009, p. 779).

However, communication theorist Cobley is more positive: the term poststructuralism 'is of use in designing a set of concerns with the role of the human

subject in communication' (Cobley 1996, p. 8). And, as Littlejohn and Foss claim, 'the challenge to traditional and stable views of signs, symbols and meaning posited by poststructuralism places it clearly within the purview of communication theory' (Littlejohn and Foss 2010, p. 60). In other words, just because it has controversial ideas does not mean there is no place for it in communication theory, and perhaps *now* is the best time to find the most productive place for it. Communication scholars admit that communication theory does not yet exist as an identifiable, solid and acknowledged field of study (Anderson 1996, p. 201; Craig 1999, p. 119; Kirtiklis 2011, p. 43), therefore 'communication research has not yet become an autonomous scientific enterprise with its own theoretical frameworks' (Cobley and Schulz 2013, p. 9). Theorists try to systematise the area and find ways to classify communication theories (Craig 1999; Rosengren 2000; Anderson and Baym 2004; Nastasia and Rakow 2010; Kirtiklis 2011; Stanfill 2012), but there is still little consensus on what should be the typological criteria of communication theories.

Philosopher Kęstas Kirtiklis observes that the most common questions regarding the identity of communication sciences are indeed fundamental:

> why are there so many (or so few) communication theories? What should be counted as a communication theory? Is there a possibility of unity of the field amidst theoretical and methodological divisions? Does such thing as autonomous communication science / communication theory exist? (Kirtiklis 2011, p. 43).

Addressing these questions and attempting to unify the field, in 1999, Robert T. Craig suggested a metatheory in which the scholar included seven different traditions of communication (Craig 1999) and later accepted a proposal to join the eighth one (Craig 2007). The traditions were mainly distinguished by their unique conceptions of communication, different from other traditions. The metatheory was based on a constitutive model (which is the same ritual model developed by communication theorist James W. Carey). This model is opposed to a transmission model, which views the communication process as transmitting information. A ritual view of communication, on the contrary, is 'not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs' (Carey 1989, p. 18). According to Craig, the constitutive model 'conceptualizes communication as a constitutive process that produces and reproduces shared meaning' (Craig 1999, p. 125); however, he indicates that this model 'does not tell what communication really is, but implies that communication can be constituted symbolically

(in and through communication, of course) in many different ways, including … as a transmission process' (Craig 1999, p. 127). In other words, such a model is chosen in order to create a dialogical-dialectical field, in which different types of communication theories could converse with each other – without necessarily agreeing on the subject of the debate.

After some time, the theorist admitted that in his metatheory some gaps remained (Craig 2009, p. 8; Craig 2015, p. 358). According to Craig, 'much of the most currently important theory seems to cut across traditions, fall in the cracks between them, or escape the model entirely' (Craig 2009, p. 8). As an example, the scholar took poststructuralist theory. On Craig's account, poststructuralist theory could 'go' to five different traditions: first of all semiotic (intersubjective mediation by signs), rhetorical (practical art of discourse), phenomenological (experience of otherness, dialogue), sociocultural ((re)production of social order) and critical (discursive reflection) (*ibid*.).[10] It is important to stress that Craig regards propositions like '"Theory X is in tradition Y" through a container metaphor' (Craig 2015, p. 359) as a common misunderstanding of his metatheory, because traditions should not be considered as elements of a fixed classificatory system; they are historical and open. Moreover, theory X can 'simultaneously or successively' (ibid.) be in more than one tradition. But the question remains whether theory X can simultaneously and successively at once be in five traditions out of seven (or eight). However, one can accept that most likely poststructuralist theory would, of the aforementioned traditions, 'go' to the semiotic tradition on the basis that semiotics covers not only different schools (European, American, Tartu–Moscow) and approaches, but also the theories of structuralism and poststructuralism. It should be noted that Craig (1999) himself, perhaps unintentionally or unconsciously, attributes poststructuralism to the semiotic tradition, by adopting poststructuralist ideas to describe it. For example, he uses poststructuralist vocabulary – a famous phrase by Derrida 'there is nothing outside the text' – to indicate the distinctive critical objection that the semiotic tradition would raise against the critical tradition in their 'conversation' (Craig 1999, p. 134).

However, it should not be forgotten that structuralism and poststructuralism are fundamentally different primarily in their interpretation of meaning. As Kristeva points

[10] When Littlejohn and Foss reorganised communication theories using the matrix suggested by Craig, the poststructuralist theory was ascribed to only one – critical – tradition (Littlejohn and Foss 2008, p. 46).

out, the main difference between structuralists and poststructuralists is in their assumptions regarding meaning (Guberman 1996, p. 259). I have stressed throughout this literature review that structuralists argued 'meaning is structure', whereas poststructuralists insisted that meaning is 'a process of heterogeneous logics, a polyphone of representations, a "trail", a "dissemination", a "revolt", a "*jouissance*" and a "pleasure" – but also a "violence", and "abjection" and "horror"' [11] (ibid). Furthermore, poststructuralists destabilised meaning by announcing the death of the author and celebrating the birth of the reader and opening the text; they decentred the speaking subject giving the main role to the receiver of the message – it completely changed the way meaning could be understood from the structuralist and poststructuralist vantages.

Craig, himself a pragmatist, accepted Chris Russill's proposal (Russill 2004; 2005) to add the eighth – pragmatist – tradition to his metatheory (Craig 2007) on the basis of its different conceptualisation of communication compared to other traditions. Then again, pragmatism can also be seen as part of the semiotic tradition. Thus, it is not clear why pragmatism can be separated and thus distinguished from the semiotic tradition but, for example, poststructuralism cannot. Apparently, at least theoretically, it can, and that is what Craig admits in the same article in which he accepts pragmatism as a distinct tradition: 'Poststructuralism, in terms of this model, is a hybrid, primarily of semiotics and phenomenology, which arguably could be added to the model as a distinct tradition in its own right' (Craig 2007, p. 130). However, according to Craig, the tradition should not only be unique in defining communication ('comprise a substantial body of thought that contributes a unique, practically consequential conceptualization of communication' [ibid.]), but also indicate its distinctive view of communication problems, present metadiscursive vocabulary and commonplace beliefs it affirms or challenges, as well as topics for argumentation in relation to other traditions. Therefore, semiotic and phenomenological traditions should be described again, the differences between the traditions should be clarified, and that would make things problematic. But Craig also raises a question and in turn suggests:

> Might it be more useful to subsume semiotic, phenomenological, and

[11] These descriptions refer to different theories of meaning by different poststructuralist authors (the concepts of trial, revolt, violence, abjection, horror mostly appear in Kristeva's work; *jouissance* and pleasure can be seen in Barthes' texts; dissemination is present in Derrida's books). However, all of the authors, as well as other poststructuralists, operated in some or all of these terms to larger or smaller extent.

> poststructuralist thought as interweaving threads of one broader tradition centered on the problem of meaning? The question is one of convenience with regard to the practical purposes we would like the model – and the integrated field of communication theory that the model represents – to serve (ibid.).

Later, however, the scholar did not try to conceal his skepticism about poststructuralism as a distinct tradition in his metatheory when he asked: 'Does this sort of recipe [of poststructuralism] (a sprinkle of this, a pinch of that) tell us anything interesting about the specific contributions of poststructuralism to communication theory?' (Craig 2009, p. 8). Craig, seemingly unable to successfully situate poststructuralist theory within his metatheory, tries instead to downplay the contribution of poststructuralism to the field. But as Gerald S. Greenberg rightly points out, 'poststructuralism is a broad and varied school of thought that has much to say about language, its use, the knowledge created by it, and the power attached to it – all of which [has] proven to be of interest to a wide variety of humanities and social science scholars, including communication researchers' (Greenberg 2005, p. vii).

I do not present poststructuralism as a distinct tradition to be incorporated into the framework suggested by Craig. Although his metatheoretical project contributed to the field significantly, it also has obvious shortcomings. Myers, in particular, is an insightful critic of the presuppositions inherent in Craig's choice of a constitutive model (as opposed to another model) and he applies pressure to certain weak points in Craig's ensuing arguments (Myers 2001, pp. 220–223). According to him, it is not clear what the criteria are upon which one could decide whether a given theory is suitable to a given model; it is, he observes, like The Mad Hatter's tea party: all are allowed to participate in this 'party of discourse' (Myers 2001, p. 226), but it is unclear when to leave it nor is it clear who should leave and why. Furthermore, Craig's metatheory was condemned for disregarding the practice of communication research and evading theorising of communication from its philosophical basis, viz. ignoring epistemological assumptions of communication theories (Kirtiklis 2009a, pp. 91–105; Kirtiklis 2009b; Kirtiklis 2011). Therefore, I submit that poststructuralism's place in communication theory should be reconsidered, but not on Craig's terms with reference to a unified field of communication theory.

However, Craig's consideration of where poststructuralist theory could/should 'go' is important in the context of this thesis to the extent that it demonstrates first of all the

multiplicity and versatility of poststructuralism in relation to communication theory. Second, it reveals an issue to be addressed: poststructuralism cannot form a coherent and distinct approach in communication theory and research when different avatars of poststructuralism and their ideas are dispersed and attributed to different traditions or conceptions of communication (postmodern, semiotic, rhetorical, phenomenological, etc.). Obviously, this obscures the contribution of poststructuralist thought to communication theory in general and increases confusion across the board. It is also worth noting that claims about the alleged paltriness of poststructuralists' contribution to communication theory has never been convincingly argued (always being assumed rather than 'proven') and the relationship between poststructuralist theories and other communication theories has not yet been established.

Another reason why poststructuralism is underrated might also be the fact that it has been and is being continuously mocked, attacked and demonized. I claim that poststructuralism lies at the heart of communication theory, however, it is often excluded from the field due to its discredit. Firstly, it is necessary to show how poststructuralism has been 'welcomed' by social scientists in general. Sociologist Dumont (2008, p. 1), one of the few proponents of poststructuralism, asserts that the scholars in the field still do not agree on what poststructuralism means for sociology. According to the author, the conversation about the meaning and relevance of poststructuralism first emerged in the social sciences in the last decades of the previous century. He nevertheless corrects himself: 'Conversation, though, is too nice a word. Angry argument is more telling description' (ibid.). Dumont claims that 'sociologists pursued at least three distinct albeit overlapping attacks on' poststructuralism (Dumont 2008, p. 3). Primarily, that it is the same or almost the same as relativism, nihilism, nominalism, solipsism, or subjectivism. Secondly, that due to poststructuralist ideas sociologists will lose the authority of their political statements: 'If the foundations for truth making are overwhelmed … then sociology loses any authority to claim that its understandings are superior' (ibid). Furthermore, the critics think that poststructuralists deliberately write intricately in order to deceive people and make them believe 'outright nonsense' (Dumont 2008, p. 4). Dillet et al. also summarise the main criticism poststructuralism receives in three points: 'it is ... normatively confused'; 'it lacks emancipatory potential'; 'it is a form of dogmatic thought in league with the consumerist society of late capitalism' (Dillet et al. 2013, p. 2).

Therefore, the critics believe, poststructuralism fails to enrich the knowledge of social sciences or perhaps is even 'harmful' to the disciplines.

Most importantly, poststructuralism threatens everything cherished by the modernist project. Sociologist Steven Ward worries that if we rejected the trust and moral commitment provided by realism, 'all social interaction and communication would break down under the weight of paranoid suspicion' (Ward 1997, p. 785). Stephan Fuchs and Ward are concerned that poststructuralists will bring 'a crisis in solidarity, organizational cohesion, and professional communication' (Fuchs and Ward 1994, p. 506). If we accepted poststructuralist claims, there would be no need to pursue successful communication and try building consensus. Communication theorist Klaus Bruhn Jensen argues that for poststructuralists, 'all communication is miscommunication' (Jensen 1995, p. 9). He criticises poststructuralism for 'epistemological doodling, anti-realistic ecstasy and narrative *laissez-faire*' (Jensen 1995, p. 10). Greenberg, who reviews his book, explains that 'these terms are defined respectively as the documentation of the impossibility of knowing things, celebration of the lack of meaning, and rejoicing at the existence of an infinite number of realities' (Greenberg 2005, p. 123). In other words, it is mainly reproved for theoretical and methodological skepticism, epistemological and ontological baselessness. There are other communication theorists in full agreement with Jensen. According to the critics, poststructuralists' claims about the death of the author equals the death of an intentional message or, as Thatcher puts it, 'the death of understanding the author's will and intentionality' (Thatcher 2011, p. 82). In similar manner, Ellis argues that the concepts of intentionality and communication are inseparable (Ellis 1991, p. 221). He claims that, 'an acceptable theory of communication cannot include the post-structuralist's tolerance for multiple meanings and interpretations' (ibid.). Furthermore, poststructuralist 'concepts of language are so misguided that any serious … communication scholar must surely abandon them' (Ellis 1991, p. 213). In conclusion, the criticism directed at poststructuralism implies that it should be excluded from communication theory, if not from social science in general.

To the best of my knowledge, only a few scholars have attempted to retrieve poststructuralism and reveal its relevance and contribution to the humanities and social sciences (Agger 1991; Williams 2005; Dumont 2008; Dillet et al. 2013) as well as information and communication theory (Grossberg 1982; Chang 1988; 1996; Poster 1990;

Desilet 1991; Mumby 1997). They managed to counter at least half of the criticism discussed above. A few authors have already responded to Derrida's critics either directly or indirectly. Nicole Anderson, for example, expounded Derrida's theory of language, focusing on his concepts of (free-)'play', 'difference' and (con)text, and demonstrated 'that the seeming coherence of … famous criticisms (made by Habermas and Searle) or postmodern appropriations (made by Rorty) are unfounded' (Anderson 2013, p. 251). Jürgen Habermas's misunderstanding of Derrida was also thoroughly explored by Christopher Norris (1992). The scholar (1990) also reviewed the book entitled *Against Deconstruction* (Ellis [John] 1989) and briefly discussed some of the misapprehensions of the deconstructionist thought found in it. Simon Critchley (1992) in his book *The Ethics of Deconstruction* argued that, despite what the critics claim, deconstruction, or, to be more precise, the practice of deconstructive reading, *is* ethical. Derek Attridge (2010) also focused on the process of deconstructive reading. He claimed that deconstructive reading has three imperatives: 1) responsibility in reading, 2) responsibility in argument and 3) responsibility in the reader (Attridge 2010, p. 4). Anderson (2006) also justified why Derrida cannot be accused of nihilism and ethical irresponsibility. She showed that in fact Derrida's 'notion of difference and deconstruction is profoundly responsible' (Anderson 2006, p. 407). Quite a few scholars (Spivak 1980; Culler 1981; Fish 1982; Scholes 1988; Frank 1989; Norris 1990; Dasenbrock 1994; Bearn 1995; Dooley and Kavanagh 2007; Pada 2009; Moi 2009; Raffel 2011; Koblížek 2012; Hartelius 2013) either reviewed or analysed the famous Austin-Derrida-Searle debate and a number of them (Bearn 1995; Dooley and Kavanagh 2007; Koblížek 2012) defended Derrida's position in it. However, some of the criticism, for instance, expressed by Scholes (1988), Ellis (1991), Dasenbrock (1994), Barrowman (2017, 2018) remains unaddressed.

One must admit that poststructuralists and especially Derrida's texts are not easy to read. Anderson rightly observes that both the form and the content of Derrida's works were often misinterpreted (Anderson 2003, p. 249). Maybe on some occasions, the misinterpretation of the form, i.e., Derrida's style of writing, led to misinterpretation of the content. His prose is, as Stanley Fish describes it, notoriously difficult (Fish 1982, p. 717), his 'works are … often digressive, discursive, as well as allusive and saturated in philosophical and literary references' (Bowman 2013, p. 453). As James Williams contends, '[h]e teaches us to have an eye for details and an ear for style and for the complex layers of a text (its manifold meanings that allow for irony, for example)'

(Williams 2005, p. 49). However, Derrida himself stressed that he did not deliberately make his style of writing or the content of his works more complicated just 'for the pleasure of complicating' (Derrida 1988, p. 119). On the other hand, he did not try to make his ideas more accessible: 'One should also never simplify or pretend to be sure of such simplicity where there is none. If things were simple, word would have gotten around, as you say in English' (ibid.). The philosopher believes 'that simplicity brings false clarify, suppressing the difficulties of making oneself clear that are intrinsic to language's *undecidability*' (Agger 1991, p. 113).

Agger (1989; 1991) argues that the relevance of Derrida's ideas to social science is 'potentially enormous' (Agger 1991, p. 114). The proponents of poststructuralist sociology seem to agree: 'Poststructuralist writings, seriously considered, can help sociology become a far more inclusive and vibrant project' (Dumont 2008, p. 4). According to Dumont, 'poststructuralist thought is not nonsensical, and missing the great potential found in these admittedly dense texts is far too high a price for scholars to pay for this flimsy excuse not to read closely and carefully' (Dumont 2008, p. 4). As it will be demonstrated, the most radical critiques of poststructuralism can be shown to 'prove' that poststructuralism is useful for social science theorists and researchers, including communication scholars. Dennis Mumby in his article 'Modernism, Postmodernism and Communication Studies: A Rereading of an Ongoing Debate' (1997) attempts to highlight the conditions of postmodernist communication that are relevant to communication research. The scholar was especially concerned with the question of whether the field of communication studies is modernist *per se* in its interest in the speaking subject (Mumby 1997, p. 13). If in the postmodernist thought the speaking subject is decentered or dissolved, is there a way to conceptualize the postmodernist communication studies? Mumby is convinced that even if a coherent speaking subject is no longer there, communication consists of unstable signifiers and 'discourse is not the way to truth but the product of institutionalized power-knowledge regimes' (Mumby 1997, p. 16), there is still a way to think of postmodern communication studies. According to Mumby, one could consider four postmodern conditions of communication that describe the relationship between postmodernism and communication studies: 1) communication is (im)possible; 2) communication is political; 3) communication is for self-de(con)struction; 4) communication is subjectless.

Mumby claims that communication is (im)possible, because it is simultaneously

stable and unstable. Communication is 'creating shared, relatively fixed discourses', but it also is 'continually articulating the possibilities for its own transformation' (Mumby 1997, p.16). The theorist believes that the perspective of (im)possibility of communication allows scholars to concentrate 'on the process by which social actors and institutional forms attempt to arrest, fix, and transform the constant overflowing of every discourse' (Mumby 1997, p. 18). Communication is political in a sense that much of it is directed towards 'fixing' discursive systems useful for certain groups. As Mumby says, 'communication is political in its construction of forms of subjectivity that situate social actors in (power)differentiated ways in society' (Mumby 1997, p. 19). This approach to communication allows scholars to not only observe the situations in which communication and power interact or analyse how power relations interfere in the process of communication, but also to control 'who gets to participate meaningfully in this dialogue in the first place' (ibid.). According to Mumby, the notion of communication as self-de(con)structive refers to the approach opposite to the common one – that communication is for self-expression. It endeavours to establish 'a nonessentialist relationship between subjectivity ("the self") and communication' and focuses on 'the productive character of the relationship between self and other' (ibid.). Such perspective, the theorist asserts, allows the scholars to analyse discursive systems 'through which competing and conflicting forms of subjectivity are constructed' (Mumby 1997, p. 20). Finally, communication is subjectless, because it is no longer 'conceived simply as the effect of the speaking subject' (Mumby 1997, p. 21). In other words, the sender of the message no longer has a prerogative to control the meaning of the message; the message has multiple meanings. However, the scholar stresses that subjectless communication does not deny the sender's intention. Rather, Mumby asserts, it 'helps us to recognize the extent to which intent is possible only because we are always situated within systems of discourse that precede and exceed us as communicators' (Mumby 1997, p. 22).

It is important to emphasise that Mumby does not draw a distinction between postmodernism and poststructuralism and regards the latter a part of the whole project of postmodernism. However, by distinguishing the postmodern conditions of communication, the author mainly relies either on the ideas of the forerunners of poststructuralism or their followers: Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's (1985) notion of 'impossibility of society', Briankle Chang's (1988, 1996) 'impossibility of communication', Foucault's

(1982) concept of power[12], Judith Butler's (1999) insights on gender as a construct, Althusser's (1971) theory of ideology and subjectivity, etc. Therefore, these postmodern conditions of communication can be called poststructuralist conditions of communication, as the aforementioned theorists here are regarded as poststructuralists. By describing them and highlighting the possibilities these conditions open up for communication researchers, Mumby not only showed how the poststructuralist thought and communication studies are connected, but also contributed to the rehabilitation of poststructuralism in communication theory. However, poststructuralist theory in the context of communication studies has never been adequately evaluated. Therefore, I argue, there is still a need to ascertain the suitability and usefulness of poststructuralism for communication theory, and to determine whether the poststructuralist theory is an insightful theory based on the criteria presented in Chapter 3.

The merits, usefulness and effectiveness of poststructuralist theory to the history of communications have been convincingly demonstrated by Mark Poster in his book *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context* (1990). In the book, the author argues that just as the windmill is associated with feudalism and the steam engine capitalism, electronic communications can be associated with the mode of information (Poster 1990, p. 8), a concept coined by Poster, paraphrasing Marx and his theory of historic modes of production. His book is one of the greatest attempts to 'to suggest the value of poststructuralist theory to the history of communications, to promote a new direction of research in that field, and therefore to be considered one theme in what Foucault called the history of the present' (Poster 1990, p. 7). He applies Baudrillard's theories for examining TV Ads, Foucault's – for databases, Lyotard – for computer science, and Derrida's – for electronic writing.

Derrida is one of the most discussed philosophers in the realm of communication studies. However, discussion of his ideas usually revolves around the Austin-Derrida-Searle debate that has, according to Stanley Raffel, 'generated more heat than light' (Raffel 2011, p. 278) and was rather a 'dispute' (Pada 2009, p. 73; Hartelius 2013, p. 23). Several authors analysed Derrida's criticism of Austin's speech act theory as well as the resultant clash between Derrida and Austin's disciple Searle. Some authors focused more on the

[12] The concept is discussed in many of his books, articles, interviews, and seminars that are collected in the book *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Volume 3: Power* (2001).

differences and similarities between Austin's and Derrida's perspectives (Culler 1981; Fish 1982; Bearn 1995); the others – on Derrida's and Searle's approaches (Frank 1989; Norris 1990; Desebrock 1994; Dooley and Kavanagh 2007; Koblížek 2012). The rest of the scholars examined the debate including all the three viewpoints (Spivak 1980; Scholes 1988; Halion 1989; Halion 1992; Moi 2009; Raffel 2011; Hartelius 2013). Some of the authors indicated here clearly support Derrida's position (Spivak 1980; Norris 1990; Bearn 1995; Dooley and Kavanagh 2007; Pada 2009; Koblížek 2012), meanwhile others criticise him (Scholes 1988; Dasenbrock 1994).

Moi, who is in favour of ordinary language philosophy, argues that none of the positions can be justified as 'right' or 'wrong', as the philosophers under discussion use the same concepts but specify different requirements for them and interpret them differently (Moi 2009.). Deconstruction and ordinary language philosophy, according to Moi, stem from two different and incompatible paradigms (ibid.). Drawing on Kuhn, Moi draws a conclusion that these philosophers 'practice their trades in different worlds' that are just too distant from each other. By contrast, Fish argues that 'Derrida and Austin may not be so far apart as some have thought' (Fish 1982, p. 712)[13]. In similar fashion, Bearn suggests we should understand some of Derrida's offered concepts (i.e., iterability and its breaching function in particular) 'as the solicitation – not the refutation – of Austin's theory' (Bearn 1995, p. 18). Fish, however, is more provocative than Bearn, as he goes so far as to say that Derrida 'is a philosopher of ordinary language' (ibid.). Although Derrida is definitely and 'primarily a philosopher of language' (Dooley and Kavanagh 2007, p. 21) or at least can be seen as such (Rorty 1977, p. 673), he hardly can be seen as an *ordinary* language philosopher. At any event, the debate has garnered enough attention from scholars; however, Derridian conception of communication has not. Twenty years ago, Cooren argued that 'What Derrida, and other poststructuralists, have to teach us about communication has not been sufficiently explored by communication scholars' (Cooren 1999, p. 118). He then singled out Chang's (1996) book as the best attempt to fill the gap. As this short literature review reveals, the situation has developed since. Nevertheless, the implications of Derrida and other poststructuralists for interpersonal communication, I argue, still lack the attention from scholars they merit.

[13] Derrida, *en passant*, feels way much closer to Austin than to Searl's interpretation of Austin.

Barthes' ideas are well known in the context of mass communication and media culture. Any introductory text on media, communication and cultural studies and/or their qualitative research methods (Fiske 1990; Barker and Jane 2000; McQuail 2010; Berger 2011; Hodkinson 2011; Durham and Kelnner 2012, to name a few), covering the semiotic and/or critical tradition and its input in analysing mass communication and culture, will invoke Barthes' work. His theory of modern myth as well as the connotation/denotation distinction receives, along with his suggestions how to study visual messages, special attention from communication scholars as perhaps the most fruitful (of his) theories to be applied to the field of media and communications (Breen and Corcoran 1982; Bennett and McDougall 2013; Kazakevičiūtė 2014; Cobley 2015). Barthes insights on interpersonal communication, however, are not widely explored, and, one should note, are rather implicit in his own texts.

In *Philosophical Profiles in the Theory of Communication* (2012), Alexander Kozin explores Deleuze's insights on communicating sense. The study is an important one due to the fact that the philosopher never explored the themes of communication directly. Kozin argues that his contribution to the communication theory of 'the 1960's lies in his phenomenological intervention, which created the possibility of decoding a particular system by the way of taking a liminal phenomenon (e.g., body, face, art, speech) as the point of entry into a complex human system' (Kozin 2012, p. 200). Also, his analysis of translation as the phenomenon of communication have added value to the field (Kozin 2012, p. 2008). It can prove particularly useful for the analysis of a 'linguistic' other.

The focus of relatively recent research of poststructuralist writings in general has been on the theme of otherness, strangeness and foreignness, topics closely related to that of communication. Juliana De Nooy (1998), for example, compares and contrasts Derrida's and Kristeva's theories of difference. The scholar demonstrates that otherness was always at the heart of Kristeva's works (Roudiez 1993; Oliver 1993, p. 12, cited in Nooy 1998, p. 4.), where she explores encounters with and the response to various forms of otherness. Paul Bowman observes that Derrida was always interested in and often (re)posed the question of 'how we should respond or react whenever we encounter something "other", something "different"' (Bowman 2013, p. 445). In other words, what could be the response and the message to the other? It is worth noting that among other forms of the 'other' poststructuralists explore the encounter with other cultures and the

representatives of them. Several theorists (Jensen 2003; Vandenabeele 2010) articulate the significance of these poststructuralist themes to the theory of intercultural communication. Vandenabeele (2010), for example, examines the relevance of Lyotard's theory of *differend(s)* for a theory of intercultural communication. As the author observes, Lyotard rightly contends that the interlocutors do not have to speak the same language in order to communicate successfully, and 'yet he exaggerates both the anthropomorphic character of Wittgenstein's later philosophy and the *differend(s)* in intercultural interaction' (Vandenabeele 2010, p. 20). Smith, in turn, offers 'an overview of Levinas's and Lyotard's respective views of Otherness and consider the consequences these conceptions suggest for communication inquiry (Smith 1997, p. 331). Just as Vandenabeele (2010), the scholar considers Lyotard's notion of communicability that will also be briefly discussed here.

Poststructuralists discuss how cultural knowledge may be transmitted, and for them, the figure of discourse in the process is essential. As Kubota points out, poststructuralists argue that 'cultural knowledge, or the ways we understand and describe a certain culture, is constructed by discourse – a meaning/subjectivity-making system mediated by language, signs, and other modes of communication; (Kubota 2012, p. 96). According to the author, it 'provides possibilities of a performative dimension of culture and language' (Kubota 2012, p. 96). The scholar refers to Judith Butler's notion of performativity, which proposes that:

> cultural and linguistic expressions … are performed by members of a community, rather than simply being dominating or controlled by external objective mechanisms called language or culture. In this view, what structures social practice and perspective is not a preexisting system of culture or language but people's acting on symbols and not only iterating actions but also appropriating, resisting, bending, and inventing language and culture (ibid.).

Despite these scattered ideas, complex studies on poststructuralist *conception* of communication, including the themes discussed above, are still lacking. However, a concise, but informative encyclopedic entry, considering almost all of the elements of communication, can be found in *Encyclopedia of Communication Theo*ry (2009), which describes the poststructuralist view of communication as follows:

> *The communicator*, far from being self-present and self-contained, is self-divided. *The message* can be full of tensions and ambivalences in meaning. *The medium* is not transparent and is not a mere conduit, but one that imposes its own meanings. *The receivers* are not passive absorbers of meaning, but are active co-creators of meanings. *The context of interactions*, with their politics of meanings and contradictory pulls, have a direct bearing on communicative acts (Dissanayake 2009, p. 779, my emphasis).

Nonetheless, although the author describes 'the constituent elements' of communication, one of them remains missing – *the effect.* In 1984, Lasswell suggested 'a convenient way to describe communication' (Lasswell 1984, p. 37). The way is to answer the questions: Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect? They correspondingly refer to key elements of communication: *communicator, message, medium, audience*, and *effect*. This five-question model has been offered for use as a heuristic device for conceptualising communication (Cobley and Schulz 2013, p. 41; Kirtiklis 2009a, p. 24). Therefore, in order to conceptualise communication, it is necessary to take into consideration, among other elements, the effect of communication.

Poststructuralists suggest that communication might always lead to misunderstanding. As it was mentioned in the introduction, Western communication theorists would argue that it is the undesirable effect of communication. The reason for such treatment is most likely the fact that positivity is 'the critical dogmatics of communication', and alternative approaches to communication focusing on misunderstanding are disregarded (Natali 1986; Chang 1996, p. 173). However, Saul Newman asks a relevant question arising from Lacan's work:

> What if we were to suggest that not only is such a fantasy of perfect communication impossible, but also that [the] distortions in speech acts and meaning are the structural condition of any communication? … What if it were the case that communication is structurally distorted – that there is always a misunderstanding between interlocutors – and that this distortion is the constitutive condition necessary for communication to take place? (Newman 2007, p. 30).

In other words, what if we were to propose that misunderstanding might be and perhaps always is a positive outcome of communication process, since without it, we would not be able to communicate at all? Lacan claims that the failure to understand each

other is an underlying foundation of communication: 'misunderstanding is the very basis of interhuman discourse' (Lacan 1997, p. 163). Newman explains what Lacan means by this strong statement: the subject turns into a speaking subject through misrecognition, when '[s]he is only partially represented by signifiers in the symbolic order' (ibid.). It is the void (*the real*) within the symbolic order that creates this partial signification and allows it to occur (Newman 2007, p. 30). It means that the acts of signification come about by virtue of 'an element that is missing from the structure of signification itself, thus at the same time disrupting the process of communication' (ibid.). Therefore, we miscommunicate constantly because of the void within the structure of communication, but this void is not only inescapable, but essential for communication to take place: 'because we are always trying to overcome this void, to represent the unrepresentable, we continue to signify, to talk, to communicate' (ibid.).

Christian Lundberg discusses Lacan's psychoanalysis, as the author puts it in the title, 'with(in)' communication. The author focuses on how the failure of communication can be productive. He argues that:

> The genius of Lacan's work is that the failures of unicity he identifies in speech, subject, and sign are invariably put to work as forces that call forth our investment in supplements, or fantasies, that work to cover over failed unicity – so much so that instead of becoming fatal in the life of speech and the speaking subject, failures in unicity become the driving forces that animate the fantasy of a speaking subject who communicates in the context of public life (Lundberg 2012, p. 340).

However, in my thesis, I favour the Derridean views of (mis)communication and (mis)understanding for the reasons explained by İlter (2017). The author compares and contrasts Lacan's and Derrida's readings of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Purloined Letter.*

> According to Lacan's theory of the proper place, "the signifier must never risk being lost, destroyed, devided, or fragmented without return" … And yet, for Derrida, … this risk is constitutive of all signifiers as marks of communication …, for "within every sign, there is distancing", a difference and deferral… Thus no instance of communication can escape *adestination* (İlter 2017, p. 273).

In his book *Deconstructing Communication: Representation, Subject, and Economies of Exchange* (1997), Chang focuses on this idea. In general terms, he applies

poststructuralist approach to his study, and deconstructs Western communication theory. The scholar opposes the 'romantic view' of successful communication (Chang 1996, p. xi) as 'organized exchange' and supports 'an inverted image of communication as the occurrence of Babel-like, *a*destinal sending (*envoi*)' (Chang 1996, p. xii).

In the last chapter, the author describes three hypothetical communicative situations: two conversations that seem to end 'successfully', and one where misunderstanding occurs: one of the participants of the conversation (the narrator), does not understand what was said by his interlocutor (Chang 1996, pp. 221–222). The first two conversations are soon forgotten, but the narrator cannot forget the last one. According to Chang, nothing really happened during the last conversation, 'but this nothing, compared to "idle chatter" and the "forgetfulness" of an ordinary conversation, was much more dramatic. It produced in me an effect like no other' (Chang 1996, p. 224). Paradoxically, this is where communication began. As Chang explains, 'communication can take place when it appears not to take place, and can appear to take place when actually it fails to even begin' (Chang 1996, p. 225).

After the interlocutor broke his silent existence, 'silence returned, devouring both of [them] again by expropriating my ability to respond' (Chang 1996, p. 224). Thus, for communication to happen, the silence should be broken by a stranger or an alien; communication only becomes possible 'when it is invaded by an alien, an inscrutable other that embodies a void' (Chang 1996, p. 225). This invasion destabilises one's inner world, but this crisis is the condition for the event of communication: 'This crisis … causes the event of communication to occupy me, to take its place in me – in spite of its nothingness, in spite of the void it induces in me' (ibid.). Therefore, according to the author, communication is (im)possible: 'The impossibility of communication is the birth to its possibility' (ibid.). This is, as Chang himself observes, a radical statement, which he explains as follows:

> Recall my visitor in the third situation. By uttering to me meaningless sounds, she might be trying to avoid being communicative. But her very attempt to avoid communication testifies to the force of its necessity and thus confirms the singular law of communication – communication cannot *not* take place ... The communication of a void therefore does not and cannot avoid communication (ibid., emphasis original).

In other words, communication is unavoidable; we are condemned to communicate and miscommunicate in order to communicate. Chang ends his explanation with a conclusion, informed by poststructuralist ideas: no matter how contradictory that may sound, communication is possible and is impossible at the same time: 'If communication is anything at all, it is an *undecidable*' (Chang 1996, p. 228).

McClure and Cabral rightly point out that 'it is precisely the role of meaning of Derrida's notion of *undecidability* that differentiates his thought from that of other deconstructive theorists and critics[14]' (McClure and Cabral 2009, p. 73). As the authors stress, Derrida identifies 'the non-presence of the signified and the impossibility of the signifier to vouchsafe the signified – a condition that results from the structure of linguistic concepts' (ibid.). The scholars explain that it is not ambivalence in the meaning of any word that is *undecidable* 'but, rather, the nature of the system or structure of language itself that is the ground of the *undecidable*', because it 'is constituted via a process of inscribing difference' (ibid.). According to them (and Derrida), in language, 'the identity of any specific signifier is constituted by its difference from other symbols and by both its non-identity with other signifiers and the non-presence of these other signifiers' (McClure and Cabral (2009p. 74). As Mumby concludes, 'meaning, in this sense, is constantly subject to slippage' (Mumby 1997, p. 15). It troubles the very process of communication, but, as Agger stresses, unfortunately: 'There is no royal road to meaning except through meaning-constitutive practices of language that, in turn, provoke new confusions, contradictions, and conflicts' (Agger 1991, p. 113).

In conclusion, although some studies have indicated the relevance of poststructuralism to social sciences, including communication theory and research, little attention has been paid to the articulation of poststructuralist conception of communication, and all the elements of communication process from a poststructuralist perspective have not been explicitly described. Therefore, the theory should be re-conceptualised and re-evaluated. Furthermore, different levels of communication analysis from the poststructuralist point of view should be considered. These are the problems and gaps in research that will be addressed in this thesis.

[14] The authors refer to the scholars of the Yale school and de Man (McClure and Cabral 2009, p.73).

Poststructuralism and Communication in Jarmusch's Films

Thirty-five years after the release of Jarmusch's first feature film, there is still scant significant scholarly work devoted to his films. Juan A. Suárez correctly observes that, although Jarmusch is a visible and an influential figure in the world of cinema, he has been relatively disregarded by scholars (Suárez 2007, p. 2). According to Mark Cauchi, this is explicable by the feeling that his films lack substance (Cauchi 2013, p. 193). Scholars note that there are very few detailed studies on Jarmusch's films published in English: so far only four books (Rosenbaum 2000; Suárez 2007; Rice 2012; Piazza 2015). However, this situation seems to be changing: this past decade, Jarmusch has received more attention from English-language researchers than ever before (Gurr 2006; Bowman 2008; Cardullo 2008; Marynuska 2008; Curley 2008; Richardson 2010a; 2010b; Blum 2010; Imboden 2010; Barbaruk 2010; Petković and Vuković 2011; Thomas 2011; Buchanan 2011; McMahon 2011; Backman Rogers 2011; Murillo 2012; Ahmadi and Ross 2012; Colleran 2012; Douglas 2012; Ladegaard 2013; Cauchi 2013; Juhász 2014; Schelkle 2014; Hastie 2014, Curley 2016). Nevertheless, most of these are peer-reviewed journal articles or conference papers; thus, due to constraints of time and space, scholars have often focused on only one of Jarmusch's films, and most often on either *Dead Man* (1995) or *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999). Still lacking are thorough analytical studies exploring all of Jarmusch's films, not to mention studies that apply poststructuralist theories of communication.

The previous research (Carmichael 1994; Tandt 2001; Otomo 2001, pp. 35–36; Suárez 2007, p. 5; Petković and Vuković 2011; Martínez Torres 2015) has shown that a significant feature of Jarmusch's films is that they are especially postmodern in their dominant themes and worldview. Firstly, they clearly present the notions of '"reality" and "truth" as unstable entities' (Villella 2001). Furthermore, they serve as an excellent example of postmodern politics, deemphasizing the centrality of class and nation and giving special importance to transitory social positions: 'They often focus on transients and immigrants – and tangential identifications that often go against the grain of birth-given nationality and ethnicity' (Suarez 2007, p. 5). As Petković and Vuković point out, Jarmusch continuously explores the influence of the Other, showing America as entirely lacking referentiality, 'a land of stasis and hyperreal images' (Petković and Vuković 2011). As expressed by Thomas Carmichael, America in Jarmusch's films is represented in its

own simulation (Carmichael 1994, p. 224). Moreover, one can notice in his films a sophisticated 'cultural eclecticism' (Carmichael 1994, p. 221) or 'the degree zero of contemporary general culture' (Lyotard 1984, p. 76, cited in Carmichael 1994, p. 221). Additionally, the director has always practiced 'a form of cultural archaeology' (Villella 2001) and combined both low and high, past and contemporary art in his films, which is also a typical feature of postmodernism. Finally, any film by Jarmusch can be a representative example of postmodern filmmaking because of the exclusion of time as a significant storytelling element.

Some studies explore postmodernist characteristics of Jarmusch's films in more depth (Tandt 2001; Martínez Torres 2015). Raúl Martínez Torres (2015), for instance, focuses in his relatively recent doctoral thesis on postmodern aesthetic and ideological elements in Jarmusch's films. In the study, postmodernity is not 'viewed as a cultural current one is free to engage in, but rather as an environment one is unwillingly immersed in' (ibid.). Unfortunately, the thesis is written in Spanish; thus, while it is a useful contribution to understanding postmodern elements in Jarmusch's films, its inaccessibility to English-language readers is a significant hindrance. Christophe Den Tandt (2001) meanwhile, looks closely at *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* as an example of postmodern realist film. This argument is mainly developed through the concepts of iconicity and indexicality. According to Tandt, what makes the film postmodern is its 'rich network of intertextuality' (Tandt 2001, p. 6) and its 'deliberate foregrounding, staging or debunking of rituals of communication and semiotic processes' (Tandt 2001, p. 7). The author in his well-grounded study refers to Peircean semiotics. However, the same issue could also be approached from poststructuralist semiotics, analyzing the complete oeuvre of the director.

While the aforementioned scholars examine postmodernist features in Jarmusch's films, others (Carmichael 1994; Petković and Vuković 2011) attempt to apply postmodernist (or here – poststructuralist) theories to the analysis of the films. It is worth noting that Charmichel (1994) alludes to Lyotard's, Baudrillard's, and Kristeva's theories, among others, whereas Rajko Petković and Kresimir Vuković (2011) expand their reference points from Lyotard and Baudrillard to include Foucault, Lacan and Žižek, as well (although referred to in the latter not as poststructuralist theories, but rather, as 'postmodernist and psychoanalytic theories' (Petković and Vuković 2011). The scholars

convincingly demonstrate that Jarmusch's films can best be explained in terms of poststructuralist, or, as they prefer, postmodernist ideas. Having said that, Jarmusch films have still been scarcely investigated from this theoretical and methodological point of view.

To my knowledge, there are no studies that analyse language and communication in Jarmusch's films from a poststructuralist perspective, except one conference paper by Roberta Imboden (2010), who applies Derrida's theories while examining language in *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*, and few publications are available in the literature that address these themes in Jarmusch's films in general. Some studies, however, even though principally oriented toward other issues, touch on language and some elements of communication as part of their overall trajectories. Communicators and receivers, the characters in Jarmusch's films, as well as their interrelationships, are briefly discussed in several relevant studies, either looking at the work of Jarmusch as a whole (Levy 1999; Villella 2001; Suárez 2007) or at (a) particular film(s) while examining the themes of alienation (Thiltges 2002), foreignness, cultural difference and otherness (Otomo 2001, pp. 35-36; Carmichael 1994; Richardson 2010a, Petković and Vuković 2011; Cauchi 2013) or heterotopias (Blum 2010, p. 58). These themes are also worth reviewing, as they are related to communication and are often addressed by poststructuralists.

Emanuel Levy perceptively states that the viewers usually are not much informed about the history of Jarmusch's characters: 'Their pasts are unimportant, their conduct motivated strictly by the present' (Levy 1999, p. 186). They are often 'lacking direction' (Richardson 2010a, p. 192) and indifferent to what the future holds. Living here and now, all of them can be described as being different from the rest of society, and in many instances, at its margins (Richardson 2010a, p. 194). Levy observes that the characters in Jarmusch's films 'are often drifters, oddballs, outsiders, foreigners or other socially marginalized figures' (Levy 1999, p. 186). Petković and Vuković correctly point out that the marginalised figures in Jarmusch's films point to the work of Foucault inasmuch as the latter 'is also particularly interested in marginalised groups and those who are excluded from positions of power' (Petković and Vuković 2011). They do not, however, go on to apply Foucauldian analysis to their considerations of Jarmusch's characters, thus indicating

one available route for subsequent investigations[15]. In general terms, all of Jarmusch's characters can be described as foreigners. A foreigner, as Michael Richardson (2010a, p. 194) maintains, is also an everyman, and to be a foreigner, among other things, means not to pursue dominant social values or ideals such as the American dream[16] (Richardson ibid.; Martynuska 2008, p. 186). As Amy Thiltges (2002) observes, in most cases, Jarmusch's characters are strangers: friends and family as well as those who build up strong relationships are seldom at the centre of the narrative. Even when story revolves around a couple or a group of friends, 'there tends to be an emphasis on the ways in which the characters are isolated rather than how they are connected' (ibid.). According to Levy, they only establish a rapport with one another through popular culture:

> In Jarmusch's world, characters connect by sharing TV dinners, chanting ice-cream jingles, revering Elvis Presley. Living in a world of devoid values, his characters seek the shelter of comfort and familiarity, blanketed by the blaring music of Screamin' Jay Hawkins and Irma Thomas (Levy 1999, p. 187).

However, Petković and Vuković (2011) argue that characters watching television, rather than representing their *connection*, represents their *alienation*. Indeed, through characters and their interrelations Jarmusch ingeniously shows the effects of alienation in American society and in the postmodern world in general. Thiltges (2002), referring to Lacan's observation that 'infants become alienated from the world the moment they realize that they are cut from the mother', goes even further, arguing that Jarmusch's films represent the alienation inherent to man, regardless of culture or epoch, its state or condition. Nevertheless, this is never shown straightforwardly, therefore the director surely deserves the title that Robin Wood (2003, p. 342) awarded him – the 'poet of alienation'.

In *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984), for example, the theme of alienation is revealed through cinematic language: 'The pauses between scenes, the rundown locale of New York and the monotonal quality of the American landscape' (Villela 2001), as well as the lack of colors in the film (Petković and Vuković 2011). It often reveals itself through various

[15] The scholars, nevertheless, do refer to Foucault's ideas about prison as heterotopia, a space of otherness, while analyzing Roberto as the Other in *Down by Law* (1986). Different heterotopic spaces (of crisis and of deviation) in *Dead Man* were also analysed in depth in the study conducted by Blum (2010).

[16] In Jarmusch's films, the criticism of the American dream is consistent. According to Gabri Ródenas (2010), in the first period of his films, American Insomnia, a criticism of the American Dream and the American Way of Life, gradually turns into a Worldwide Insomnia, reaching its apogee with *Night on Earth* (1991).

symbols. Richardson, who analyses communication in *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*, contends that the theme of alienation emerges at the start of the film, when we see a carrier pigeon with a message:

> The opening of the film establishes one of its key themes: that in the modern world we have become alien to ourselves; and it is the emphasis on the fact of communication at the expense of what is communicated that is at the heart of this alienation. An alien perspective is thereby cast on our own alienness (Richardson 2010b, p. 361).

Levy insightfully recognizes a narrative structure common to almost all Jarmusch's films: They 'typically [begin] with characters who are living a quiet existence and are unable to communicate' (Levy 1999, p. 186), a quietness suggestive of their alienation. However, the palpably 'lethargic atmosphere is usually interrupted by an outsider who exposes the shallow emptiness of the American characters' (ibid). These outsiders usually are newcomers from Europe and they often play crucial roles in Jarmusch's films, signifying the impact of the other (Petković and Vuković 2011).

Richardson, in his book *Otherness in Hollywood Cinema* (2010a), has drawn attention to the fact that, in contemporary American cinema, no one has dealt with the theme of otherness 'as frequently or in as sophisticated a manner as Jim Jarmusch' (Richardson 2010a, p. 192). Various types of the other in his films (the repressed Other[17], represented by Hungarian identity in Stranger *Than Paradise* (1984), 'the Other deprived of its Otherness' (Roberto in *Down by Law* (1986), the Other raising the universal Other (Nobody in *Dead Man* (1995), to name a few) are examined by Petković and Vuković (2011). It is important to stress that the authors apply poststructruralist theories (particularly Lacan's and Žižek's ideas but also with reference to Foucault); even so, they focus on a certain typology of otherness and they do not analyse the theme in relation to communication. Meanwhile, Richardson correctly observes that Jarmusch is interested in 'the impenetrability of otherness' and is open to 'the challenge to communication that it offers' (Richardson 2010a, p. 195). Indeed, the director in his films often shows the difficulties of *communicating* with the other, a theme yet to be fully examined. However, all the research that has been done on otherness in Jarmusch's films or at least indicated

[17] In this thesis, the capital-O Other and lower-o other will be used as has been suggested by Lacan. However, in the quotations and citations by other authors, the terms will be used as they appear in the original work.

the theme (Villella 2001; Richardson 2010b, p. 366, p. 367; Petković and Vuković 2011; Chauchi 2013) suggests it is represented as essential to American culture. Richardson claims that Jarmusch highlights the loss of cultural values in American culture and demonstrates this loss can only be recovered 'through its own sub-cultures and through interaction with other cultures' (Richardson 2010b, p. 367). His films propose that the perspective of the other is needed for the picture of American culture to be complete (Petković and Vuković 2011). Moreover, the other 'opens up the narrow world of American characters' (Villela 2001), enables them to 're-make themselves' (Richardson 2010a, p. 193) and 'to make the world anew' (Richardson 2010b, p. 367). Therefore, positive change in America, its regeneration and revival, is only possible by letting in and accepting otherness.

The most elaborate approach to the issue has been proposed by Mark Cauchi (2013), who develops the idea while analysing *Down By Law* and applying Emmanuel Levinas' ideas on the relationship between freedom and otherness, as well as the Arendtian concept of freedom as the capacity to introduce newness into the world. According to the author, the film suggests that the encounter with otherness 'renews or revitalizes freedom and identity [of America], both at the individual level and at the collective level' (Cauchi 2013, p. 193). The researcher argues that Americans Jack and Zack, who cling to the old American ideal of individualist negative freedom, have ended up in prison, and it was the Italian Roberto – the Other[18] open to otherness – who directed them out of their prison (Cauchi 2013, p. 203). However, the scholar emphasizes that this liberation should not be interpreted as an escape from America, but rather, 'as a translation, transformation, and renewal of it' (ibid.). In the context of this thesis, this is important since it speaks to how the two dimensions of Roberto's otherness (the Other open to otherness) are revealed through communication with Jack and Zack and the usage of the English language:

> Being engaged in the process of mutual translation between the Italian and the American idioms, he inevitably and unexpectedly alters the meanings of the English words and expressions he uses. […] It is significant that he uses clichés, because clichés are expressions whose origins are usually unknown by most users of the

[18] Mark Cauchi points out that Roberto's English, 'coupled with the loudness of his voice and the thickness of his accent, is enough to announce him as capital-O Other' (Cauchi 2013, p. 203).

> language. They are habitual, dead expressions, but Bob's otherness gives them new life (Cauchi 2013, p. 205).

Therefore, Jarmusch's films imply that the renewal of cultural identity can also be obtained through communication with the other, communication with other cultures; that this is how old meanings can be positively distorted and new meanings established. From the research that has been undertaken, it is possible to conclude that the communicators in Jarmusch's films, as poststructuralists suggest, are 'far from being self-present and self-contained, are self-divided', meanwhile receivers of the message are 'not passive absorbers of meaning, but … active co-creators of meaning' (Dissanayake 2009, p. 779). Moreover, the message in the films seems to have multiple, and quite often subjective, meanings. *The Limits of Control* (2009), for example, is all about subjectivity and solipsism[19]. Thus, communication with the other in Jarmusch's films and the multiplicity of meaning lend themselves to poststructuralist analysis from an especially Kristevan point of view. Her ideas in the book *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991), in which she claims that 'the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity' (Kristeva 1991, p. 1), seems to be the most appropriate for further investigation of the topic.

Encounters with foreigners pave the way for more detailed analyses of inter-lingual, inter-cultural and cross-cultural communication in Jarmusch's films. It has been recognised (Suárez 2007, p. 2; Richardson 2010b, p. 366) that to a great extent his films are about cross-cultural communication and understanding. In other words, Jarmusch's films are not only about how the representatives of different cultures communicate; they raise a bigger question: What happens to cross-cultural understanding and knowledge when it is transmitted across cultures? (Richardson 2010b, p. 366). Among other ways, it is often transmitted in the form of texts, the material from outside one's culture. It has been argued that this material 'can supplement our identity – intervening in our identity, offering new points of identification, and playing complex roles in the construction of identity' (Bowman 2008, p. 64).

[19] It should be noted that a conference in France (the 8th-9th April, 2015) dedicated to Jarmusch's films called to submit papers on dialogue and solipsism in the oeuvre of the director. However, none of the speakers chose this topic.

According to Paul Bowman, *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* suggests that, through encounter with *Hagakure*, a translated Japanese text,[20] fantasy (identification with a fantasy social position of a Samurai) and the discipline of martial arts, a young black man from an American ghetto actually becomes a ninja (Bowman 2008, p. 73).[21] In Bowman's words, the film 'proposes that identity is formed through a complex and hybrid process of identification – processes of fantasy and self-invention, processes of "seeing oneself as" this or that' (Bowman 2008, p. 73). It shows that at times culture can or could begin to be another culture, even though the communication with that culture is 'translated', 'mediated' and, as the scholar (Bowman 2008, p. 74) suggests, dependent on identification with a fantasy. However, the author stresses that such East-West encounters in the film are actually encounters with simulacra. Joanna Handerek in her article *The Way of the Samurai* (Handerek 2013, p. 77) also notes that the film demonstrates how one culture successfully integrates the elements of another culture. She argues that through *Hagakure* Ghost Dog 'adopt[s]' the mentality of the East, and therefore it is an excellent example of cultural influence, as well as interaction or even communication between cultures. Nevertheless, the scholar also draws attention to the film's martial and violent centre. Moreover, 'fighting and its canons are contrasted with cultural requirements' (ibid.). According to Handerek, it can be interpreted as the way in which Eastern and Western cultures feel about and behave towards each other:

> The contrast between modern aggression of Western people (simple and based only on physical violence) and the Samurai code (requiring one not only to comply with given virtues, but also to be in control of oneself) can show the relation between Eastern and Western culture, as well as provide a modern take on many traditions and their meaning (ibid).

Nevertheless, the question remains whether the idea is to show the *relation* between the East and the West. As Richardson (2010b, p. 367) points out, Jarmusch is interested in

[20] *Hagakure* is not the only Japanese text that is translated in the film. The other Japanese text that plays a significant role in the film is Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's *Rashōmon and Other Stories*. It is also a reference to another 'translation' in the form of the cinematic adaptation by Akira Kurosawa. Furthermore, *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* includes a reference to the scene from the Japanese Yakuza film *Branded to Kill* (1967). Such borrowings, as the scholar maintains, work to emphasise the director's 'awareness of the complexity of cultural translation and communicability and that translation must not lose sight of fundamental difference' (pp. 366–367).

[21] Ghost Dog is certainly more of a ninja than a samurai in terms of how he makes a living (he is a hitman). However, ninjas did not follow the samurai code that Ghost Dog follows like a samurai.

finding alternative notions that stand in contradiction to American values. Added to which, these notions should perform a critical function, namely the renewal of meaning and identities. However, dialogue between the East and the West in the film still needs to be examined further, as do other aspects of cross-cultural communication – future endeavours which a utilization of Lyotard's theory of *differend(s)* could undoubtedly benefit.

In Jarmusch's films, the director identifies the ways in which cultural contact – be it *tête-à-tête*, indirect, translated or mediated – reveals the possibilities of communication, but also its potentially ruinous effects (Richardson 2010b, p. 366). This is why communication with various forms of the other, including the cultural other, is shown in Jarmusch's films to be so ambivalent; as Cauchi explains with reference to Roberto's phrase '*Is* a sad and beautiful world' in *Down by Law*:

> Our strangeness to one another is sad because it inhibits the full disclosure to and mutual comprehension of one by the other and therefore is the source of misunderstanding, conflict, and potentially violence. But, on the other hand, this strangeness is 'beautiful' because it is the other's strangeness – her difference from oneself – that makes her intriguing and worth engaging with. … since there is no point in dialoguing with another who is a mirror-image of oneself (Cauchi 2013, p. 194).

Actually, the phrase 'sad and beautiful world', often used to describe Jarmuschian cinema, is, among other things, about the sadness and beauty of the problems people faced after the building of the Tower of Babel. This raises the important question of what happens when we communicate, translating from our language and translating ourselves as idiosyncratic languages. It is the question that is often raised in the films by Jarmusch and often addressed in works by poststructuralists.

Problems of language in Jarmusch's films have not been thoroughly investigated, although some studies suggest good starting points for further analysis from a poststructuralist perspective. It has been recognized (Watson 2003) that language is one of Jarmusch's thematic preoccupations. According to Paul Watson (2003, pp. 145–146), his films imply that we should not overrate the idea of language as the primary medium of communication. Moreover, Richardson argues that, in his films, Jarmusch 'shows that he distrusts the direct transmission of messages by language' (Richardson 2010b, p. 369). The scholar observes that in *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* communication almost never

takes place through direct transmission. For example, Ghost Dog has a good friend, a Haitian ice-cream vendor Raymond (Isaach De Bankolé). Raymond, a French speaker, knows no English. Ghost Dog, meanwhile, knows no French. Yet, they are still able to communicate via their own specially devised means. Their communication, in Richardson's words, 'exists at a different level of discourse':

> Their communication occurs through shared thoughts which each can only verbalise in a language the other cannot understand. They are nevertheless connected together through a convergence of thoughts which can only vulgarly be reduced to language (Richardson 2010b, p. 363).

Sarah Piazza (2015, pp. 185–188) calls their ability to intuit and repeat each other's thoughts in their own language 'invisible translation'. According to her, Jarmusch is not concerned with 'how this small "linguistic magic" works' (Piazza 2015, p. 187), as long as the communication between these two characters 'is saved'. Indeed, when direct spoken language is used and words are uttered, communication between the characters in many instances fails. Thus, spoken words are often obstacles to successful communication and sources of misunderstandings.

What is more, Jarmusch's films also imply that one should not trust the written word (Richardson 2010a, p. 209). For example, in *Dead Man*, an illiterate fireman looks at the letter William Blake (Johnny Depp) received with a job offer at the *Dickinson* Steel Mill and warns him: 'I wouldn't trust no words written down on no piece of paper'. In this film, according to some scholars (Salyer 1999, p. 29; Shapiro 2004, p. 151; Curley 2008), writing is represented as an untrustworthy medium, 'the primary medium for disseminating lies' (Salyer, ibid.). Salyer also observed that this sentiment 'can be found in non-writers when … writing is introduced to the culture (Plato is most notable this regard)' (Salyer 1999, 29). One could also question the reliability of the written word in *Broken Flowers* (2005), where another letter, this one informing the protagonist that he has a son, causes confusion and problems for him. Thus, a tendency to distrust both the spoken as well as the written word in Jarmusch's films can be clearly seen, as words not only make everything difficult and complicated, but also often mislead.

It has been observed (Piazza 2015) that, since a man is inclined to verbocentrism, words are at the centre of communication in cinema (p. 176), but Jarmusch is one of the

few directors who decenters them. He uses various techniques of relativization (ibid.) in his films, when speech is inscribed 'in a visual, rhythmic, gestural, and sensory totality where it would not have to be the central and determining element' (Chion 1994, p. 178). French cinema scholar Michel Chion identifies seven possible techniques of speech relativization: rarefaction, proliferation, narrative commentary over dialogue, multilingualism, submerged speech, loss of intelligibility, and decentering (Chion 1994, pp. 179–183). Piazza observes that Jarmusch adopts the strategies of rarefaction, proliferation and multilingualism[22] in his films (Piazza 2015, pp. 179–185). Her study (2015) on words and language(s) in Jarmusch's films so far has been the most extensive. She dedicates the whole subchapter in her book (2015) to multilingualism in Jarmusch films and examines the instances where the usage of foreign languages in Jarmusch's films helps to develop arguments of social-political nature, although, as she observes, the director himself denies making in his films anything directly political or ideological (Piazza 2015, p. 189). The author refers to Žižek and his ideas on English language as the language of imperialism, arguing that, if we applied these ideas to film, even the use of some other languages could be regarded as a political statement (a similar argument on the politics of English is developed by Mirona Moraru and Alida Payson (2017). Moreover, Piazza illustrates how such social-political statements are made in several instances from three Jarmusch films. Nevertheless, the author's study (2015) is more focused on words and language as sounds than as means of communication. Thus, unusual uses of speech/language and verbal/written communication in Jarmusch's films remain to be more extensively examined.

Having said that, acoustical analysis should not be depreciated, as Jarmusch gives special importance, for example, to paralanguage, the use of voice. He is also interested in various forms of non-verbal communication, such as kinesics, more commonly known as body language, i.e. posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye movement, gaze, etc. As Suárez writes, 'much of what is enjoyable about [Jarmusch's films] has to do with the performers' physiognomies, voices, and eccentric use of language' (Suárez 2007, p. 5); despite the astuteness of his observation, however, thorough communication analysis at this level still has yet to be undertaken. Some scholars (Villella 2001; Thiltges 2002; Richardson 2010; Piazza 2015) have observed that Jarmusch in his films also shows

[22] Rarefaction is used when the presence of speech in film is rarefied. Proliferation, by contrast, is an overdose of speech. Lastly, multilingualism is the use of a foreign language that is not known to a major part of the audience (Chion 1994, pp. 179–180).

fondness for silence. Piazza even argues that Jarmusch combines elements of pre-sound and sound cinema, therefore the director has created a film that can be defined as silent-sound film (Piazza 2015, p. 328). According to Richardson (2010a), Jarmusch, like present-day jazz musicians, 'brings attention to the silences and spaces that exist between things, the recognition of which is an important aspect of the process of communication' (p. 194). Silence itself can communicate things, and this is apparent in many of Jarmusch's films. An episode in *Night on Earth* (1991), for instance, when a driver (Isaach De Bankole) is carrying a blind woman (Béatrice Dalle), is punctuated by moments of silence. According to Thiltges (2002), his attraction to the woman is more obvious in these silent moments than in what is verbalized: 'The way he looks at her and his general body language convey what is hidden in words' (ibid.).

Thiltges (2002) rightly points out, silences in Jarmusch films have several functions: as in reality, they provide chances for reflection and contemplation, but they also increase suspense. Furthermore, 'moments of silence convey meaning on many levels', and from a psychoanalytical perspective, are often signs of what is repressed (Thiltges 2002). Silences pervade the conversations in Jarmusch's films when his characters fail to find common ground or understand each other. However, these positive and negative silences in the process of communication have been scarcely analysed. Thus, silence – in the context of communication – could be investigated more thoroughly.

It has been argued that characters in Jarmusch's films manage to communicate silently or communicate in different languages 'precisely by discovering their shared humanity' (Watson 2003, p. 146). However, it should not be forgotten that such indirect communication takes place not only between humans, but also between humans and animals. Silent communication is also present in characters' contact with this type of other. Animals play a considerable role in *Dead Man* and *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*, but especially in *Broken Flowers*. In *Dead Man*, we clearly see William Blake interacting with animals, which suggests his spiritual communication with them. Another important reference to such communication is the question, which is constantly asked by different characters: 'Do you have any tobacco?' Some references to tobacco, as Julian Rice states, allude to its hedonistic and addictive use, while others allude to its social and ceremonial use (Rice 2012, p. 11). As regards the latter, Rice maintains that, in *The Sacred Pipe: Clack Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (1953), the use of tobacco is

explained as 'the primary medium of communication between human beings and the spirits of animals, plants, and weather' (ibid.). However, the scholar is more focused in his study on the role and meaning of tobacco use and in *Dead Man* rather than on the exploration of the communication with animals in Jarmusch's films.

Scholars have mostly recognised and emphasised the importance of animals in *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (Villella 2001; Richardson 2010; Petković and Vuković 2011), and first of all, the role of carrier pigeons in the film. For Ghost Dog, they are not simply a means of communication with the gangsters; they are also the animals with which he himself communicates. As Richardson (2010b, p. 365) points out, Ghost Dog has learned the language of birds, the language that existed before the rise of the Tower of Babel:

> Which is not merely a means of communicating a meaning, but also constitutes a system of knowledge … It is thus not simply the beginning of language; it is also a language, which transcends language.

The transcendence here is also spiritual, the one that transcends the physical and empirical. Petković and Vuković (2011) observe that Ghost Dog, as if the shaman of a primitive society, 'goes through a traumatic experience that enables him to transcend into the spiritual world' and befriend animals in general (pigeons, a dog, a bear). Similarly, in *Broken Flowers*, one of the characters, Don's (Bill Murray) ex-girlfriend Carmen Markowski (Jessica Lange), after her dog Winston dies, gets a gift – to hear animals speak. Carmen stresses to Don that she cannot read animals' minds; however, when they *want* to communicate with her, she has the ability to hear and understand them. According to the script, the woman has received her doctoral degree in animal behavior and is an author of three books: *Animal and Identity Issues, Animal Enlightenment* and *Animal Vernacular*. The latter, as the back cover informs, 'delves into the intricacies of understanding one's animal and communication':

> An in-depth analysis of the vernacular and how we can communicate with animals. It has taken many years for us to understand other species and Dr. Markowski has made it easy to know why we are ready now.

It should be clear now that Jarmusch draws special attention to communication with animals, highlighting the pros-and-cons and raising the questions of how animals can be

heard, how we should respond to them, and how they can help us face the question of who we are. I will analyse the role of homing pigeons in *Ghost Dog* as a means of communication between Ghost Dog and the mafia but I will not analyse the communication between humans and animals in Jarmusch's films, as I am primarily interested in interpersonal communication.

Although silent communication with others, transmission of thoughts and the intuitive communication 'magic' works well in Jarmusch's films, he also shows how we excel at miscommunication. As film critic and professor Levy rightly points out, 'a postmodernist (mis)communication informs the interaction among Jarmusch's characters' (Levy 1999, p. 187). In terms of Western communication theory, this constitutes failure; in terms of the poststructuralist conception of communication, it is always a possibility.

It has been observed (Villella 2001; Thiltges 2002; Wood 2003, p. 345, Suarez 2007; Richardson 2010a; Tasker 2010, p. 208; Piazza 2015, p. 14; Platt 2015; O'Meara 2018, p. 62) that miscommunication and misunderstanding is one of the recurring motives in Jarmusch's films; some scholars notice the theme in particular films by Jarmusch (Nelmes [2003] – in *Dead Man*, Jacobson 2008 – in *Mystery Train*). Some of the cases have been briefly discussed. Robin Wood, for example, examines the different levels of understanding in *Night On Earth* and how it changes with different drivers and passengers (Wood 2003, p. 345). Amy Thiltges (2002) in her turn draws the reader's attention to the scene in *Mystery Train* (1989) when Jun (Masatoshi Nagase) and Mitzuko (Yûki Kudô) are sitting in their hotel room, and Mitzuko tries to cheer Jun up by clowning. However, that does not seem to work. Moreover, it appears that Mitzuko misunderstood Jun's mood:

Mitzuko: Do you feel happier now?

Jun: I was already happy.

According to Thiltges, 'Mitzuko's misreading of Jun's expression is symptomatic of the ways in which signs are ultimately unreliable' (ibid.). This unreliability of signs is one of the recurring themes in all Jarmusch's films, which becomes most obvious in the instances when miscommunication and misunderstanding[23] occur. However, all of the

[23] Miscommunication is a failure to communicate adequately, whereas misunderstanding is a failure to understand something correctly. In other words, the first term refers to the sender of the message and the

research that somehow touches upon the issue so far has been descriptive rather that analytical. It should be stressed that miscommunication and misunderstanding in Jarmusch's films are shown as natural and fundamental to human communication. Therefore, a deeper analysis of his films is needed to understand the phenomenon of misunderstanding and miscommunication better. The poststructuralist approach, which, unlike Western communication theory, privileges misunderstanding as opposed to understanding (Dissanayake 2009, p. 779), seems to be the most probative.

In the last decade, much of the research on communication problems in Jarmusch's films has been done by Richardson. He dedicated to this topic the whole chapter 'Jim Jarmusch or Communication in Crisis' in his book (2010a) and wrote an article (2010b) on the same in *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*. Although it should be noted that Richardson covers similar ground between these two sources (to the point where he sometimes repeats himself verbatim), his insights on the problems of communication in Jarmusch's films are the most significant.

The results obtained by Richardson suggest that it is not merely human communication that is under discussion in Jarmusch's films, but also 'how different forms of communication link together the strands of existence itself' (Richardson 2010b, p. 363). In other words, according to Richardson, the issue is one of understanding the phenomenon of communication 'in a cosmic sense and [in relation to] the position humans have within the scheme of things' (ibid.). Therefore, Jarmusch's films are essential for the exploration of the phenomenon, and may offer, in artistic form, a credible explanation of it.

Richardson observes that, although living in 'the age of communication', the characters – paradoxically – face difficulties while communicating (Richardson 2010a, p. 193; 2010b, p. 361). It has been observed that technology in *Dead Man* 'is the machine that produces inauthenticity and falseness' (Salyer 1999, p. 27). Richardson found that, in his recent films, the director was more interested in the development of technology and its use in our everyday lives for communicating with each other (among other things) and was concerned with the 'dehumanizing impact' it has on people (Richardson 2010a, p. 193; 2010 b, p. 366). According to the author, Jarmusch's films invite us to reconsider earlier forms of communication and introduce the idea that the new means, emerging with the

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second one refers to the receiver of the message. However, both terms stress the same result or effect of the process of communication, namely, its 'failure'.

expansion of technology, prevent rather than allow communication to happen (Richardson 2010a, p. 193). In other words, they are not facilitating but in fact restricting what can possibly be said (Richardson 2010a, p. 209; Richardson 2010b, p. 370). Instead of connecting people, the new means of communication alienate them further.

Richardson argues that the opening scene in *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*, when we see a carrier pigeon flying with a message, is 'a travesty of the modern idea of communication' (Richardson 2010b, p. 361) reminiscent of the time when communication had a different inducement (ibid.). It is also 'a deliberate provocation to technological communication', questioning reliability, trustworthiness and transparency of the new forms of communication. Indeed, in *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*, we cannot see anybody using mobile phones, tablets or computers; they are not only 'conspicuous' (Richardson 2010b, p. 369), but also suspicious by their absence, and this absence requires critical reflection. According to Richardson, the problem is that mediated communication eliminates the previously shared intimacy, 'which is the hallmark of a genuine contact between people' (Richardson 2010a, p. 210). The intimacy is lost; rather than two people communicating, there is always a third present: the media itself (Richardson 2010a, p. 210; Richardson 2010b, p. 370). The scholar draws attention to the fact that, previously, the only potential third player involved in the communication process was an omnipresent God. Now, however, the media has taken His place: 'There is a tendency to place a faith that sometimes seems overwhelming in technological media which parallels the faith people once had in God' (Richardson 2010a, p. 210). Nevertheless, the scholar maintains that *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* acts as a warning not to trust new forms of media, and not to assume – without questioning – the messages it transmits are always the undistorted truth (Richardson 2010a, p. 211; 2010b, p. 371). As the author states, 'the claim that modern media allows direct communication is based upon the assumption that media is neutral ... Is this, however, really so?' (Richardson 2010a, p. 210; Richardson 2010b, p. 370). According to the scholar, the rapid increase of new media forms implies they have already become something more than merely means of communication and are apt to penetrate human consciousness (ibid.). While thinking that media is neutral we risk losing 'a sense of where the boundary between our reality and that of the media is to be found' (Richardson 2010b, p. 371). And, although we may maintain the illusion that we control or regulate the flow of information, it is actually the media itself that does so (Richardson 2010b, p. 370).

These considerations, made in the context of Jarmusch's films, are of profound importance to the thesis. However, a key limitation of Richardson's research is that the author analyses them as a critic rather than as a theorist; thus, he does not apply any theoretical insights to bolster critical claims. His ideas on mediated communication in the works by Jarmusch lend itself to a poststructuralist interpretation, as in the poststructuralist view, 'the medium is not transparent and is not a mere conduit, but one that imposes its own meanings' (Dissanayake 2009, p. 779). The other major drawback of Richardson's study is that it lacks the analysis of the dialogue. As Sarah Kozloff accurately observes, 'to overlook the dialogue is to miss the heart of the film' (Kozloff 2013, p. xiv), especially when it comes to the problems of communication.

Film dialogue is another almost unexplored area in communication and media studies (Braga 2019, p. 51), According to Jeff Jaeckle (2013b, p. 1), scholars have long concentrated on cinematic images and neglected cinematic language. Except for several notable contributions to it made by Sarah R. Kozloff (2000), Jeff Jaeckle (2013), and Braga (2015), very few scholars[24] analysed dialogue in film. Communication in film, being a broader area, has also been scarcely investigated. However, several studies are worth mentioning. Ned Schantz's (2008) research focused on different modes of communication between female characters in film (gossip, letters, and phones). Elizabeth Monk-Turner et al. (2014) researched how communication technology is portrayed in film and how this differs in terms of gender and time. A collection of essays edited by Andrea Sabbadini et al. (2018) looked at virtual intimacy and communication in film from a psychoanalytic perspective. Dialogue and communication have been analysed in my guest-edited issue of the *JOMEC Journal* (2019). However, needless to say a number of questions regarding dialogue and communication in film still loom.

Especially little attention has been paid to the dialogue of 'independent' movies and communication between the characters in it. One work that could be singled out is a study by Jennifer O'Meara who analysed cinematic verbalism in American independent cinema (Jarmusch was one of the directors she explored). The scholar argued that in comparison to the dialogue standards of mainstream cinema, 'the verbal styles of … independent writer-directors are found to be marked by alternations between various extremes, particularly those of naturalism and hyperstylisation, and between the poles of efficiency and excess'

[24] See Braga's (2019) article for more references.

(O'Meara 2018, p. 1). A smaller, but no less important, study was conducted by Berliner (2013). The author focused on the dialogue in the American independent filmmaker John Cassavetes' pioneering work. Berliner's insights (2013) on differences between Hollywood movies and independent films are useful within the framework of this thesis because of the emphasis on various imperfections of speech and miscommunication. The scholar observes that the characters in Hollywood movies are inclined to flawless speech (Berliner 2013, p. 106). Moreover, they 'communicate effectively and efficiently', usually listen to one another and easily grasp the meaning of what has been said (Berliner 2013, p. 104). Furthermore, they seem to understand each other's feelings or ideas. In other words, rapport in Hollywood movies is a norm (Berliner 2013, p. 105). Therefore, Berliner claims, Hollywood movie dialogue does not follow regular conversational conventions (Berliner 2013, p. 104). As Petković and Vuković point out, 'The underlying tendency of Hollywood films is to present the world as ultimately presentable and knowable, but a more thorough analysis reveals their realism as only partly rooted and clearly distorting external reality' (Petković and Vuković 2011).

The dialogue as well as communication in Hollywood movies is not an exception. However, dialogue in independent film, as the results of Berliner's study (2013) suggest, comes much closer to a real conversation with all its imperfections. The speech of characters is 'as inefficient and rambling as real speech' (Berlin 2013, p. 108), they 'readjust and re-focus their sentences as they speak' (Berliner 2013, p. 109), misunderstandings occur, etc. The dialogues in Jarmusch's films might at first sound unrealistic, but deeper analysis might well show that they draw nearer to real speech and can better inform us as to the more fundamental levels of communication – its inarticulateness, positive and negative silences, misunderstandings, and other problems, such as translation, communicating with the other or communicating through technology. However, the minimal but promising dialogue in Jarmusch's films has largely been overlooked, while the problem of communication in general has yet to be explored with theoretical rigor – gaps in the knowledge of Jarmusch's films that this thesis will address.

3. Methodology

My thesis lies at the intersection of philosophy, communication and film studies, thus, three different disciplines: humanities, social sciences, and arts. Under the scope of my work, there are two objects of analysis: the poststructuralist theories of communication as well as the dialogue and the communication between the characters in Jarmusch's films. The interdisciplinary as well as theoretical nature of the work requires a strong theoretical framework and an innovative methodology. This chapter is concerned with the methods and research techniques used for the study. In what follows, I will describe and justify my 'methodological armoury' (Deacon et al. 2010, p. 3), i.e., the research strategy chosen in relation to my research objectives and questions.

The chapter starts by outlining the philosophical and methodological assumptions of my preferred paradigm. It moves on to a very brief discussion of two methods used in the theoretical part of the work: meta-theoretical analysis and rational reconstruction. I then indicate the selected poststructuralist authors to be examined in the theoretical part of my work in order to describe the poststructuralist theory(-ies) of interpersonal, intercultural and mediated communication. Subsequently, I give an overview of Lasswell's construct that will be used to describe the poststructuralist conception of communication. In the next section, I discuss the notion of theory as well as criteria that can be used to evaluate a communication theory and then present those that will be used in order to evaluate the poststructuralist theory. I outline the methodology employed for film dialogue analysis in the second part of the chapter. It ends by indicating my research sample and reflecting on it.

Paradigm

On the one hand, media and communications research '*suffers* from a fundamental lack of disciplinary coherence' (Koivisto and Thomas 2008, p. 225, my emphasis). On the other hand, interdisciplinarity 'is … held up as a prime value in research' (Barthes 1977, p. 155) and the strength of the field, as it can be a 'space, where a range of existing academic disciplines meet, bringing their own particular questions, concerns and intellectual traditions with them' (Deacon et al. 2010, p. 2). Their variety, however, complicates the

categorisations of the main approaches or paradigms,[25] informing media and communication research. There is also the related problem of a lack of common criteria for categorising them. As a result, there is no unified taxonomy: there are many classifications, depending on different standards.

Anthony Karl Erik Rosengren (1983), for instance, insists that there are four main approaches to the field of media and communications: a functionalist, an interpretive, a radical-humanist and a radical-structural. Giddens (1989) argues we should single out three: naturalism, social causation, and functionalism. Robert Craig (1989) also argues for three, but different ones: empiricism, hermeneutics and critical theory. There are also different variations[26] of this categorisation, for instance, positivism, interpretivism and critical realism (Deacon et al. 2010). But there are also more approaches to categorising the field. Stuart Hall (1982), for example, looks at it from a historical perspective and argues that it was first informed by the mass society paradigm, then by the American-based paradigm and finally by the ideology-focused paradigm. In a similar manner, emphasising the historical development of the field, Oliver Boyd-Barrett (2002) suggests classifying media and communications into the effects research, cultural studies, and political economy. The latter two classifications should not be understood as diachronic – the indicated paradigms successfully coexist today.

Poststructuralism is difficult to fit into (only) one of these 'boxes'. It has similarities with hermeneutics/interpretivism[27] but communication scholars usually ascribe the label to the last cluster – critical realism, critical theory, critical research,[28] cultural studies or

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[25] I define a paradigm as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105). It is 'a basic system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways' (ibid.).

[26] Positivism is not the same as empiricism but it was influenced by it; interpretivism is a broader term than hermeneutics but also includes it. In some categorisations, critical realism is seen as encompassing critical theory.

[27] For a brief discussion of the similarities and differences between hermeneutics and poststructuralism, see, for example, Kögler (2008, p. 152). For a concise review of the distinction between interpretivism and critical realism, see, for instance, Deacon et al. (2010, p. 6).

[28] Critical realism, also known as transcendental realism or complex realism, is one of 'postpositivist approaches positioned between positivism/objectivism and constructivism/relativism' (Clark 2008, p. 167). Critical theory is a tradition (although sometimes regarded as a separate approach/paradigm) known for two generations: the first one that attempted to marry dialectical reason with Weberian social theory; and the second one distinguished by the shift from dialectics to intersubjectivity (Carspecken 2008, p. 174).

postmodernism, depending on the categorisation. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 109) argue that poststructuralism is one of three substrands of critical theory, the other two being postmodernism and what they call a blending of poststructuralism and postmodernism. Since the taxonomies have their own strengths and weaknesses, I would like to set them aside and focus on the poststructuralist tradition itself. Ontology, epistemology, and methodology are generally regarded as helpful criteria in comparing, contrasting, and categorising the paradigms (Guba and Lincoln 1994, 105). I will therefore outline the main philosophical assumptions of poststructuralism and describe the poststructuralist methodology.

Poststructuralists do not believe that it is possible to reach the God's Eye Viewpoint from which we could observe reality objectively. According to Antonio Sandu, in the poststructuralist view, 'there is no single reality' that can be measured; rather, there are many realities that can, at best, be understood (Sandu 2011, p. 39). From this perspective, 'the meanings are not themselves derived from the properties of objects, but attributed through the communication game, after sets of rules imposed randomly by the needs of discourse' (Sandu 2011, p. 43). It is commonly believed that knowledge 'consists of signs that systematically represent objective and subjective states of affairs. Accurate representation is then believed to ground the meaning of signs' (Carspecken 2008, p. 171). The repetition of signs is supposed to ensure their meanings are stable and objective. However, deconstruction shows the opposite is the case: 'it is the repetition of signs that generates belief in objectivity and subjectivity (as categories that transcend sign systems)'[29] (ibid.).

Poststructuralist authors are accused of refusing the idea of truth 'at both theoretical and interpretive levels' (Uhan 2013, p. 24). However, it is not the value of truth that they say no to, but rather the idea of truth as definite and absolute. According to poststructuralists, 'Truth *as certainty* is no longer fully adequate to science' (Sandu 2011, p. 48, my emphasis). They allow that different 'truths' may coexist together and encourage different interpretations of social and cultural text(s). As Uhan (2013, p. 23) stresses, instead of creating a strict theoretical and methodological frame for guiding the scholars

According to Carspecken (ibid., p. 170), critical research is a genre of social inquiry that focuses on the problematisation of knowledge, drawing on both critical theory and poststructuralism/postmodernism.

[29] A more elaborate discussion of the deconstructive views on objectivity and subjectivity can be found in Chapter 4.

towards unambiguous results and interpretations, the poststructuralists 'strive for multiple and variable interpretations of results which should demonstrate the inconsistency and fragmentation of the (media) text (reality)'. They advocate an open economy of readings and argue that analytical meaning is 'always provisional, never complete' (Deacon et al. 2010, p. 6).

Uhan observes that 'from [the] poststructuralist viewpoint, the whole set of traditional methodological strategies is problematic' (Uhan 2013, p. 33). Firstly, poststructuralists problematise the very idea of methodology, as it implies a stable structure. According to one of the leading poststructuralists, Barthes (1977, p. 201), there is 'No surer way to kill a piece of research and send it to join the great waste of abandoned projects than Method'. Fixing a method, sticking to it, in his opinion, is dangerous to research (ibid.). '*At a certain moment*', writes Barthes (ibid., emphasis in the original), 'it is necessary to turn against Method, or at least to treat it without any founding privilege as one of the voices of plurality – as a *view*, a spectacle mounted in the text'.

Poststructuralism criticises the notions of intentional subject and universal reason (Carspecken 2008, p. 171), which has significant methodological consequences. Two dilemmas related to methodology arise from Derrida's deconstruction: '1) the question of the position of the humanistic subject in research; and 2) the question of the researcher as the author[ity] of research' (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000, p. 164, p. 167, cited in Uhan 2013, p. 26). Since no human subjects are involved in my study, I would like to briefly discuss the role of the researcher whose authority in the poststructuralist research is challenged.

As Ballinger explains, 'In poststructuralist research, the unitary voice of the researcher is usually disrupted and fragmented, providing a range of possible interpretations' (Ballinger 2008, p. 45). In a study, the researcher can provide the reader with different perspectives on the same subject. For example, retelling 'the same research process from the perspectives of different stakeholders or even the researcher herself or himself in the guise of different personalities' (ibid.) and (introducing) divergent readings of the same cultural or social text(s). Since poststructuralists do not accept that there is neutral reality 'which can be objectively described and interpreted', the main task of the researcher 'is to make visible the text's ambivalent and contextual nature by adopting an active attitude (values and interests) to it' (Uhan 2013, p. 28). Also, s/he cannot detach

herself/himself from what s/he's researching, because 'You cannot analyze someone without yourself being part of the listening situation' (Kristeva and Midttun 2006, p. 168).

Barthes argues that research not only concerns a text; it produces a text and becomes a text itself (Barthes 1977, p. 198). Since it is a text, it deals with language: 'whatever it [a piece of research] searches for, it must not forget its nature as language – and it is this which renders finally inevitable an encounter with writing' (Barthes 1977, p. 199). 'In writing', the author continues, 'the enunciation deludes the enounced by the effect of the language which produces it, a good enough definition of the productive, dissatisfied, progressive, critical element which is indeed ordinarily granted to "research"' (ibid.).

Agger distinguished methodological implications relevant to social sciences in general. According to the scholar, poststructuralism allows one to 'read all sorts of non-discursive texts as rhetoric' (Agger 1991, p. 120). It allows science to be less technical (ibid.). Furthermore, it highlights the part language plays in the constitution of reality, 'thus offering new ways to read and write science' (ibid.). Science readers are given an active role and are invited to enter into a dialogue with scientists. Moreover, poststructuralism 'enables readers to deconstruct the universal reason of the Englightment as the parcularistic posture of Eurocentric rationality, which contains class, race, and gender biases' (Agger 1991, p. 121). Lastly, it provides a constructive critique of positivism (Stockman 1984, cited in Agger 1991, p. 106). Uhan, who discussed qualitative methodological strategies that are relevant to communication studies, argues that:

> poststructuralist critiques of empirical research can strengthen researchers' methodological ambitions by moving methodological attention away from looking for the "empirical truth" in data towards an interpretation of and reflection on data in the global context including the ideological, meta-theoretical, linguistic and political dimensions of research (Uhan 2013 p. 33).

To sum up, poststructuralist philosophical assumptions are difficult to define. An attempt to define, for example, poststructuralist ontology, according to Benoit Dillet (2017), poses a threat to essentialise it. However, it can be firmly said that poststructuralists question objective reality as it understood by other theorists, do not regard it as fixed or determined, and their epistemology (as well as methodology) can be described as qualitative (Sandu 2011, p. 44). In this work, I will follow the principles

outlined by poststructuralists and, where possible, will introduce different perspectives and interpretations of the same communicative situations.

The Selected Authors

In the theoretical part of my work, I will apply meta-theoretical analysis[30] and rational reconstruction. Meta-theoretical analysis will allow me to reveal similarities and differences between poststructuralist theories and their relationship to other communication theories in the communication theory field. Rational reconstruction will serve to recognise the implicit assumptions underlying in the poststructuralist theory. The poststructuralist theory[31] of interpersonal communication will be derived from Barthes', Derrida's and Kristeva's works as well as Lyotard's insights on the process of communication. The poststructuralist theory of written communication will be based on Barthes' and Derrida's ideas. Drawing on the same, I will reconstruct the theory of mediated communication. The poststructuralist theory of otherness/foreignness and intercultural communication will be developed following Derrida's, Kristeva's, and Lyotard's insights on the topics. I will analyse the phenomena of miscommunication and misunderstanding from a Derridean point of view. For the reasons why his view is more appropriate for the study of miscommunication and misunderstanding than that of Lacan's, see Iter (2017), I exclude from the theoretical part of my research several poststructuralist authors who may be regarded as important representatives of the poststructuralist thought (e.g., Hélène Cixious, Luce Irigaray, Felix Guattari, Deleuze, Louis Althusser, Michel Serres, Jacques Rancière or Étienne Balibar,[32] to mention but a few). I provide the reader with some of their insights where possible, but I cannot discuss their ideas extensively due to space constraints.

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[30] Meta-theoretical analysis is concerned with the analysis of meta-theories. According to Birger Hjørland, meta-theories are 'theories about the description, investigation, analysis or criticism of the theories in the domain' (Hjørland 2005, p. 5).

[31] These 'theories' of communication, however, will not be elaborate theories in a strict sense of the word but rather the main implications for the foundation of those theories.

[32] These authors are acknowledged as the most important authors of the movement by the editors of *Edinburgh Companion to Poststructuralism* (Dillet et al. 2013, pp. 2–3).

What I aim to suggest is an approach and a theoretical framework to a general communication theory; I do not attempt to offer the foundation for a grand communication theory. I will only lay down partial and contingent guidelines for the communication theory from the poststructuralist perspective. My goal here is neither to build a communication theory that seeks an overall explanation of the phenomenon of communication nor a communication theory that looks at one narrow level. Rather, I will try to show what *implications* it has to our understanding of the phenomenon of communication in general, communication in particular discourses (spoken, written, and mediated) and certain types of interpersonal communication (verbal, nonverbal, written, incultural/interlingual). What is more, I will explain, from the poststructuralist vantage, why communication 'fails' in general as well as in those particular discourses and contexts. My decision to discuss extensively the work of only certain poststructuralists was based on two reasons. First, I give preference to theorists who pay particular attention to interpersonal communication and different aspects of it. Second, I favour authors whose work is more focused on the topic of miscommunication, as this thesis is very much focused on those situations when communication 'fails' as well as on those situations when it 'succeeds', although, it seemed to be almost condemned to a 'failure' (for example, when two people communicate without the ability to talk a common language but understand each other perfectly).

Lasswell's Construct as a Tool for Conceptualising Communication

The main elements of communication from the poststructuralist perspective will be described following Lasswell's five-question construct[33] of communication. In his article 'The Structure and Function of Communication in Society' (1948), Lasswell wrote that a convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following questions: Who? Says What? In Which Channel? To Whom? With What Effect? (Lasswell 1948, p. 117). Each of the questions refers to different elements of communication (communicator, message, medium, receiver/audience and effect).

The construct was repeatedly criticised for its linearity (McQuail 1985; Schram 1983; Westley & Maclean 1985, cited in Sapienza, Iyer and Veenstra 2015, p. 601).

[33] Sapienza et al. (2015, p. 602) stress that, in scholarly literature, it is called a 'model', a 'formula', even a 'paradigm', but they believe 'construct' to be the most neutral and accurate word to allude to it.

Zachary S. Sapienza, Narayanan Iyer and Aaron S. Veenstra (2015, p. 611) speculate that such criticisms come from the graphic representation of the model that 'itself projects linear communication, not necessarily Lasswell's construct in general' (ibid). Lasswell himself never presented the construct visually, and the authorship of its graphic representation should not be credited to him. He actually stressed the importance of a two-way communication that he believed 'occurs when the sending and receiving functions are performed with *equal frequency* by two or more persons' (Lasswell 1948, p. 220, my emphasis). Thus, if we do not view Lasswell's construct as a linear graphic model 'it can be utilised for a diverse range of theoretical and conceptual needs' (Sapienza, Iyer and Veenstra 2015, p. 612).

Two of the best-known shortcomings of the construct are that it fails to address the crucial elements of communication – noise and context (Colbey and Schulz 2013, p. 6). Furthermore, the wording of the questions is problematic. For example, 'says' is glottocentric, 'to' attributes intentionality, 'with what' assumes an attuned destination, etc. (ibid.). However, according to Sapienza, Iyer and Veenstra, Lasswell encouraged the addition of more questions or categories (or subtraction, or modification of them), if necessary (Sapienza, Iyer and Veenstra 2015, p. 609; p. 617). Thus, the questions can be paraphrased[34], their position changed, and new questions can be added as well[35].

The model is usually applied to mass communication research, whereas I focus more on interpersonal communication. For this reason, one might argue, the construct is not the most suitable for my purpose. However, as Sapienza, Iyer and Veenstra point out, 'simply moving beyond the 1948 article quickly reveals that Lasswell applied his construct to all acts of communication' (Sapienza, Iyer and Veenstra 2015, p. 60). Lasswell argued that in the five questions, 'the principle branches of the science of communication are indicated' (Lasswell 1943, p. 1, cited in Sapienza, Iyer and Veenstra 2015, p. 607). On Lasswell's account, 'The general science of communication includes studies of private and of mass communication. When the participants in communication exceed a selected number, the communication ceases to be private and becomes a mass phenomenon' (ibid.). Thus,

[34] One could, for instance, reword the first question into 'Who heard what' 'to shift the focus to the importance of dialogic interaction' (Sapienza, Iyer and Veenstra 2015, p. 617) or 'Who received what' to silence the author-centric and logocentric echoes in the formulation.

[35] Watson and Hill (1997), for example, suggested adding 'In what context?' to address the social, economic, cultural, political and aesthetic context of communicative situations.

although the construct was initially developed for the description of mass communication, it can be successfully used to describe any communicative act.

The construct might be associated with the social scientific paradigm of communication, having different names (the American-based paradigm (Hall 1982), empiricism (Craig 1989), naturalism (Giddens 1989), positivism (Deacon et al. 2010), to mention a few) and the realistic conception of communication (Kirtiklis 2009a) alien to the poststructuralist conception of communication to be formulated in this work[36], using Lasswell's construct. I use the construct here aside from the origins and a possible value system associated with it as a provisionally appropriate device to conceptualise communication. It should be pointed out that using it for this purpose is not an entirely new research strategy. It was used earlier for the composition of mass communication definitions (DeFleur 1998), and some scholars (Kirtiklis 2009a; Cobley and Schulz 2013) implemented it in their theoretical work for the conceptualisation of communication and the construct proved to be an effective tool.

I will finally come up with something akin to a poststructuralist 'definition' of communication. The poststructuralists themselves are critical about creating definitions. A definition presupposes a stable meaning, whereas poststructuralists are epistemologically committed to avoiding the closure of interpretation. Furthermore, asking the question 'What is communication?' 'leads ... to a reductionist or essentialist mode of thinking that impedes rather than fosters appreciation of the complexity and heterogeneity of communicative events' (Murphy 1991, p. 825). However, I will regard this question as leading to many answers and my offered definition of communication as a 'working' definition – unstable, partial, and incomplete. I argue that the poststructuralist theory offers a unique understanding of and a novel approach to communication. I am therefore convinced that such 'definition' should be formulated for practical purpose of situating poststructuralism in communication theory as a field.

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[36] The poststructuralists themselves would not admire the simplicity of the construct and the principles embedded in it. However, I will not try to *explain* communication with the help of this construct but use it as an aid to structure the description of the process of communication from the poststructuralist stance without missing any constituent parts. I could apply m/any other constructs to explore communication, but in the space allowed in this thesis, I can only choose one.

Intellectual Maps, Nets and Lenses: Metaphors and Definitions of Theory

As discussed in the literature review, poststructuralism has been referred to differently (as a movement, a school of thought, a philosophical position, etc.). Evan Kropp argues that 'multiple forms of reference are a result of a lack of clear criteria for defining cultural theories as "theories"' (Kropp 2015, p. 11). It raises important questions, such as what is to be regarded as a theory, and specifically, a cultural theory? Furthermore, how can one determine whether a cultural theory is a 'good' one? A suitable departure for answering these questions is the consideration of the term 'theory' while looking at the metaphors used to describe it.

Some scholars see theories as maps (Griffin 2003, p. 4; Infante, Rancer, Womack 2003, p. 30). Dominic A. Infante, Andrew S. Rancer and Deanna F. Womack, for instance, argue that a map, just like a theory, is a 'symbolic construction' (Griffin 2003, p. 4; Infante, Rancer, Womack 2003, p. 30) or a symbolic representation of a territory, but not the territory itself. It does not include all the physical characteristics of the area, only some of them. Maps, therefore, cannot be evaluated by the categories of 'true' or 'false': 'Each is more or less useful and accurate in portraying relevant features of the territory' (ibid.). Em Griffin adds that the 'truth' maps represent 'may be objective facts "out there" or subjective meanings inside our heads' (Griffin 2003, p. 4).

Famous philosopher of science Karl Popper compares theories to nets. According to him, 'theories are nets cast to catch what we call the world: to rationalize, to explain, and to master it' (Popper 2002, p. 38). Just as different types of fishing nets are designed to catch different types of fish, different theories are built in order to achieve different purposes. In other words, the effectiveness of the result highly depends on the tools used to achieve it. This idea is best illustrated with a metaphor of 'intellectual spectacles' suggested by philosopher Stephen Toulmin (1961 p. 104.) It implies that with different 'intellectual spectacles', having different shades, we might see the world in slightly different ways.

Mats Alveson and Stanley Deetz point out that 'a theory is a way of seeing and thinking about the world ... As such it is better seen as the "lens" one uses in observation than as a "mirror" of nature' (Alveson and Deetz 2000, p. 37). Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss further explain that, 'we can never "view" reality purely ... and our theories

provide the lenses with which we observe and experience the world' (Littlejohn and Foss 2004, p. 4–5). Thus, any theory is rather 'a way of packaging reality' than a way of reflecting it (ibid.).

Some authors refer to the term theory 'in its broadest sense as any organized set of concepts, explanations, and principles of some aspect of human experience' (Littlejohn and Foss, 2005, p. 17). Others are more precise and allude to a theory as 'a set of constructs[37] that are linked together by relational statements that are internally consistent with each other' (Chaffee and Berger 1987, p. 101). These inter-related propositions have explanatory power, suggesting 'why events occur in the manner that they do' (Hoover 1987, p. 38).

Infante, Rancer and Womack argue that scholars build theories to accomplish at least one of the following purposes: '(1) to describe, (2) to explain, (3) to predict, and/or (4) to control behavior' (Infante, Rancer and Womack 2003, p. 26). Most of the theories seek to describe and explain phenomena. However, unlike scientific theories, interpretive or cultural theories do not aim to predict futures and control behavior. As Kropp rightly observes, 'scientific theories have goals of explanation, prediction and control', whereas cultural theories 'reveal systems of oppression in social structures and examine their underlying values, attitudes and beliefs' (Kropp 2015, p. 11).

There are also four elements of theory: (1) philosophical (epistemological, ontological and axiological) assumptions, (2) concepts, (3) explanations, or dynamic connections made by a theory, and (4) principles, or guidelines for action' (Littlejohn and Foss 2005, p. 18). Most scholars agree it is essential for a theory to have at least the first three components to be worthy of the name (ibid.), and most of the theories possess them, including the poststructuralist theory.

It is important to note that theories differ tremendously in their assumptions. Littlejohn and Foss observe that, 'they make drastically different assumptions about reality and assume many different forms' (Littlejohn and Foss 2005, p. 31). Thus, before moving to the criteria that can be used to determine whether a communication theory is a good theory, one should first consider different *types* of theories.

[37] Constructs are concepts that can also be described as theoretical variables (Chaffee and Berger 1987, p. 101).

The most common dichotomies of communication theories are scientific/interpretive (Griffin 2003), scientific/cultural (Kropp 2015), and empiricist/humanist (McClish 1994)[38]. There might be different categorisations, but it it is still possible to divide the theories into two broad worldviews: objective and interpretive. As Griffin argues, 'the distinction between objective and interpretive worldviews is a difference that makes a difference' (Griffin 2003, p. 10). For practical purposes, like Griffin, I refer to the advocates of objective worldview as scientists and to the exponents of interpretive worldview as scholars.

The first difference between the two camps is that scientists strongly believe in objective reality, whereas interpretive scholars are rather skeptical about it. One of the reasons for that is that scientists 'assume that truth is singular' (ibid.), meanwhile interpretive scholars believe truth is plural and 'largely subjective – meaning highly interpretive' (Griffin 2003, pp. 10–11). Scientists are inclined to determinism and therefore highlight 'forces that shape human behavior', while 'interpretive scholars stress individual choices' (ibid., p. 11). The highest value for scientists is objectivity; interpretive scholars value emancipation the most (Griffin 2003, p. 13). Scientists focus on the effectiveness of the process of communication; interpretive theorists stress the importance of participation. Scientists seek to reveal universal laws that can be applied to different communicative situations, meanwhile interpretive scholars '[strive] to interpret a particular communication text in a specific context' (Griffin 2003, p. 14). The poststructuralist theory clearly falls into the category of the interpretive worldview.

Set of Criteria for Evaluation of Communication Theory

There are different answers to the question 'What is a good theory?', as 'different scientists have different criteria for what makes a "good" theory' (Infante, Rancer, Womack 2003, p. 39; p. 47). It seems that many years after the first criteria for evaluation were established, there is still no consensus what helps to determine whether a theory is a good theory. It is an ongoing discussion, and, as Kropp notices, 'now is as good a time as any to stir the conversations about the ways we evaluate theories' (Kropp 2015, p. 23). Kropp himself adopts his set of criteria from Steven H. Chaffee and Charles R. Berger

[38] However, these oppositional labels should not be used synonymously, as they are not entirely the same. For example, not all scientific theories are empiricist, and not all interpretive or cultural theories are humanist.

(1987) for evaluation of a cultural theory (Hall's encoding-decoding 'model'). Chaffee and Berger (1987) distinguished seven standards to evaluate a communication theory: (1) explanatory power; (2) predictive power; (3) parsimony; (4) falsifiability; (5) internal consistency; (6) heuristic provocativeness; (7) organising power (Chaffee and Berger 1987, pp. 104–105)[39].

In the end of their study, the authors note that, 'not all communication phenomena are studied by scientific methods' (Chaffee and Berger 1987 p. 119), and that their aim was to summarise the work of 'those who are within the scientific tradition' (ibid.). Thus, these criteria for the evaluation of a theory are scientific. L. Kropp, however, argues that 'positivist social scientific models of theory critique' can be successfully applied to 'cultural models of communication' to determine if they can be regarded as (good) theories (Kropp 2015, p. 10). His main argument for why we should use scientific criteria to evaluate of cultural theories is that primary goals of scientific and interpretive theories, 'explanation, description, and acquisition of new knowledge[,] are compatible' (ibid., p. 18). However, philosophical assumptions, and especially epistemological assumptions, are too important to be overlooked.

In addition to Chaffee and Berger's (1987) or Kropp's (2015) suggested criteria, there are more sets criteria suggested by other scholars in the field, for example, Deutch (1952), Infante et al. (2003) who adopted the criteria from Shaw and Costanzo (1970), or Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss (2005), to mention a few. I cannot discuss them all in detail due to space constraints. However, most of the authors argue that these criteria are universal and applicable to different types of communication theories. However, if one takes a closer look (see Table 1 where matching colours represent similar or the same criteria in different sets of criteria), it becomes obvious that despite different labels, most

[39] The first criterion, explanatory power, requires a theory to offer reasonable explanations for the phenomenon it was built to explain. Furthermore, the wider the range of phenomena the theory is able to explain, the stronger it is. The second criterion, predictive power, is set to measure the theory's ability to predict events. The third one, parsimony, refers to Occam's razor principle: 'Simple theories are preferred to more complex ones, assuming that both predict and explain equally well' (Chaffee and Berger 1987, p. 104). Falsifiability denotes the capacity of being able to be proven false: 'If a theory is not, it cannot be said to have survived a test even if research is consistent with it' (Chaffee and Berger 1987, p. 104). Moreover, the theory's statements should be inter-related and compatible with each other – this shows its internal consistency. Heuristic provocativeness suggests that the theory should be able to create new hypotheses that will potentially enhance knowledge. A good theory should not only able to generate new knowledge, but also organise existing knowledge. Kropp accepts all the criteria suggested by Chaffee and Berger (1987), except falsifiability, that, as he argues, could be changed to a more useful criterion of testability.

of the criteria distinguished in different sets, coincide, and most fit for the evaluation of scientific theories. For example, Griffin argues, 'prediction is possible only when we are dealing with things we can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste again and again. As we notice things happening over and over in the same way, we begin to speak of universal laws' (Griffin 2003, p. 40). Thus, cultural theories would fail to meet the criteria of predictability and furthermore fail to meet the criterion of parsimony, as they tend to be complex in their constructs.

It is also a question whether a criterion 'useful', meaning 'practical', as suggested by Infante et al. (2003, p. 43), can be adequate for evaluating cultural theories. When one considers what is meant by 'practical', it appears that 'in order to be practical, ... a theory must be able to predict as well as to describe and explain behavior' (Infante et al. 2003, p. 27). Thus, it seems that such criteria simply mean that interpretive or cultural theories cannot be regarded as 'good' (or at least meet this particular standard) because they are more 'theoretical' than 'practical'. Bowman correctly notices that the terms of theorising and doing 'are all too easily opposable, and they frequently acquire the values of passivity to activity and, hence negative/inferior to positive/superior' (Bowman 2013b, p. 9). Such oppositions, according to the author, result in 'set of questions that are almost begged by the very term 'Theory':

> For what is the *object* of "Theory"? What is the *other* of "Theory"? Or, indeed, what is the *point* of "Theory"? There are certain answers that are almost ineluctably programmed into such questions. These answers include highly valuing terms like *practice, action, doing, reality,* etc. – all of which seek to consign "Theory" to the category of the inferior and less important (ibid.).

Theory in general, and in this particular context, a cultural theory, should not be placed in such a position. It can further be said that the criteria suggested for the evaluation of different theories should not be adapted from one of the worldviews and, therefore, in favour of certain types of theories.

Deutsh (1952)	Steven H. Chaffee and Charles R. Berger (1987)	Shaw and Costanzo (1970), Infante, Rancer, Womack (2003)	Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss (2005)	Steven H. Chaffee and Charles R. Berger (1987), Evan L. Kropp (2015)
(1) Organizing power	(1) Explanatory power	(1) Logically consistent	(1) Theoretical scope	(1) Explanatory power
(2) Heuristic value	(2) Predictive power	(2) Consistent with accepted facts	(2) Appropriateness	(2) Predictive power
(3) Predictability	(3) Parsimony	(3) Testable	(3) Heuristic value	(3) Parsimony
(4) Operations of measurement	(4) Falsifiability	(4) Simple	(4) Validity	(4) Testability /Empirical value of constructs
(5) Originality	(5) Internal consistency	(5) Parsimonious	(5) Parsimony	(5) Internal consistency
(6) Simplicity	(6) Heuristic provocativeness	(6) Consistent with related theories	(6) Openness	(6) Heuristic provocativeness
(7) Realism	(7) Organizing power	(7) Interpretable		(7) Organizing power
		(8) Useful		
		(9) Pleasing to mind		

Table 1. Different sets of scientific criteria to evaluate a theory

Some communication scholars established sets of different criteria for assessing different types of theories. Griffin (2003) distinguished five standards for assessment of scientific theories and five standards for evaluation of interpretive theories. The scientific standards offered by Griffin correspond with some of the criteria already described by other authors: (1) explanation of the data, (2) prediction of future events, (3) relative simplicity, (4) hypotheses that can be tested and (5) practical utility (p. 240–243). Interpretive theories, according to the author, should be evaluated by the following criteria: (1) new understanding of people, (2) clarification of values, (3) aesthetic appeal, (4) community of agreement, and (5) reform of society.

The first interpretive standard, understanding of people, requires the theory to offer 'fresh insight into the human condition' (Griffin 2003, p. 44). It should help a scholar understand a text (words, images, ideas) better. Subjective understanding and individual

interpretations are desirable. A scholar should include himself/herself as 'constituent of [his/her] own construction'[40] (Griffin 2003, p. 45). As Griffin points out, 'scholars can and should affect the communication they study' (ibid.). The second standard, clarification of values, refers to the possibilities offered by theory to reveal power relationships and underlying ideologies in communicative situations or, more broadly, interpreted texts. The third standard suggests that 'good interpretive scholarship doesn't just consider issues of artistry and aesthetics – it embodies them ... The form of communication theory can capture the imagination of a reader just as much as the content" (Griffin 2003, p. 46). A good interpretive communication theory receives acknowledgement and support from allied scholars in the field; they agree with the subjective interpretations, making them valid. In other words, they 'verify or vilify' (ibid.) theorist's ideas. This is the fourth standard, a community agreement. The last one, reform of society, requires a theory to make a change in society. As Griffin puts it, 'contrary to the notion that we can dismiss social philosophy as *mere rhetoric*, the critical interpreter is a reformer who can have an impact on society' (emphasis original, ibid.). I argue these criteria are the most suitable for the evaluation of interpretive theories, however they can be supplemented by additional criteria.

In her article 'Good Theory and Good Practice: An Argument in Progress', Robyn Penman also claims that postmodern paradigm requires different criteria than those used for modern paradigm, and offers four standards of postmodern theories: constitutiveness, contextualness, diversity, and incompleteness (Penman 1992, p. 234). The first criterion refers to the idea that 'both our meaning and our knowledge are socially constituted within the communication process' (Penman 1992, p. 243). Therefore, communication theories accepting of this idea should be regarded as good theories. Furthermore, Penman argues that 'Communication is always located in a context – both spatial and temporal – and it is the context that provided the frame for intelligibility of action' (Penman 1992, p. 244). However, one should consider that the context is constantly changing. According to the author, a good communication theory and practice should affirm the critical feature of unstable contextuality. The criterion of diversity celebrates the variety of possible meanings and interpretations of communicative events. Penman argues that, 'in a very broad and almost paradoxical sense, we could suggest that better descriptions/interpretations are those that recognize the diversity that is possible' (Penman

[40] It is known as Krippendorff's self-referential ethical imperative for building a theory.

1992, p. 245). Moreover, a good communication theory and practice should accept that 'there can be as many descriptions as we, in our participation, are capable of generating' (ibid.). Finally, the last criterion of incompleteness suggests that meaning generated in communication can never be complete. Therefore, communication theories and practices that 'allow none of the open-endless of communication' or 'presume the possibility of perfect understandings' (Penman 1992, p. 247) are to be regarded as not so insightful. However, those communication theories and practices that deny any closure are also 'equally bad' (ibid.). Thus, in order to evaluate a communication theory, one should consider the theory's claims about the outcomes of communication process.

Poststructuralism could be evaluated while using both sets of criteria. However, such evaluation would be excessive: some of the criteria suggested by Penman are close to if not the same as the ones outlined by Griffin. Therefore, I have chosen only one set of criteria – the one suggested by Griffin, as his set is wider than Penman's. However, Penman's set is also an important contribution to the field. I would like to stress that these criteria are no better or worse than those stemming from the scientific approach. They are just more suitable for the evaluation of theories that differ from scientific theories. They also resist the hegemony of the dominant paradigm and avoid the 'equal standards for all' approach, which fails to consider significant differences in philosophical assumptions.

Film Dialogue Analysis

Film dialogue is essential to our understanding of the communication between characters in the medium of film. According to film scholar Sarah Kozloff, 'to overlook the dialogue is to miss the heart of the film' (Kozloff 2013, p. xiv). However, Jeff Jaeckle rightly observes that '[t]rained to critique elements of camerawork, editing and mise-en-scène' for quite a while 'scholars have not developed the necessary analytical tools to study dialogue' (Jaeckle 2013, p. 2). Therefore, in 2013, the author suggested a four-step methodology for the analysis of dialogue in film: (1) quoting the film dialogue, (2) verifying the accuracy of film quotations, (3) analysing aural and verbal as well as (4) the literal and figurative components of film dialogue.

Kozloff claims 'what the characters say, exactly how they say it, and how the dialogue is integrated with the rest of the cinematic techniques are crucial to our experience and understanding of every film since the coming of sound' (Kozloff 2000, p.

6). Therefore, according to Jaeckle, quoting dialogue is necessary: 'it is the means by which scholars can appreciate aesthetic, narrative and ideological details only glimpsed in descriptions' (Jaeckle 2013, p. 3). The author asserts that film quotations reveal the subtle nuances in expression and meaning, determining our understanding and judgement of the scenes. He insists that 'Quotation is the prerequisite for dialogue analysis, for it allows scholars to perceive – to a degree that descriptions cannot achieve – subtle yet telling speech patterns that deepen our understanding of a film' (Jaeckle (2013, pp. 4–5). It is recommended to transcribe quotations from the finished film and verify them with it, instead of trusting screenplays or subtitles.

Jaeckle also argues that 'a single syllable of film dialogue is an assemblage of phonographic details of pitch, pace and volume' (Jaeckle 2013a, p. 7). This syllable, according to the author, has linguistic and literary characteristics 'pertaining to national language or regional dialect, word choice and wordplay' (ibid.). For analytical purposes, the syllable of film dialogue can be divided into aural and verbal components; the latter can also be divided into the literal and figurative dimensions of dialogue. According to Jaeckle (Jaeckle 2013a, p. 10), a scholar should first study the literal content of dialogue and reflect on how it helps in shaping the characters and developing the narrative. S/he should then study the figurative implications of the dialogue and consider 'the possible presence of alliteration, rhymes, puns, allusions and other devices that enrich the literal content with aesthetic or meta-textual flourishes' (Jaeckle. 2013a, p. 11).

I will follow all the four methodological steps suggested by Jaeckle (2013); I should, however, be cautious not to overanalyse linguistic elements of dialogue if they do not increase our understanding of the process of communication. In addition, I will investigate how the poststructuralist conception of communication is reflected in Jarmusch's films, applying the poststructuralist theoretical framework that will be established in the theoretical part of the work.

Analysis of Body Language

There are five channels of non-verbal communication: facial actions, vocal cues, proxemics, gaze, and kinesics. I will examine these domains while analysing body language of the characters in Jarmusch's films. I will observe, for example, facial expressions of the actors while searching for basic emotions, I will analyse vocal cues,

such as, for example, the tone of voice, examine the distance between the characters while they communicate, explore the length of eye-contact they maintain, and body movement as well as various gestures. I will not code them, though, as, I believe, quantifying the non-verbal communication does not serve the aim of the work. Also, I will not analyse, for instance, certain body positions in great details. Some researchers go so far as, for example, to count the degree angle of a lean (Fairbanks, McGuire and Harris 1982), but I doubt whether such detailed analysis would add anything to the study. Rather, I am interested in general trends in the non-verbal signifiers in Jarmusch's films and I will approach these from the semiotic perspective, trying to understand what meaning they convey.

Sample

The empirical part of my project will be dedicated to analysis of the dialogues and communication between the characters in twelve Jarmusch's films: *Permanent Vacation* (1980), *Stranger than Paradise* (1984), *Down by Law* (1986), *Mystery Train* (1989), *Night on Earth* (1991), *Dead Man* (1995), *Ghost Dog: The Way of Samurai* (1999), *Coffee and Cigarettes* (2003), *Broken Flowers* (2005), *The Limits of Control* (2009), *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013) and *Paterson* (2016). My focus will be on Jarmusch's feature films; I left out of my analysis his short films, documentaries, and videos, as I was interested in his creative work where cinematic dialogue is the most elaborate.

According to Hansen and Machin, 'The collection of data, regardless of the method used, must always be focused on what is relevant or necessary in order to address and answer the objectives or posed for the research' (Hansen and Machin 2013, p. 23). Therefore, I will select for analysis those dialogue extracts and those communicative situations that are most suited to help me answer my research questions. Some films, therefore, will be examined more extensively than others. Intercultural communication, for example, is artistically explored in *Down by Law* (1986), *Night on Earth* (1991), *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999), *Coffee and Cigarettes* (2003); written communication in *Dead Man* (1995), *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999), *Broken Flowers* (2005), *Paterson* (2016); miscommunication frequently occurs in *Coffee and Cigarettes* (2003), etc.

However, all Jarmusch's feature films will be included in the research sample in order to reveal how the communication problems in Jarmusch's films intensify with each film. Moreover, this opens a possibility to analyse the communication with different forms of the other. In addition, each of Jarmusch's films shows the increasing distrust in technology and new media as well as the presentiment of its negative influence on the process of communication. Thus, the analysis of all Jarmusch's films might reveal the deepening crisis of communication in the modern world.

4. Poststructuralist Conception of Communication

This chapter describes the poststructuralist conception of communication and counter often scathing and undeserved criticisms directed at deconstruction and poststructuralism. I will describe the poststructuralist conception by focusing on three authors: Derrida, Barthes, and Kristeva. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, I structure their ideas on the sender and the receiver, the message, or the text and its meaning, the medium and effect of communication according to the construct offered by Lasswell in a form of the following questions: Who/to whom? Says what? In which channel? With what effect?

I counter the misinterpretations of deconstruction and poststructuralism[41], focusing on Derrida's understanding of language and his conception of communication. For this reason, the subchapter on Derridian conception of communication is the longest one. I argue that, if the main misinterpretations of Derrida's works either directly or indirectly relating to the topic of communication were dispelled, there would be no room left for the claims that poststructuralism and communication theory are incompatible (Ellis 1991, p. 221) and that '[a] theory of communication must position itself away from post-structuralists' (ibid.). I confront the criticisms Derrida received, demonstrating that, in the words of Norris, 'the whole charge-sheet falls to shreds if one only takes trouble to read what Derrida has written, instead of relying on a handful of simplified slogans' (Norris 1990, p. 26).

The main misunderstandings of Derrida's ideas can be roughly summarised as follows: 1) Derrida rejects objectivity and reality as well as the values associated with it; 2) Derrida denies intentionality but does not live by his theory; 3) Derrida does not give instructions on how one should read and interpret texts, although claims there to be rules; 4) Derrida advocates pluralist ethos and the indeterminacy of meaning; 5) Derrida contends that all communication is miscommunication and that understanding is impossible. I confront the first three claims in the first subsection on the sender (Who/to whom?) the fourth statement is disclaimed in the second subsection on the message (Says what?) the last one is addressed in the last section (With what effect?). After dismissing the criticism and describing the Derridean conception of communication, I move on to discuss the understanding of communication from the point of view of Barthes and Kristeva. The

[41] These misinterpretations are often explained in the footnotes.

chapter ends by re-evaluating the poststructuralist theory by the chosen criteria described in the methodology chapter.

4. 1. Derrida: (Im)possibility of Communication

Who/To whom?

The philosopheme of the subject is one of the central ones in continental philosophy, but especially French philosophy (McGushin 2005, p. 625), as well as an underlying theme in postmodernity (McGushin 2005, p. 168). It is also one of the main concepts in poststructuralism. The beginning of the discussion of the subject in poststructuralist thought can be traced back in 1962, when one of the fathers of structuralism, Lévi-Strauss, set a goal for the human sciences in his opus *The Savage Mind* 'not to constitute a man but to dissolve it' (1966, p. p. 247). It was successfully achieved by his successor poststructuralists in whose texts the subject is often described as 'dissolved'. One of the poststructuralist discoveries was that the subject is constituted through language and discourse. As Kaja Silverman puts it in her famous book *The Subject of Semiotics*, 'significations occur only through discourse, ... discourse requires a subject and ... the subject itself is an effect of discourse' (Silverman 1984, p. vii). Another important finding of this analysis was that the subject is not constituted in a vacuum: historical, political and social contexts have an effect on it and render it accordingly mutable. This is, as Chang argues, often forgotten in traditional communication theory:

> Borrowing too readily from this Cartesian heritage, traditional communication theory cannot help turning a deaf ear to culture and history, thus re-creating a subject that is gender-blind, culturally absolutist, and historically frozen. Such an understanding of the communicative subject is unavoidably idealist, for divorced from culture and history, it corresponds not to any concrete reality but to a theoretical fiction yielded by introspection and abstraction (Chang 1996, p. 181).

Derrida in particular aimed at deconstructing the speaking subject based on the Cartesian mind. However, he stressed that the deconstruction of the speaking subject should not be understood as destruction of the speaking subject. Rather, it should be understood as 'resituating' the subject:

> There are subjects, "operations" or "effects" of subjectivity. This is an

> incontrovertible fact. To acknowledge this does not mean that the subject is what it says it is. The subject is not some metalinguistic substance or identity, some pure cogito of self-presence; it is always inscribed in language. My work does not, therefore, try to destroy the subject; it simply tries to resituate it (Derrida 2004 and Kearney, p. 156).

Derrida is perhaps best known for his 'method'[42] of deconstruction and his critique of logocentrism, explicitly set forth in his famous opus *Of Grammatology* (1997 [1967]). After carefully studying a litany of philosophical and intellectual texts from Ancient Greece through to the present day, Derrida developed an argument regarding the history of Western thought, or, as he characterised it, the metaphysics of presence. He found that a wide range of thinkers who had contemplated the question of being, had determined being as presence and maintained almost religious belief in presence as the origin and destination of everything. As Protevi claims, 'The basic problem of deconstruction is the relation of the privilege of presence in the entire history of the West to the representation of that history by the history of metaphysics' (Protevi 2001, p. 19). Derrida argues that the metaphysical orientation sets up axiological oppositional binaries (such as, for example, presence/absence, speech/writing, signified/signifier, intelligible/sensible, etc.) that always privilege one term over the other. They are not just innocent binaries; they are hierarchies that orientate our thought and action. These hierarchies, in Derrida's words, are '*violent* hierarch[ies]. One of the two terms controls the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), holds superior position. To deconstruct the opposition … is to overthrow the hierarchy' (Derrida 1981b, p. 41).

Derrida contends that the violent system of power can be overcome, since these oppositions are unstable. The philosopher therefore calls for a revolution in consciousness that does not fetishise the notion of presence. He does not, however, suggest prioritising absence, for that would merely preserve the binary logic deconstruction is meant to

[42] Deconstruction is not, strictly speaking, a method. One should resist the temptation to make ontological assertions, to provide definition(s) of it, as it contradicts the essence of deconstruction itself. As Critchley claims, 'All ontological statements of the form 'Deconstruction is x' miss the point *a priori*; for it is precisely ontological presuppositions of the copula that provide one of the enduring themes of deconstruction' (Critchley 2014, p. 22). Culler points out that 'Deconstruction has been variously presented as a philosophical position, a political or intellectual strategy, and a mode of reading' (Culler 1992, p. 85). Perhaps the latter description is the most accurate. Derrida himself argued that rather than 'is', deconstruction 'takes place' and, as Critchley argues, 'What takes place in deconstruction is reading, … *double reading'* (Critchley 2014, p. 23) to be explored further in this subchapter.

deconstruct. Neither term in such binaries should be regarded as primary because: 'Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces' (Derrida 1981b, p. 216).

Derrida, drawing on Saussure[43], argued that meaning is produced by a sign's difference from other signs, thereby forming a chain of differences, and is always postponed. To illustrate his point, he introduced the (non-)concept of *différance*[44], the notion in French connoting two words: *to differ* and *to defer,* referring, accordingly, to space and time. Derrida argued that to deconstruct the binary oppositions on which the whole edifice of philosophy is built means not to reverse them or make them disappear, but rather to conceive how one of the coupled concepts 'appears as the *différance* of the other, the other as "deferred" within the systematic ordering of the same' (Derrida 1973, pp. 148–149). In other words, the goal is to understand how one of the binary terms is already in the other, as each *always already* carries the otherness of the other within itself: every presence contains the trace of absence in itself, and every absence contains a trace of presence.

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[43] Derrida criticised Saussure for prioritising speech over writing. Saussure argued that we distinguish words from other words by the difference in their sound. Derrida claimed that the difference in sound and meaning shows up not thanks to a sound *per se*, but to the space or spacing between sounds. Since the difference and/or space can be observed in both spoken and written form, speech should not be privileged. Furthermore, Saussure viewed the sign as a unity of the signifier and the signified, whereas Derrida argued that the signifier is not directly related to the signified. He saw 'the sign as a structure of difference: half of it is always "not there" and the other half is always "not that"' (Sarup 1993, p. 33). As Dooley and Kavanagh sums up, it can be said that Derrida 'replaces the term "sign" with that of "trace"' (Dooley and Kavanagh 2007, p. 34), the trace of difference. However, it is inaccurate to state, as Ellis does, that 'the post-structuralists such as … Derrida go out of their way to persuade us that language is composed of a bunch of meaningless sounds to which meaning is "added"' (Ellis 1991, p. 222). It would be more accurate to say that for Derrida, language is composed of iterable units – with reference to the functioning of iterability. As Simon Glendinning correctly points out, 'It is this affirmation … which distinguishes this account from more traditional accounts of language as 'physical' words (in themselves meaningless sounds or marks) connected to pure idealities, 'ideal' senses (meanings)' (Glendinning 2000, p. 278).

[44] Protevi argues that *différance* is Derrida's main concept (Protevi 2001, p. 19). However, according to Derrida, *différance* is 'neither a *word*, nor a *concept*' (Derrida 1973, p. 130). '*[D]ifférance, supplementarity, hymen* and *pharmakon'* should be regarded as non-concepts: 'They are somehow concepts but also beyond concepts or non-concepts or aconceptual concepts' (de Beer 2005, p. 166). However, it could be agreed that, among all his 'non-concepts' and neologisms, *différance* is the most important one, the one on which depends the main Derrida's philosophical points, including the demystification of metaphysical oppositional binaries, such as writing/speech. By this concept Derrida in a way gives preference to writing that is usually given to speech: the *difference* between the words *différance* and *différence* can only be observed in writing, since both words are pronounced the same.

With the help of the notion of *différance* Derrida explained his understanding of both objectivity (also often misinterpreted by the critics[45]) and subjectivity – from the deconstructionist standpoint. His conception of objectivity is different to others precisely because of the exposure of the play of *différance* and therefore the disclosure of the illusion of pure presence. For Derrida, 'Objectivity is an effect of *différance*, an effect inscribed in a system of *différance*' (1981b, p. 28). One cannot get away from the interminable play of *différance*, as we interpret the world through the concept of difference, and our interpretive experience is constituted by the differential trace. According to Derrida, reality has the same structure: 'all reality has the structure of a differential trace, and that one cannot refer to this "real" except in an interpretive experience' (Derrida 1988, p. 148).

Derrida argues that subjectivity is also the result of the movement of *différance.* The consciousness of the subject, according to Derrida, is reliant on the system of differences and the traces of differences. The fact of the matter is that the consciousness does not exist as a stable entity before the signifying process starts taking place: the subject becomes one, constitutes itself, during this process and 'only in being divided from itself, in becoming space, temporizing, in deferral' (Derrida 1981b, p. 29). This idea of subjectivity produced in the movement of *différance* opposes the traditional view of consciousness that sees it as the immediate experience of self-presence. At the same time, it challenges the primacy

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[45] Ellis, for example, contends that 'The fervor to reject the idea of objectivity and reality is strong in post-structuralist work. Post-structuralists very much want to cling to the idea that reality exists in the human mind and nowhere else'. However, the group of authors under the label neither reject objectivity nor do they believe reality exists in the human mind. Ellis might have gotten the terms mixed up: this is solipsism, not poststructuralism. Such misinterpretation was possibly induced by another one – that of the famous Derrida's slogan 'There is nothing outside of the text'. Quite a few scholars have already cleared up the misconception of the phrase (Chang 1988, p. 559; Chang 1996, p. 188; Chang 1996, p. 163; Critchley 2014, p. 25; Williams 2005, p. 41; Anderson 2006), including Derrida himself (1988, p. 136). It does *not* mean that there is nothing beyond language and that we are trapped in it as in a prison or as in an inescapable cave (Derrida and and Kearney 2004, p. 154). Derrida makes it explicit that the phrase 'means nothing else [but that] there is nothing outside context' (ibid.). In other words, the meaning of what is beyond language, the other of language, is determined by a limitless context – unfixed in extent. This context has to be taken into consideration as the determining factor, creating the meaning and value of, among (any) other things, 'objectivity': 'What is called "*objectivity*", *scientific,* for instance (*in which I firmly believe*, in a given situation), imposes itself only within a context which is extremely vast, old, powerfully established, stabilized or rooted in a network of conventions (for instance, those of language) and yet which still remains a context. And the emergence of the value of objectivity (and hence of so many others) also belongs to a context. We can call "context" the entire "real-history-of-the-world", if you like, in which this value of objectivity and, even more broadly, that of truth (etc.) have taken on meaning and imposed themselves' (Derrida 1988, p. 136, my emphasis).

given to presence. The term implies that 'the relationship to the present, the reference to a present reality, to a *being* – are always *deferred*' (Derrida 1981b, p. 29). As Anderson explains it, the term *différance* shows that 'within language and thus within culture, there is no absolute meaning, there is no absolute presence' (Anderson 2006, p. 410). It demonstrates that 'The self-presence of meaning and consciousness, accepted as fully possible as well as adequate, is an illusion produced by the repression of these differential structures from which they originate' (de Beer 2005, p. 161). However, although it has consequences of the notions of objectivity and subjectivity, the speaking subject and her/his text, the meaning of it, '*Différance does not* mark the end of communication' (Pada 2009, p. 86, my emphasis). Yet, it does have important effects on it.

In his book *The Post Card*, Derrida meditates on the question of sending love letters in a form of post cards. The philosopher argues that this very form of a postcard has important implications on the sender of them. S/he is never the same and in the same place or time as in the moment of writing: none of the words in the message 'I am here', for example, actually mean the same when they are received. While appealing to the secret receiver of one of his post cards, his significant other, Derrida writes: 'but there are the others, the others within us, I grant you' (Derrida 1987, p. 45). Later in the book, Derrida asks her: 'Who are you, my love? you are so numerous, so divided, all compartmented, even when you are there, entirely present and I speak to you' (Derrida 1987, p. 193). Therefore, as Poster rightly observes, 'Neither the receiver of the postcards nor their sender emerges as coherent individuals. They may be specified only vaguely in coordinates of time and space' (Poster 1990, p. 127). Derrida's point is that, no matter what kind of messages we send, we are those senders and receivers of postcards – always divided and never fully present. Perhaps, one might go so far as to say, we are, in a way, always possibly absent.

According to the philosopher, one of the features characterising the receiver is that of absence. Derrida argues that writing, in order to be writing, has to be able to function in the total absence of the receiver: 'A writing that is not structurally readable – iterable – beyond the death of the addressee would not be writing' (Derrida 1988, p. 7). However, such absence of the receiver is not a necessity, but rather a possibility (Derrida 1988, p. 47). In other words, the text should be able to be read without the receiver's presence but can be read in it, too. According to Derrida, the same applies to the sender of the message: 'For a

writing to be writing it must continue to "act" and to be readable even when what is called the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written, for what he seems to have signed' (Derrida 1988, p. 8). This total absence not only means the absence in time or space, an absolute absence (caused by death), but also the non-presence of her/his wish to transmit his intentions through what is written.

It would possible to call into question the claim that 'intentionality and communication are inseparable' (Ellis 1991, p. 221) and dispute the validity of the statement that 'Communication is by definition intentional' (Ellis 1991, p. 223)[46]. In his critical essay on poststructuralism and deconstruction, Ellis (1991) argues that when the utterance is detached from public norms and speaker intentions, the words uttered do not have any communicative power. The author claims that a parrot's squawk 'The car is in the driveway' cannot be regarded as communication since a parrot was not able to understand the words s/he uttered and did not intend to indicate the location of the car. For the same reason, we cannot say that communication occurred when a cat threw down a box with squares having letters on them, which formed the lines from the Book of Genesis. These examples imply that poststructuralists would object to that. However, they would never go so far as to say that the utterances were messages sent by the parrot or the cat, but they would surely assert these pronouncements can signify and successfully function *as* messages, i.e., might be perceived or received as such, because a message can operate without referent, signified, hearer/reader, speaker/writer and his or her (full and actual presence of) intention.

In contrast to what many critics believe (Ellis 1991; Barrowman 2017, 2019), poststructuralists, with Derrida at the head of them, do not 'ignore' (Ellis 1991, p. 222), reject or deny intentionality. It is not accurate, and indeed *wrong*, to say that

> At practically every turn, … Derrida adamantly affirms to his readers … that self-consciousness is an illusion, intentionality belongs only to that which is not

[46] There is still no consensual definition of the notion of communication. In fact, there are quite a few definitions of the word. Dance and Larson (1976) found 126; Erol Mutlu (1998, cited in Ilter 2017, p. 262) counted close to 200, and not all of them emphasise the dimension of intentionality. It is only one of three points of critical conceptual differentiation (the other two being the level of abstractness and the judgment or 'success' of communication) (Dance 1970).

> human, and concepts such as responsibility[47] and culpability are utterly superfluous in the realm of human existence (Barrowman 2017, p. 170).

In actuality, Derrida does not question the existence of self-consciousness; he rather criticises the teleological discourse of it, its metaphysical nature and origin (Derrida 1988, p. 18). In many of his works, criticising Western metaphysics, Derrida explicated why there can be no pure presence and why we can never be fully conscious of what we are experiencing in the present moment. In objection to Husserl, for instance, he claimed one cannot detect the 'objective' nature of phenomena by coming to a standstill in consciousness, as there is no such thing as a pure content of consciousness. Yet, he himself stresses: 'By no means do I draw the conclusion that there is no relative specificity of effects of consciousness' (Derrida 1988, p. 19).

The same applies to intentionality: the author does not question the intentions of authors *per se*, he rather questions their *telos* and plenitude during the communicative act (Derrida 1988, p. 56). At practically every turn in *Limited Inc*, Derrida stresses that he does not 'see any "conflict" with intentionality' (Derrida 1988, p. 130) and he 'more or less' agrees that we cannot escape it (Derrida 1988, p. 58). The author emphasises that '*at no time* does *Sec*[48] invoke the *absence*, pure and simple, of intentionality' (Derrida 1988, p. 56); on the contrary, it reassures that 'intentionality will have its place but from that place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and system of utterance' (Derrida 1988, p. 18). Intentionality simply cannot 'govern the entire scene and system of utterance' because '*no* intention can *ever* be fully conscious, or actually present to itself' (Derrida 1988, p. 73). According to Derrida, it stems from two reasons: a) that every enunciation is contingent to the movement of *différance* or the traces of difference; and b) every

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[47] The question of responsibility is not under the scope of my thesis. I will therefore discuss it only briefly, while reflecting on the responsibility of deconstructive reading. However, it is important to stress that Derrida does not believe that responsibility and culpability are utterly superfluous, nor does he want to shake off the responsibility of what he says. When he admits that 'Speaking frightens me' (Derrida 1978, p. 9) (a phrase Barrowman quotes in his essay, as it fits well Barrowman's speculations about Derrida being a 'moral coward'), he is frightened of the ways in which language functions: one can always say either too much or not enough. In other words, he is frightened of speaking precisely because of the responsibility and accountability he feels for his words; yet, he is aware of the inability to control them utterly. Furthermore, he admits in *Post Card* that writing 'horrifies' him (Derrida 1987, p. 128) for the same reason. As de Beer rightly observes, 'to Derrida, there is no writing without responsibility. When one reads his book of mourning, one is overwhelmed by his immense moral sensitivity and his fear of writing the wrong thing with the wrong attitude towards the wrong outcome' (de Beer 2005, p. 169).

[48] His essay 'Signature Event Context' (1988 [1972]).

enunciation pivots on the structural unconscious (of language, the textual unconscious) which 'prohibits any saturation of the context' (Derrida 1988, p. 18).

The first reason (a) was partially explained above, while introducing Derrida's concept of *différance*. As it was already said, meaning can only be generated through the chain of differences and/or the play of traces that are the traces of otherness. Therefore, what is (to be intentionally) 'expressed' always has a mark of what is not (intentionally) 'expressed'. In Derrida's own words, '"meaning" (to be "expressed") is already, and thoroughly, constituted by a tissue of differences. … It [a text] already differs (from itself) before any act of expression. And only on this condition can it constitute a syntagm or text. Only then can it "signify"' (Derrida 1981b, p. 33). It is for this reason our intentions cannot be fully present when we want to express them.

The second reason (b) is closely related to the functioning of what Derrida calls iterability, the capacity of repeatability in a myriad of contexts, but also the capacity of being altered while being repeated. This notion will be explained and explored more thoroughly in the following section on the message. For now, let me just say that, according to Derrida, intention 'is divided and deported in advance, by its iterability, towards others, removed in advance from itself' (Derrida 1988, p. 56). He explicates that iterability does not limit intentionality; rather, it limits 'its character of being conscious or present to itself (actualized, fulfilled, and adequate), the simplicity of its features, its *undividedness*' (Derrida 1988, p. 105). In other words, Derrida insists on the dividedness of intentionality, but this feature does not prevent the intention from functioning, just from making itself actual and full (Derrida 1988, p. 56). As Spivak explains, intention is 'irreducibly graphematic' which means that it 'is always already plural, an effect, heterogeneous, divided, and that that is precisely what allows it to work' (Spivak 1980, p. 34). It could be added that every intention, when it is uttered in words, can be and always is interpreted.

Some authors also argue that 'There must be something wrong [with the theory] if its inventors cannot live by it' (Dasenbrock 1994, p. 275). Their (Dasenbrock 1994, p. 266–267, Ellis 1990, p. 13–14, Scholes 1988, p. 281–282) argument is that, although Derrida ostensibly denies the authorial intent, he becomes irritated when he feels his authorial intent is missed. As Scholes playfully puts it, 'iterability yields all too readily to irritability' when a reader does not grasp his intention (Scholes 1988, p. 281). Usually, the

critics refer to Derrida's reaction to Searle's reading of his text or to his open letter to Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon published in *Critical Inquiry* (1986), but still claim that 'we can find *frequent* instances of sympathy for the outlaw coming to righteous indignation when his own [intellectual] property is at stake' (Scholes 1988, p. 281, my emphasis). Dasenbrock therefore contends that 'the question remains whether Derrida is prepared to have his writing taken from his control' (Dasenbrock 1994, pp. 266–267). Ellis is even firmer and more straightforward: 'Derrida thus abandons this position [that the reader should not grasp the author's intention], just as others do, when he feels the need to replace a misstatement of his view with an adequate statement of it' (Ellis 1990, p. 13). It is tempting to respond to these critics with Derrida's own words:

> Since the deconstructionist (which is to say, isn't it, the skeptic-relativist-nihilist!) is supposed not to believe in truth, stability, or the unity of meaning, in intention or "meaning-to-say", how can he demand of us that we read *him* with pertinence, precision, rigor? How can he demand that his own text be interpreted correctly? How can he accuse anyone else of having misunderstood, simplified, deformed it, etc.? In other words, how can he discuss, and discuss the reading of what he writes? The answer is simple enough: this definition of the deconstructionist is *false* (that's right: false, not true) and feeble; it supposes a bad (that's right: bad, not good) and feeble reading of numerous texts, first of all mine, which therefore must finally be read and reread. Then perhaps it will be understood that the value of truth (and all those values associated with it) is never contested or destroyed in my writings, but only reinscribed in more powerful, larger, more stratified contexts (Derrida 1988, p. 146).

There is no question: Derrida 'one of the best readers of other works' (Williams 2005, p. 26) and wants to be read the same way he reads the texts of others, i.e., carefully and closely. His offered 'method' of deconstruction, in his own words, 'calls for prudent, differentiated, slow, stratified readings' (Derrida, 1981 [1972], p. 33), which is also to say, responsible readings. As Attridge (2010, p. 4) observes, deconstructive reading, first of all, has the responsibility in creating a reading that 'involves a fidelity to the singularity of a work, that which marks it as distinctive and of importance' (ibid.). However, as the author emphasises, a responsible reading also requires responding with 'an answering singularity' and 'so with a degree of infidelity' (ibid.). The singularity Attridge talks about refers to

one dominant meaning of the text or the one intended by the author. However, the reader should not remain faithful to this meaning; s/he has to go further.

There are many metaphors to refer to the practice of deconstructive reading. Attridge (ibid.) reminds us that Derrida himself liked the metaphor of signature and counter-signature. Chang calls it reading and counter-reading and singles out two operations that have to be performed accordingly: mimesis and castration (Chang 1997, p. xiii). Critchley (2014, p. 23) argues that 'what distinguishes deconstruction as a textual practice is *double reading*'. However, all of them speak about the same procedure that Derrida (1997, p. 158) described in *Of Grammatology* – the 'doubling of commentary':

> To produce this signifying structure obviously cannot consist of reproducing, by the effaced and *respectful* doubling of commentary, the conscious voluntary, *intentional* relationship that the writer institutes in his exchanges with the history to which he belongs thanks to the element of language. This moment of doubling commentary *should no doubt have its place* in critical reading. To recognize and respect all its classical exigencies is not easy and requires all the instruments of traditional criticism. Without *this recognition and this respect*, critical production would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything. But this indispensable guardrail has always only *protected*, it has never opened, a *reading* (Derrida 1997, p. 158, my emphasis, except the one in the last sentence).

Here Derrida insists on a respectful doubling of commentary that includes the recognition of the intentions of the author. Just as he reassures the *Sec* reader (Derrida 1988, p. 18) and then later Searle in *Limited Inc* (1988) that 'the category of intention will not disappear; it *will have its place*' (Derrida 1988, p. 58), he here stresses that 'This moment of doubling commentary [the respect to and recognition of the author's intention] *should no doubt have its place* in critical reading' (my emphasis). Derrida clearly implies that the intentions of the author do limit the interpreted freedom of the reader by saying that 'Without *this recognition and this respect* [for the author's intentions], critical production would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything'. Therefore, the critics arguing that 'Since authorial intentions in no way actually limit the interpretive freedom of a reader, as Derrida has helped to show, it is in the reader's power to do with any text what he or she wishes, to read as he or she wishes'

(Dasenbrock 1994, p. 272) are wrong. However, Derrida also ends up by saying that recognising the intentions of the author, revealing a relatively stable, and therefore destabilisable, dominant or preferred meaning of the text (Derrida 1988, p. 145) is only half of the reader's job. S/he should also unveil the intangible tensions or contradictions that the text inhabits. This is what opens the text, but also what deforms and transforms it[49].

Due to the misinterpretations of Derrida's views on intentionality, Derrida was often (mistakenly) viewed as someone who promotes 'anti-intentionalist impersonalism' (Dasenbrock 1994, p. 263), subjectivism, relativism (Scholes 1988, p. 291) and nihilism (Scholes 1988, p. 291, Hekman 1986, p. 196). In other words, the misinterpretations of Derridian stance towards the authorial intent[50] led to other misinterpretations, one of which is his perspective on meaning. In the eyes of the critics, Derrida is often seen as an advocate of indeterminate meaning. The logic of faulty reasoning is this: if the intention does not determine the meaning of the text absolutely (and nor does the context), it means that the meaning is indeterminate. However, for Derrida, meaning is rather undecidable. Undecidability, according to him, 'is always a *determinate* oscillation between possibilities (for example, of meanings, but also of acts)' (Derrida 1988, p. 149). There would be no wavering between usually two, but feasibly more possible meanings or courses of action if the 'oscillation' between the possibilities and those possibilities themselves were indeterminate:

> There would be no indecision or *double bind* were it not between *determined* (semantic, ethical, political) poles, which are upon occasion terribly necessary and always irreplaceable singular. Which is to say that from the point of view of

[49] In *Positions*, Derrida claimed that 'Reading is transformational … But this transformation cannot be executed however one wishes. It requires protocols of reading' (1981b, p. 63). In the same interview, he admitted not to have found any system of reading rules that would satisfy him (ibid.). It is no surprise that critics soon identified this as a weakness in his argument: '[t]here must be rules – but there are no rules. What is it, then, that checks or guides our exegetical transformation or critical reading?' (Scholes 1988, p. 294). However, having in mind the inevitable limitations of different methods of reading, Derrida is critical about any 'universal' guidance, along with the very idea of 'universal' methodology: 'The laws of reading are determined by the particular text that is being read. This does not mean that we should simply abandon ourselves to the text, or represent and repeat it in a purely passive manner. It means that we must remain faithful, even if it implies a certain violence, to the injunctions of the texts. These injunctions will differ from one text to the next so that one cannot prescribe one general method of reading (Derrida and Kearney 2004, p. 155).

[50] But also of the freeplay of the sign/ the undifferentiated textual play/hypertextualism as well as his insistence of non-saturable context to be explored in the next section.

> semantics, but also of ethics and politics, "deconstruction" should never lead either to relativism or to any sort of indeterminism' (Derrida 1988, ibid.).

The 'oscillation' Derrida talks about refers, again, to the movement of *différance*. Derrida argues that, 'in order for structures of undecidability to be possible (and hence structure of decisions and of responsibilities as well), there must be a certain play, *différance*, nonidentity' (Derrida 1988, p. 149). However, he insists that *différance* should not be confused with indeterminacy. In fact, *différance* 'renders determinacy both possible and necessary' (ibid.). It is therefore a positive quality, rather than a negative one. Derrida also adds that '[i]nsofar as it is always determined, undecidability is also not negative in itself' (ibid.). Closing the discussion, Derrida rejected both the term of indeterminacy and the label of nihilism, arguing that '[d]econstruction is not an enclosure in nothingness, but an openness towards the other' (Derrida 2004 and Kearney, p. 155).

Says what?

Derrida's discussion on the message (and its meaning) is inaugurated in the very first sentence in *Sec*: 'Is it certain that to the word *communication* corresponds a concept that is unique, univocal, rigorously controllable, and transmittable: in a word communicable?' (Derrida 1988, p. 1). Toril Moi finds this sentence 'melodramatic' and 'too insistent, too absolute' (Moi 2009, p. 806). In other words, as a proponent of ordinary language philosophy, she finds it inordinarily exaggerated. According to Moi, the question implies 'that someone has been saying that it is certain' (Moi 2009, p. 807). The question arises – who? Moi quotes philosopher Stanley Cavell who cannot imagine that someone would be Austin whose theory of speech acts Derrida criticises in his essay; according to Cavell, Austin would hold such question a 'quite unreal question' (Cavell, quoted in Moi 2009, p. 807). The first question has to do with the rigorousness of concepts, but, as regards the form of the question, in my view, rather than asking an 'unreal question', having no answer, Derrida poses a rhetorical question, requiring no answer. In other words, Derrida's question could be inverted and made into a statement perhaps with a tag question he likes using a lot: 'Of course it is not certain, is it, that the word communication…' However, posing a question serves the problematisation of the concept:

> even to articulate and to propose this question I have had to anticipate the meaning of the word *communication*: I have been constrained to predetermine

> communication as a vehicle, a means of transport or transitional medium of a *meaning*, and moreover a of a *unified* meaning (Derrida 1988, p. 1).

The formulation 'Is it certain' along with the words to 'anticipate', 'predetermine', and 'as' prompt Derrida's influences – the Heideggerian mode of thinking, argues Spivak: 'we cannot but sense the strong … theme of the pre-, the inevitable fore-structure of interpretation and the as-structure of understanding' (Spivak 1980, p. 41). For Heidegger, pre-understanding is a structure of understanding; like interpretation, it entails the as-structure. Posing a question about communication requires pre-conception, it involves taking, interpreting communication as something. Derrida, however, questions the widespread conception of communication as a transfer of a unified meaning. Such understanding is based on what Derrida calls 'psychologistic' usage of the concept of sign assuming the possible transmission of the identity of the signified object:

> Communication presupposes subjects (whose identity and presence are constituted before the signifying operation) and objects (signified concepts, a thought meaning that the passage of communication will have neither to constitute, nor, by all rights, to transform). A communicated B to C. Through the sign the emitter communicates something to a receptor, etc. (Derrida and Kristeva 1996, p. 214).

As mentioned in previous section, according to Derrida, the speaking subject is constituted during the signifying operation; the meaning of the message, as I will show here, is not stable and therefore cannot be so easily – without loss or surplus – transported to the addressee. Derrida's argument is that meaning cannot be fixed by authorial intentions and/or by context, like ordinary language philosophers argue, owing to the fact that context cannot be exhaustively determinable: 'In order for a context to be exhaustively determinable … conscious intention would at the very least have to be totally present and immediately transparent to itself and to others, since it is a determining center of context' (Derrida 1988, p. 18). Derrida contends that the conscious intention can never be fully present, therefore the context cannot be entirely stabilised by it. By all means, the exchange of messages does happen in physical, social, cultural, historical context. One can analyse it but 'one cannot analyse it exhaustively' (Derrida and Ferraris 2003, p. 13).

Nevertheless, not only for theoretical but also practical reasons, we have no other choice but to keep determining it: 'This is inevitable; one cannot do anything, least of all

speak, without determining … a context' (Derrida 1988, p. 136). In other words, a context can be stabilised to some extent, but it can be no more than 'relatively stable' (Derrida 1988, p. 145, p. 151). On Derrida's account, 'a context is never absolutely determinable' (Derrida 1988, p. 3) due to an open structure of it (Derrida and Ferraris 2003, p. 13). No matter how much of the metacontextuality is considered, how far the boundaries of the context are marked out, how solid, firm, and closed the context seems, 'In it there is a margin of play, of difference, an opening' (Derrida 1988, p. 151). This means that a) a context always refers to a different and wider context *and* b) that the contextualised (text) can always be transformed into another context. Therefore, taking into consideration the context, one also has to consider the non-closure of it. Derrida even points out that one of the possible definitions of deconstruction could be 'the effort to take this limitless context into account, to pay the sharpest and broadest attention possible to context, and thus to an incessant movement of recontextualization' (Derrida 1988, p. 136).

Every message delivered in spoken or written discourse (but it might as well be nonlinguistic – a pictorial sign or a gesture, for example) can be recontextualised because it can be cited. Once the text is put into quotation marks and another context, what Derrida also calls 'grafting', it is not only repeated but also altered: the very act of repetition of the text transforms it. Therefore, Derrida calls this phenomenon 'iterability' with reference to Sanskrit where *iter* means other. The possibility that every text or parts of it can be quoted in the future is 'programmed' in it from the very moment of its production. This possibility detaches the message from the present moment and the intentions of the author, and makes ideal, full, pure meaning of it impossible – before the text of the message is repeated and altered in another context in the time yet to come:

> at the very moment when someone would like to say or write, "On the twentieth…etc.," the very factor that will permit the mark (be it psychic, oral, graphic) to function beyond this moment – namely the possibility of its being repeated *another* time – breaches, divides, expropriates the "ideal" plenitude or self-presence of intention, of meaning (to say) and, *a fortiori*, of all adequation between meaning and saying (Derrida 1988, pp. 61–62).

Glendinning explains that the 'condition of a necessary or structural relation to an iteration that is *another such* 'singular event' which is *not present* at the time of its production or reception' (Glendinning 2000, p. 282). Therefore, iterability, as Derrida

argues, ‘leaves us no choice but to mean (to say) something that is (already, always, also) other than what we mean to say’ (Derrida 1988, p. 62). This quality, according to the philosopher, ‘structures the mark of writing itself’ (ibid.). It brings us again to the discussion of a message in a form of a postcard. According to Chang, ‘Not only can the postcard mean something it does not say or say something it does not mean, but by being either apocryphal or perfunctory, it upsets even the most sincere “hermeneutical promise” that understanding can and must take place’ (Chang 1996, p. 217). Poster claims that ‘If the writer wants the message to be understood only by the receiver, it consequently must be coded, encrypted for privacy’ (Poster 1990, p. 126). But even when they are ‘encrypted for privacy’, they can be read. On the one hand, in a complex manner, the book suggests that being public, iterable, read by others is a fundamental feature of language (Smith 2005, p. 59). Conversely, not everything can be *understood* by the public, which makes the postcards ‘private’. The postcard interests Derrida precisely because its message is both private and public, neither private nor public, or half-private, half-public. Thus, this makes the postcard ‘a kind of open letter’ (Derrida 1987, p. 35) and ‘even if in an envelope, they are made to circulate like an open but illegible letter’ (Derrida 1987, p. 12). The philosopher writes about one of his unpleasant experiences: ‘When I came back into possession of these [returned] letters two months later, they had in effect been opened’ (Derrida 1987, p. 50). In other words, even if in an envelope, letters can be opened and read but not necessarily understood as intended by the author and by whom intended by the author. Therefore, Derrida concludes that ‘letters are always postcards: neither legible nor illegible, open and radically unintelligible’ (Derrida 1987, p. 79). According to him,

> the letter is immediately dispersed or multiplied, a divided echo of itself … it is lost for the addressee at the very second when it is inscribed, its destination is immediately multiple, anonymous, and the sender, as they say, and the addressee (ibid.).

Chang, whose thought was highly influenced by Derrida, sees this idea of half-private, half-public, divided message in the famous Jan Vermeer’s painting *Woman Reading a Letter* painted around 1663. The observer can see a letter in the woman’s hands. However, it cannot be seen fully, only half of the letter is exposed clearly. As stated by Chang, like that letter in the woman’s hands, ‘all communicative acts are essentially *publicly intimate* and, for this very reason, *intimately public* as well’ (Chang 1996, p. 246). Nevertheless, there will always be something secret whether in publicly intimate or

intimately public message, as there will always be something secret in communication itself: ‘when one thing is said, another may be heard’ (ibid.). After discussing the painting, Chang draws the conclusion that also serves as a conclusion of this small section:

> There is a truth in this painting – a truth of communication that is veiled and unveiled simultaneously by what is apparently communicated, a truth that communicates to us what will always remain invisible, and perhaps forever enigmatic, precisely because the divided message is all that is available (ibid.).

Image 1. A fragment from Vermeer’s painting *Woman Reading a Letter*. Source: Vermeer, J. n. d. Rijksmuseum [Online]. Available at: https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/SK-C-251 [Accessed: 13 May 2019].

The division of the message is conditioned by its half-private and half-public quality – because it is shared with one but possibly with many. Chang contends that the idea of ‘sharing’ the message is more complex than it is usually thought of it, because ‘To share is to divide’:

> Something can be shared if and only if it is divided and divides itself. To the extent that there is no sharing without division, that can be shared is of necessity already divided; conversely, since what is shared must be devided, only that which is divided can be extended by one to share with an other. Put simply, what is shared shares, which is to say, what shares (itself) is thus shared by the act of sharing (Chang 1996, p. 245).

Chang claims that to be shared, the message must be deprived of some of its identity before the act of sharing it (ibid.), just as the subject is being constituted and divided at the same time during the speech act. The philosopher indicates that this act (of sharing the message) involves certain operations: 'differentiation, separation, and distribution' (ibid.). Prior to the sharing of the message, it has to go through the 'ordeal of self-partioning'; in other words, it has to be split (ibid.). Therefore, only a divided message can be shared, but not the understanding of it – as intended by the author.

Which medium?

Derrida was especially interested in the binary opposition between the spoken and the written word. In his books, he 'documented the devaluation of writing in philosophical writings' (Culler 1992, p. 89) and demonstrated – especially in *Of Grammatology* (1997 [1967]) – that a lot of thinkers from Plato to Saussure[51] reinforced the idea that speech was primary and writing was secondary. For Derrida, in many texts, speech was presented as the medium of presence, identity, interiority, spirit, truth, and life, while writing was presented as the medium of absence, difference, exteriority, body, appearance, and death.

A speaker is present to the words s/he is saying and present in the moment when the words are being uttered. Thus, speech is viewed as primary this 'natural' relationship with presence, the full self-presence and full self-consciousness of the speaking subject. As Derrida explicates in *Speech and Phenomena* (1973), in a dominant view, 'no consciousness is possible without the voice. The voice is the being which is present to itself in the form of universality, as con-sciousness; the voice *is* consciousness' (Derrida 1973, pp. 79–80). Thus, speech, it is believed, offers the most direct access to consciousness. The voice can seem to be consciousness itself, as, it is often argued, it is the closest thing to a present thought that can be communicated through the medium of voice.

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[51] Writing in Saussure's works was considered as 'derivative because *representative*: signifier of the first signifier, representation of the self-present voice, of the immediate, natural, and direct signification of the meaning' (Derrida 1997, p. 30, emphasis in the original). In other words, the written word was regarded as the representative of the representative. It was relegated to a secondary role due to the absence of the author and the distance from her/him of time and space. By drawing on different texts in the history of Western thought, Derrida showed that writing was often viewed as exterior and having merely instrumental function – as well as the connotations of evil or mischief. Saussure described writing as having 'exteriority that one attributes to utensils; to what is even an imperfect tool and a dangerous, almost maleficent, technique' (Derrida 1997, p. 34).

The rudiment of such view can be found in Plato's texts that provide the conceptual backdrop of Western metaphysics (Derrida 1997, p. 76). In his work *Phaedrus,* Plato provided a devastating critique of writing as a questionable and rather *untrustworthy* medium. As Jonathan Culler puts it, he denounced writing as 'a bastardized form of communication'[52] (Culler 1992, p. 100). In the book, the young Athenian Phaedrus discusses with Socrates the limitations of writing. Socrates tells him a legend[53] about the origins of writing. The story goes as follows: the Egyptian divinity Thoth, known as the god of the moon, knowledge, calculation, measuring, weighting the souls, and, as Derrida argued, of death[54], came to then King Thamus with a gift of writing that could later be made available for all. Thoth presented writing as a great invention – a mnemonic technique, an aid for remembering. However, the King came up with the idea that writing might actually have the opposite effect – it might produce forgetfulness. For the King, it is a remedy for reminding, but not remembering[55].

In his analysis of Plato, Derrida focuses on the usage of the word *pharmakon*[56] to describe writing. It means both medicine and poison and characterises the written word as (also) 'beneficent or maleficent' (Derrida 1981a, p. 70). It is a contronym, one of those words that are not simply ambivalent but that house oppositional and contradictory meanings. As Chang astutely asserts, a word like *pharmakon* 'reenacts the movement of *supplément*'[57] and therefore cannot be translated without a loss. Concepts like these resist

[52] A lot of scholars have long speculated what could have caused such an attack on the written word. Eric Havelock thought that *Phaedrus* should be interpreted in the context of the Greek cultural moment of a dying oral tradition and the birth of literacy (Havelock, cited in Peters 1999, p. 36); others read it as a premonition and fear of new information systems (Peters 1999, p. 36). In any case, the text went on to shape Western thought on the topic for centuries.

[53] Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff in their translation of *Phaedrus* claim that the legend Socrates tells is probably an invention of Plato's (Nehamas and Woodruff 1995, p. 78).

[54] Derrida is convinced that Theuth must also be a god of death and control the organisation of death: 'The master of writing, numbers, and calculation does not merely write down the weight of dead souls, he first counts out the days of life' (Derrida 1981a, p. 92.).

[55] As Socrates postulates, 'In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the souls of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. You have discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality' (Plato 1995, pp. 80–79).

[56] In English translated as 'potion'.

[57] Supplement is a recurring term in Derrida's writings but was discussed most explicitly and extensively in *Of Grammatology* where Derrida deconstructs Rousseau's view of writing as a dangerous supplement to speech. According to Derrida, speech must be lacking, not full in itself, if it needs writing to supplement it.

'philosophy's first desire for full presence and totalizing transcendental economy characterized by meaning-*fullness*' (Chang 1996, p. xv). Such words also illustrate undecidability, a play of either/or and neither/nor, a structural condition in language that does not allow reducing meaning to a single facet. To reinforce this idea, Derrida highlights one additional meaning of *pharmakon*. In Ancient Greek, *pharmakos* meant ritualistic human sacrifice. Therefore, one word becomes a composite of three meanings, which makes it an unstable unit in the text, describing writing not only as medicine and poison, but also as a scapegoat blamed for all the wrongdoings or faults of others. As Culler explains it, 'The exclusion of the *pharmakos* purifies the city, as the exclusion of the *pharmakon* of writing is meant to purify the order of speech and thought' (Culler 1992, p. 143).

In *Phaedrus*, it is suggested that people should not 'put their trust in writing' (Plato 1995, p. 80) which implies a complicated relationship between writing and truth, the supposed 'incompatibility of the *written* and the *true*' (Derrida 1981a, p. 68, emphasis in the original). According to Derrida, in the history of Western metaphysics, the origin of truth has always been assigned to the *logos*: 'history of truth, of the truth of the truth, has always been … the debasement of writing, and its repression outside "full" speech' (Derrida 1997, p. 3). Indeed, Socrates believes that genuine knowledge and wisdom can only be transferred and obtained through living memory (*mneme*) and speech. As Derrida argues, for Socrates and Plato, 'Memory and truth cannot be separated' (Derrida 1981a, 105). There is also memory as writing (*hypomnesis*), however, the latter is far 'worse' than the former for reasons explained by Dooley and Kavanagh:

> Living memory (*mneme*) is the unveiling of truth (*alētheia*) in its self-presentation to itself. Memory as writing (*hypomnesis*), on the other hand, conceals, buries the truth (*lethe*), and, as Derrida puts it, 'simultaneously increase[s] the domains of death, of nontruth, of nonknowledge (Dooley and Kavanagh 2007, p. 21).

From this view, Derrida posits that 'writing is […] productive not of science but of belief, not of truth but of appearances. The *pharmakon* [writing] produces a play of

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As Culler puts it, 'Writing can be compensatory, a supplement to speech, only because speech is already marked by the qualities of writing: absence and misunderstanding' (Culler 1995, p. 78). The supplement, in other words, 'adds itself to an ostensibly ideal or original presence in the form of exposing the lack and self-difference at its very origin' (Wortham 2010, p. 204).

appearances which enable it to pass for truth' (Derrida 1981a, p. 103). In other words, from the metaphysical perspective, writing can be easily taken *as* truth. Later in *Phaedrus*, Socrates compares writing to painting because of the illusionary impression that paintings are alive and can speak (Plato 1995, pp. 80–81). Plato is concerned that there is no guarantee that writing will not fall into the hands of unqualified people incapable of understanding the intended meaning. In writing, the author of the work is absent and therefore unable to clarify the meaning of the work. In speech, on the other hand, the author is there to assure their intended meaning is understood.

'Death, distance, difference' (Johnson 1981, ix) or 'distance, divergence, delay' (Derrida 1988, p. 7) as well as 'absence, misunderstanding, insincerity, and ambiguity' (Culler 1992, p. 100) are the qualities of writing that, in the Platonic or Socratic view, possibly lead to distortions of meaning. According to Peters, for Socrates, miscommunication or misunderstanding emerges from the loss of personal contact and original context: 'Because writing can live on far beyond the situation of utterance, it can mean many things for many people' (Peters 1999, p. 47). As Chang observes, it is exactly 'because the letters are dead that the living can use them in any way they want' (Chang 1996, p. 201). Therefore, for Socrates, the true, genuine meaning can only be transferred in the presence of the author through the medium of immediacy and his living voice. For Plato, writing 'substitutes the breathless sign for the living voice' (Derrida 1981a, p. 92). Once words are put down on a piece of paper, they are cut off from the intention that breathes life into them.

For the above reasons, mainly the fear of being misinterpreted and misunderstood, Socrates refused to write; Plato was the one who documented his ideas and thus made them available for the readers of their epoch as well as the ones that succeeded them. Paradoxically, it was writing that rescued them from oblivion. The image that is on the cover of *The Post Card* (1987), however, suggests the inversion: Plato is depicted standing behind Socrates and seems to be the one who dictates while Socrates writes everything down. Derrida was fascinated by the picture, as it supported some of his main insights regarding the written and the spoken word:

> Plato, the actual writer, precedes Socrates, the speaker so that a possible representation of their relation would reverse the roles, as the postcard does. But postcards, in Derrida's view, are a form of writing and as such play as disruptive role

> in the logocentric tradition. This particular postcard then may also be said to represent that disruption. As a postcard, it portrays the destabilizing effect of postcard/writing and does so by transposing Socrates/Plato relation (Poster 1990, p. 124).

Derrida highlighted the fact that, in Plato's text, writing is always 'involved in questions of life and death' (Derrida 1981a, p. 105), and, moreover, never belongs to the living word as speech, constantly ascribed to the kingdom of the dead. Nevertheless, Derrida insists that speech and writing cannot really be separated. The presence of speech and living memory already contains within it the traces of absence and death. Therefore, speech already has the attributes of writing. Derrida stresses that Plato himself admits that speech already has holes in it, that speech needs writing to be speech. Thus, he 'shows how the undecidability of life and death, of presence and absence, plays itself out in terms of speech and writing' (Dooley and Kavanagh 2007, p. 22) and concludes that writing is an essential condition of speech. Derrida elaborated on this idea in *Sec* where he showed – with precision – why the associations, qualities, and predicates assigned to writing 'are also valid for *spoken* language and even beyond it' (Derrida 1988, p. 46).

The main Derrida's point is that g*ram* or *différance* is at work in both speech and writing (Derrida and Kristeva 1996, p. 216). As he explains, 'Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present' (Derrida and Kristeva, p. 216). Therefore, Derrida argues that 'the absence attributed to writing is proper to every communication' (Derrida 1988, p. 7). He had no doubt that any signifying mark, written or spoken, is 'grapheme in general' (Derrida 1988, 10). It can signify because of the feature of iterability. Derrida insisted on the idea that 'citational grafting … belongs to the structure of every mark, spoken or written, and … constitutes every mark as writing even before and outside every horizon of semiolinguistic communication' (Derrida 1988, p. 12). As Glendinning emphasises, 'if we do take into account the iterable structure of events of the use of words we will find that all communication, even the most spontaneous events of speech, can be conceived, in a certain way, a kind of writing' (Glendinning 2000, p. 278).

However, this kind of writing is different from that which is merely one means of communication. According to Chang, in this Derridean sense, writing 'is not a bastardized imitation of speech anymore; writing is no longer an ignoble or inferior species of communication. Quite the contrary, *communication is a species of écriture*' (Chang 1996,

207, emphasis in the original). Derrida created a new word, a neologism (or rather, a neographism) but demanded retaining the old name of writing (Derrida 1988, p. 21):[58]

> To leave to this new concept the old name of writing is tantamount to maintaining the structure of the *graft*, the transition and indispensable adherence to an effective *intervention* in the constituted historical field. It is to give to everything at stake in the operations of deconstruction the chance and the force, the power of *communication* (Derrida 1988, p. 21).

Fish is correct that 'there is no epistemological difference between direct and mediated communication because, in a fundamental sense, all communications are mediated' (Fish 1982, p. 700). They are all mediated by language that is itself a *medium* having 'the potential to disrupt the speaker or writer's intentions' (Mangion 2011, p. 142). However, certain *channels* through which the messages are sent can have an effect on them. While meditating on the functioning of post (that can be understood as technology), Derrida argues that 'The "posts" are always post of power. And power is exercised according to the network of posts' (Derrida 1987, p. 404). In other words, a postal system is still a system that has the power to either deliver or refuse the message; in certain cases – to distort it. The message can get stuck, be held, delivered later than expected, in other words, postponed or, as Derrida prefers, deferred, simply get lost and not reach its destination, come back opened and read by those people who were not intended as recipients.

Some *channels* have very specific effects on our communication. For example, drawing on Derrida, Poster claims that there is a difference in the effect on the graphic mark imposed by a pen, a typewriter, the printing press, and a computer (Poster 1990, p. 111). According to the author, with each of these *channels*, the graphic mark gradually loses the personal trace or the individual signature, but the computer de-individualises the graphic mark the most and dematerialises it completely (ibid.). Furthermore, it alters the conception of the speaking subject: s/he becomes even more divided in her/his identity (this is due to the fact computer writing can simulate the identity) and dislocated in time and space (Poster 1990, pp. 115–116). What is more, her/his 'Identity is dispersed in the electronic network of communications and computer storage systems' (Poster 1990, p. 117). Poster argues that 'More than books, letters and postcards, computer writing

[58] He explained this logic and strategy in great detail. See, for example, Derrida (1981b, p. 71).

challenges and radicalizes the terms of analysis initiated by the deconstructionist' (Poster 1990, p. 128). Therefore, in the 21st century, when electronic writing is embedded in every aspect of human life, deconstruction becomes more relevant than ever.

With what effect?

Questions, such as 'How do you communicate … when your paradigm denies the possibility of communication?' (Nelson 1985, p. 3), still appears in the critical commentaries on deconstruction or poststructuralism. The critics are indignant: 'Post-structuralists cannot deny the stability of language and in the same breath use a public language to make a claim' (Ellis 1991, p. 220). Even the titles of their critiques speak volumes as, for instance, the one in Barrowman's (2017) essay: 'Jacques Derrida and the Failure to Communicate'[59]. Not surprisingly, after all the criticism is expressed, the slogans such as 'all communication is miscommunication' or 'all understanding is misunderstanding' are ascribed to deconstruction and poststructuralism. However, Derrida does not believe that we miscommunicate or misunderstand each other all the time. He is simply alive to the complexity of the process of communication as well as its limits. To those who think that communication is not so complex, Derrida has a few rhetorical questions:

> Don't you believe that all language and all interpretation are problematic? More than problematic even, which is to say, perhaps of an order other than problematicity? Isn't this also a stroke of luck? Otherwise, why speak, why discuss? How else would what we call "misunderstanding" be possible? That we may or may not be in agreement on this subject attests by itself to this more than problematic problematicity (Derrida 1988, p. 120).

The argument that he develops in *Sec* is that all communication, whether spoken or written, possess the properties of writing. Therefore, any message and its intended meaning can always fail to reach its the receiver, it 'can always *not* arrive at its destination, etc. This is a chance' (Derrida 1987, p. 123). This chance, however, is structural. In other words, it is a structural possibility present in every act involving a communication network. As Derrida argues in *The Post Card*, 'as soon as … there is *différance* … and there is postal maneuvering, relays, delay, anticipation, destination, telecommunicating network, the

[59] This is also a reference to the Captain's speech in *Cool Hand Luke* (1967).

possibility, and therefore the fatal necessity of going astray' (Derrida 1987, p. 66). By necessity, Derrida does not mean that the message *will* go astray; but it is necessary for it to be able to. This is what Derrida call the paradox of destination.

This idea was discussed in *Sec* in the context of the speech act theory developed by Austin. His theory indicated certain felicitous conditions and criteria necessary for a successful speech act. According to Austin, all the infelicities, infelicitous – or fictive – cases (misinvacations, misexecutions and abuses), the abnormal cases, any chance of anomaly that can cause speech acts to fail, should be excluded from consideration. Derrida argues that Austin treats them as 'accidental, exterior, … teach[ing] us nothing about the linguistic phenomenon [communication] being considered' (Derrida 1988, p. 16). Derrida finds this kind of reasoning flawed because he believes that a possible failure of communication is an internal, positive (Derrida 1988, p. 17) and necessary condition. In Derrida's words, 'Austin does not ponder the consequences issuing from the fact that possibility – a possible risk – is *always* possible, and is in some sense a necessary possibility' (Derrida 1988, p. 15). Therefore, 'this [structural] possibility can be neither *excluded* nor *opposed*' (Derrida 1988, p. 157).

Derrida, in other words, is critical of the very opposition success/failure or communication/miscommunication. According to him, 'The relation of "mis" (mis-understanding, mis-interpreting, for example) to that which not "mis-," is not that of a general law to cases, but that of a *general possibility inscribed* in the structure of positivity, of normality, of the "standard' (ibid.). Therefore, when Searle accuses him of misunderstanding Austin or misstating his position, Derrida asks: 'I would like to pose, then, the following question: if a misunderstanding (for example, of Austin's theses) is possible, if a *mis*- in general … is possible, what does that imply concerning the structure of speech acts in general?' (Derrida 1988, p. 37). Derrida's implication is that in the very structure of speech acts, there are 'the essential and irreducible *possibility* of *mis*understanding' (Derrida 1988, p. 147) which makes understanding of such acts possible. As Chang metaphorically puts it, 'The impossibility of communication is the birth *to* its possibility' (Chang 1996, p. 225).

Derrida stresses in *Post Card*, 'a letter can always – and therefore must – never arrive at its destination' and it is 'the tragic' condition 'that something does arrive' (Derrida 1987, p. 121). It is 'tragic' because communication must be able to fail in order to

succeed. However, communication itself is not tragic. The practice of communication testifies that we still manage to communicate more or less successfully when there are necessary conditions for communication to occur. Derrida does not refuse to accept this; rather, he insists that main condition for this to happen is this possibility of failure. He does not deny the effects of consciousness, presence, the performative effect and the effect of ordinary language either (Derrida 1988, p. 19). He makes it very clear that 'It is simply that those effects do not exclude what is generally opposed to them, term by term' (ibid.). Drawing on Derrida, İlter argues '[m]iscommunication uncannily resides in communication' (İlter 2017, p. 259). Therefore, miscommunication should not be viewed as otherness *of* communication, but rather otherness *within* communication (İlter 2017, p. 274). He suggests reconceptualising communication 'as *involving* the otherness of communication itself' (İlter 2017, p. 260). In a similar manner, Chang argues that communication should be conceptualised as depending on undecidability: 'Communication is possible and is impossible. If communication is anything at all, it is an undecidable' (Chang 1996, p. 228).

The success of our social exchanges is nevertheless limited. The hermeneutic 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer 2004), as Gadamer puts it, is still very questionable. In other words, it is doubtful that we can share perfect understanding. Chang argues that the only thing that we can actually share is the message itself. As he explains, '"sharing the message" should be understood precisely as sharing *the message*, and "understanding (the message of) an other", by extension, should be understood strictly as grasping that the other says' (Chang 1996, p. 244). In other words, we can only receive the words, but not the ideas and mental content the other person puts into those words: 'If communication necessarily involves exchange of some sort, it is an exchange of signs or messages, not of mental content or any element of what is called one's inner life' (Chang 1996, p. 244).

And although the 'fusion of horizons' is a dream, a romantic fantasy that can never become reality, some kind of mutual understanding is possible even if people do not share the same linguistic code or culture. It is possible due to the common horizon of their experience. Derrida suggests this idea in *Introduction to Husserl's Origin of Geometry* (1989) in the context of the discussion of objectivity. The philosopher asks: 'Is the recognition in language of what *constitutes* absolute ideal Objectivity, as far as it *states* this Objectivity, not just another way of announcing or repeating that transcendental

intersubjectivity is the condition of Objectivity?' (Derrida 1989, p. 79). He then goes on to indicate three important points in relation to Husserl's conception of objectivity in the realm of communication. By way of responding to Husserl's claim that 'everyone can talk about what is within the surrounding world of his civilization as Objectively existing' – and, by extension, to Husserl's conception of objectivity (i.e., Husserl's resoundingly objectivist emphasis on the primacy of existence), Derrida makes the following case:

> two *normal* men will always have *a priori* consciousness of their belonging together to one and the same humanity, living in one and the same world. Linguistic differences and what they imply will appear to them at the bottom of an *a priori* horizon or structure: the linguistic community, i.e., the immediate certainty of both being speaking subjects who can never designate anything but what belongs to the horizon of their world as the irreducibly common horizon of their experience. This implies that they can always, immediately or not, stand together before the same natural existent which we can always strip of the cultural superstructures and categories founded (*fundiert*) on it, and whose unity would always furnish the ultimate arbitration for every *misunderstanding* (Derrida 1989, p. 81).

According to Derrida, 'Consciousness of confronting the *same* thing, an object perceived as such, is consciousness of a pure and precultural *we'* (ibid.). The philosopher explicates that by 'preculture' he does not mean 'regression toward cultural *primitiveness* but the reduction of a determined culture' (ibid.). In such a scenario of two or more people facing the same thing, 'the existing sensible world … becomes the first ground of communication' (ibid.), providing with the opportunity to reinvent the language. In other words, 'the very existing of sensible world' in which we exist together and experience the same thing is something that makes our communication and understanding possible before even actual communication – in pragmatic sense – begins. This insight can be connected to Lyotardian understanding of communication without communication, i.e. 'without a concept at a time' (Lyotard 1991, p. 109). Lyotard develops the idea of assumed communicability from the Kantian analysis of the beautiful. According to the philosopher, 'This assumed communicability, which takes place immediately in the feeling of the beautiful, is always presupposed in any conceptual communication' (Lyotard 1991, p. 109). Such communication can take place even between people from different linguistic communities because they can form a different community – that of feeling. Feeling, according to Lyotard,

> must gather everyone's agreement without mediation, im-mediately, without presupposing a sort of *community of feeling* such that every one of the individuals, placed before the same situation, the same work, can at least dispose of an identical judgement without elaborating it conceptually (Lyotard 1991, p. 110).

This connects to Derrida's ideas of two or more people being able to comprehend each other without words while being placed in front of the same thing, object, in the existing sensible world. However, Derrida argues that 'preculturally *pure Nature* is always buried. So, as the ultimate possibility for communication, it is a kind of inaccessible infra-ideal' (Derrida 1989, pp. 81–82). Therefore, the opposite of what Husserl argues can be stated in the form of a rhetorical question:

> Are not non-communication and misunderstanding the very horizon of culture and language? Undoubtedly misunderstanding is always a factual horizon and the finite index of the infinite pole of a sound intelligence. But although the latter is always announced so that language can begin, is not finitude the essential which we can never radically go beyond? (Derrida 1989, p. 82).

It comes as no surprise that Derrida's contentious ideas, usually stemming from questioning the ideas of others, were often misinterpreted. One of Derrida's critics described him as somebody whose 'best writing has taken the form of commentary that becomes contest' (Scholes 1988, p. 284). The author referred to 'boxing matches' with Saussure, 'a quick knockout of Lévi Strauss', 'the loving, patient wrestling matches with [Husserl]', 'judo contest with Lacan' and 'a no-holds-barred battle with Searle' (ibid.). The experience listed above makes Derrida a prolific intellectual martial artist who fought heavyweight fights in the arena of communication. Unfortunately, not all them were finished. Some of the remaining bouts between the critics and Derrida's disciples, followers and companions, as well as admirers, including myself, continue to this day. I cannot find a better end to this section than the words by C.S. Fanie de Beer (2005, p. 170) who was also a friend of Derrida:

> To all those who criticize without reading, to all those who attack without understanding, to all the 'know-nothings' to whom Simon Critchley refers in his tribute to Derrida, the following: show us the absolute truth, demonstrate unmistakably demarcated saturated contexts, spell out your vision of meaning in its fullness and plenitude, envisage your intended directions for a safe and certain future,

> the *telos*, in such a way that certainty will prevail. These clarifications are the conditions for embracing this style of thinking in terms of which they are made. Until then, the Derridean style of thinking, questioning and deconstructing that he left as his precious heritage, offers more than mere material to embrace (de Beer 2005, p. 170).

4. 2. Barthes: Communication and Literature as Countercommunication

Who/To whom?

It should be noted from the beginning that Barthes' theories stem from his ideas on writing and literature and generally are 'literature-centristic' (Andrijauskas 2010, p. 490). As Antanas Andrijauskas explains, 'Art and literature here reveals itself as the language of written forms' (ibid.), the historical study of which can speak volumes about them. The scholar points out that Barthes' views evolved over time, and three periods of his academic and critical work are distinguishable: a distinctive feature of the first, the post-war period, is Barthes' fascination with Sartre's and Marxist ideas; the second one is marked by his interest in structuralist and semiotic ideas, whereas the third one is characterized by consolidation of the poststructuralist ideas (Andrijauskas 2010, p. 484). Although I am most interested in the last one, many of his ideas on the interpersonal communication come from the former two periods.

Barthes was greeted with hostility from some scholars along with other influential poststructuralists. As Kristeva points out, his writings had to face and 'attack and denigration' (Kristeva 2000b, p. 187) and were harshly criticized for embracing nihilism. Kristeva writes about his apparent contribution 'to killing the French novel (no less!)' (ibid.), but he was more explicitly accused of murdering (or attempting to murder) the figure of the author (Barrowman 2017, 2018). Barthes reflected on the topic of the author in many of his books, but focused on it in his essay *The Death of the Author* that is regarded as his 'critical manifesto' (White 2012, p. 1, p. 112).

As is widely known, for a long period of time, in the realm of literature, the author has had a parental relationship with his text and was regarded as the father to and the owner of his work[60] (Barthes 1977, p. 145; Barthes 1977, pp. 160–161). This idea operates

[60] This understanding of the author has deep roots but was popularised during the European protestant reformations that promoted the idea of an individual. However, according to Barthes, it was during the

under the assumption that the author's intentions can and should be communicated to the reader (if necessary, explained – preferably by the author – or other authority, such as the critic) and that the text has an objective meaning. As stated by Barthes, 'literary science therefore teaches respect for the manuscript and the author's declared intentions, while society asserts the legality of the relation of author to work' (Barthes 1977, pp. 160–161). Barthes argued that the author's relationship to his text has to be revised – the author has to 'leave'. That does not mean that the author should not have any relationship with or any rights to the text; he may '"come back" but he then does so as a "guest"' (Barthes 1977, p. 161), which suggests that he is no longer the owner of the text: his inscription is 'no longer priviledged, paternal, aletheological, his inscription is ludic' (ibid.).

The author, according to Barthes, was thought of as the originator of an original message, someone who puts himself/herself into his original writing; the message, in other words, had to be interpreted taking authorial consciousness and authorial identity into account. S/he had an origin: historical, cultural, social context in which her/his message had to be interpreted. However, the French literary theorist contends that the very process of writing 'is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin' (Barthes 1977, p. 142); it is the 'space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost' (ibid.). As Kristeva puts it, 'writing [for Barthes] is the intermediary that incorporates the tensions of the ego into history, insofar as it desubjectifies its subject' (Kristeva 2000b, p. 194). Barthes therefore suggests that a shift has to occur: from the author as God whose text has one single theological meaning to a less powerful modern scriptor who leaves his text without a '"secret", an ultimate meaning' (Barthes 1977, p. 147).

A modern scriptor, succeeding the author, 'no longer bears within him passions, humours, feelings, impressions, but rather this immense dictionary from which he draws a writing' (Barthes 1977, p. 147). The only origin a modern scriptor has is the origin of language itself, 'which ceaselessly calls into question all origins' (Barthes 1977, p. 146). As suggested by Barthes, language is not a mere instrument through which s/he speaks: 'it is language which speaks, not the author' (Barthes 1977, p. 142). According to him, 'language knows a "subject", not a "person", and this subject, empty outside of the very

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French Revolution (which also, as historians argue, has origins in protestant reformations) that the 'copyright' of the author was legalised.

enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language "hold together", suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it' (Barthes 1977, p. 145). Therefore, not the writing person, but the writing subject which is created during the process of writing.

Thus, this shift from the author to a modern scriptor transformed the way a written text should be produced and read. In the words of Barthes, a text should be 'made and read in such a way that at all its levels the author is absent)' (Barthes 1977, p. 145). Unlike the author, a modern scriptor no longer has the parental relationship with his text therefore, 'it reads without the inscription' (Barthes 1977, p. 161) and 'without the guarantee of the father' (ibid.) It becomes not a '"message" of the Author-God but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash' (Barthes 1977, p. 146). According to Barthes, the text no longer belongs to the divine creator, but to wider cultural codes and systems, because it is produced drawing on multiple writings from a variety of different fountainheads (Barthes 1977, p. 148), which makes it 'is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture' (ibid.). The writer does not create anything original; he rather joins already pre-existing ideas in an authentic way. As Barthes puts it, 'the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His power is to mix writings' (Barthes 1977, p. 146).

Although Barthes' focus was on the writing subject, he emphasised that the term writer 'may be applied to any sender whose "message" (thereby immediately destroying its very nature as message) cannot be summarized' (Barthes 1977, pp. 191–194). The message cannot be summarised owing to the fact that the sender loses the power to communicate one single meaning and the authority to stabilize it; the power becomes concentrated in the hands of the receiver who can interpret the message in multiple ways. 'To interpret a text', writes Barthes, 'is not to give it a … meaning, but on the contrary to appreciate what *plural* constitutes it' (Barthes 1990 [1974], p. 5). In claiming that '*the Text is experienced only in an activity of production*' (Barthes 1977, p. 157), he means that the text is experienced only when read actively, i.e. when it is interpreted otherwise than the author intended. As Culler puts it, 'meaning of the work emerge[s] through an account of the reader's activity' (Culler 1992, p. 35). The reader, for Barthes, no longer consumes the text but also produces it (Barthes 1990 [1974], p. 4). S/he is expected to read and *re*read the text, which introduces to the process the notion of play, 'the return of the different' (Barthes 1990 [1974], p. 16). The word 'play' is polysemic, it should be interpreted in a couple of ways:

> the reader plays twice over, playing the Text as one plays a game, looking for a practice which reproduce it, but, in order that practice not be reduced to a passive, inner *mimesis* (the Text is precisely that which resists such a reduction), also playing the Text in the musical sense of the term (Barthes 1977, p. 162).

In other words, the reader should avoid *deciphering* the text, mimicking the author's moves and thoughts and endeavour *disentangling* it (Barthes 1977, p. 147) and playing his part in the game, recreating the text. The fact that the text is reconstructed is to be regarded as 'normal effects of the act of reading' (Culler 1992, p. 38). Although this applies to a written text, the spoken text is also produced not by a relatively passive speaker but by an active listener: 'to listen is to not only to perceive a language, it is also to construct it' (Barthes 1977, p. 102), which suggests that *receiving* a spoken message involves an exercise in play, too: reading (listening), reproducing/reconstructing, responding. The unity of a text, according to Barthes, 'lies not in its origin but in its destination' (Barthes 1977, p. 148). However, unlike in reader-response criticism, the reader, in the Barthesian view, is depersonalised just as the writing subject, and the understanding does not depend on his/her 'history, biography, psychology' (ibid.). As Culler points out, 'emphasis falls on the reader as a function rather than as a person' (Culler 1992, p. 33). This reading subject is not united; Barthes revealed 'a polyphony internal to subjects investigating meaning' (Kristeva 2000b, p. 189). But most importantly, he revealed that modern scriptor is not a modern communicator.

Says what?

If, in the Barthesian view, the author is situated in contrast to a modern scriptor, a passive reader-consumer with an active reader-producer, the work can be contrasted with the text. According to Barthes, 'The difference is this: the work is a fragment of substance, occupying a part of the space of books (in a library for example), the Text is a methodological field' (Barthes 1977, pp. 156–157). Although Barthes contrasted the work with the text in the realm of literature and distinguished their qualities according to certain categories (method, genre, signs, plurality, filiation, reading and pleasure), concerning literary texts, his conception of the text transcends the boundaries of literary criticism and includes more discursive practices.

According to Barthes, the text is metonymic, associative, radically symbolic (Barthes 1977, p. 157) irreducibly plural (Barthes 1977, p. 159). Is not to be confused with a liberal view of meaning, acceptance of ambiguity and openness to interpretation. The text, according to Barthes, 'answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination' (ibid.). It is marked by the 'weave of signifiers' (Barthes 1977, p. 159), it is, as Barthes puts it elsewhere, the 'galaxy of signifiers' (Barthes [1974] 1990, p. 5). The metaphor that represents the idea of the text the best is that of network (Barthes 1977, p. 161). It is intertextual, referring to other texts, their fragments, extracts, or citations, that lie in it. However, as mentioned, this intertextuality cannot and should not be traced: 'the citations which go to make up the text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas' (Barthes 1977, p. 160).

One the one hand, the produced text is never original. It is not original in a sense that it does not *belong* to the individual producer. In one single message, the receiver can always already hear the echoes of other messages. However, on the other hand, when it comes to conveying the *meaning* one wants to convey through a written text, the variation of the message and the originality of it is inevitable. Barthes provides us with an example of a hypothetical situation:

> A friend has just lost someone he loves, and I want to express my sympathy. I proceed to write him a letter. Yet the words I find do not satisfy me: they are "phrases": I make up "phrases" out of the most affectionate part of myself; I then realize that the message I want to send this friend, the message which is my sympathy itself, could after all, be reduced to a simple word: condolences. Yet the very purpose of the communication is opposed to this, for it would be a cold and consequently inverted message, since what I want to communicate is the very warmth of my sympathy. I conclude that in order to correct my message (that is, in order for it to be exact), I must not only vary it, but also that this variation must be original and apparently invented (Barthes [1972] 2000, p. xiv).

According to Barthes, a written message can reach the receiver only when it is altered: 'everything written becomes a work only when it can vary, under certain condition, an initial message (Barthes [1972] 2000, p. xiv)'. What is more, 'to be least "false" I must be most "original," or, if you prefer, most "indirect"' (Barthes [1972] 2000, pp. xiv-xv). Therefore, if one wants not only to send a message, but also to convey a

certain meaning, a double gesture should be made – two messages should be constructed. We come up with the first one while thinking of the most appropriate forms of *saying (writing)* what we mean, but, paradoxically, this form does the opposite job; we have to construct the second message which is the variation of the first one, that loses its directness, but, in the event of success, gains indirectness, which is what allows it to be *understood* the way we want to be understood. Nevertheless, we can never run off the possibility it will be interpreted otherwise.

While constructing the second message, one adds connotational meaning to the first message's denotational meaning. One has to choose the best connotation, 'the one whose indirectness (however circuitous) least distorts not what they want to say but what they want to make understood' (Barthes [1972] 2000, p. xv). The final message then, again, is never straightforward, it always has at least two layers of meaning. According to Barthes, 'connotation, releasing the double meaning on principle, corrupts the purity of communication' (Barthes [1974] 1990, p. 9). It becomes, in the words of Barthes, countercommunication (ibid.). These considerations of how the messages are constructed in the written form are quite different to the activity of constructing a spoken message.

Elsewhere, Barthes reflected on what he called the irreversible nature of speech (Barthes 1977, p. 190). Unlike the case of writing, in a speaking mode, the sender of the message cannot cross out his words or alter what has been said in his Text: 'if I want to erase what I have just said, I cannot do it without showing the eraser itself (I must say: 'or rather..'., 'I expressed myself badly')' (ibid.). Thus, the speaker cannot construct the 'second message' (as in the case of the letter described in the former paragraph), conveying the meaning the author wanted to convey; s/he is forced to always send the imperfect 'first' one. According to Barthes, 'All that one can do in the case of a spoken utterance is to tack on another utterance, correct and improve the movement of speech' (Barthes 1977, p. 191). Furthermore, in order to be understood (better or worse), one has to speak in a certain speed and maintain it, avoid silence and vacillation (ibid.). The speech, in this sense, is continuous, the speaker cannot stop if she wants to be 'successful' in communication. However, the 'clarity' of the spoken word in such a case is purely supposed. The 'loss' of the second message and all its connotations, introducing the polysemy, does not allow the spoken discourse to convey the meaning of the message properly, reflecting all its subtle nuances.

Depending on the type of a written text, messages can be read either horizontally, following the plot and experiencing the pleasure of the text, or vertically, appreciating the play on language and experiencing the bliss (*jouissance*). While trying to produce the typology of literary texts, Barthes introduced the value of 'writerly', referring to the latter type of texts. The author believed that the aim of literary work is to make the reader a (co-) producer ([co-]writer), as opposed to the consumer, of the text, hence 'writerly', not 'readerly', should be the standard of literary texts. While describing the writerly text, Barthes writes that it:

> is a perpetual present, upon which no *consequent* language (which would inevitably make it past) can be superimposed; the writerly text is *ourselves writing*, before the infinite play of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system (Ideology, Genus, Criticism) which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages (Barthes 1990 [1974], p. 5).

'Readerly' text stands as the 'countervalue', the 'negative' of 'writerly': 'what can be read, but not written' (Barthes 1990 [1974], p. 5). Besides the different types/positions of readership, readerly and writerly texts have other characteristics. Readerly text can be characterized by conventional style, linear narrative, and fixed pre-determined meaning of the *work*. By contrast, writerly texts violate stylistic convention, might be marked by non-linear narrative, but the meaning of them is always unfixed and indeterminable. Thus, readerly and writerly texts can be easily identified: 19th century realist novel is a readerly text, whereas the 20th century experimental novel is a writerly text. Any novel by Balzac, for example, is a readerly text. However, Barthes' analysis of *Sarrasine* (that falls into the category) shows that even a readerly text can be writerly. Seemingly stable meanings, such as, for example, the gender of the main character's name, Sarrasine, can be easily questioned. As a result, the binary opposition, established at the beginning of Barthes' *S/Z*, turn out not to be stable and determined. Thus, this analysis demonstrates the instability and ambiguity of meaning par excellence.

Which medium?

Like Derrida, Barthes also reflected on the dichotomy of a spoken and written word, distinguishing fundamental differences between the two. His main argument is that writing

essentially differs from speech. According to Barthes, 'In speech, everything is held forth, meant for immediate consumption, and words, silences and their common mobility are launched towards a meaning superseded: it is a *transfer* leaving no trace and brooking no delay' (Barthes 2012 [1967], p. 11, *my emphasis*). On Barthes' account, in a spoken form, the messages are *transferred*, whereas written messages are *disseminated*. Barthes emphasises that for this reason writing by no means can be called communication:

> Writing is in no way an instrument for communication, it is not an open route through which there passes only the intention to speak […] it develops like a seed, not like a line, it manifests an essence and holds the threat of a secret, it is anticommunication (Barthes 2012 [1967], p. 10).

Kristeva, reflecting on Barthes considerations, admits that it is still difficult for people to understand such a concept. Journalists, for example, constantly ask the writer – who is your reader/to whom is your text addressed/who are you sending a message to, etc. As explained by Kristeva, Barthes would insist 'that, while employing the universal language-toll of communication, writing stamps it with another economy. Which? "Closure," "strangeness," "introversion", these are the words that mark the way, that allow us to seize the issue at hand' (Kristeva 2000b, pp. 201–202). However, the most important aspect of writing in contrast to speech is that of closure. Barthes stresses that all modes and forms of writing (whether creative writing or, for example, a letter) 'have in common the fact of being "closed" and thus different from spoken language' (Barthes 2012 [1967], p. 110). Signs, as used in speech, are empty, explicates Kristeva; they only 'take on a value in the movement of communication'; the signs of the written word, in contrast, are full, they 'act', but are self-referential – they refer to themselves (ibid.).

A written text is 'produced' differently to speech is both senses: as the act of writing and the act of reading. One can read the text in multiple ways: coherently, from the beginning to the end, for instance, all the chapters of the book in turn, closely following the plot of the story or the contents of the book; or one can read selectively – just certain chapters or paragraphs, in a different order than they appear, etc. Although a spoken message is open for an (open) interpretation as a written message, the way it is 'sent' makes a huge difference. Barthes deliberately avoid using the terms used to describe the elements of communication ('communicator'/'sender', 'message', 'receiver', etc.), in the context of writing, as these concepts, in his opinion, only apply to spoken discourse.

In his texts, Barthes reflected on different media of communication, such as, for example, writing a letter or talking on the phone. Again, certain media can have a certain effect on communication: the voice of the sender (whether figuratively or literally speaking), the flow and the quality of communication. In *Lovers Discourse* Barthes considers why Freud did not fancy the medium of telephone: 'Perhaps he felt, perhaps he foresaw that the telephone is always a *cacophony*, and that what it transmits is the *wrong voice*, the false communication' (Barthes 1990 [1978], p. 115). The wrong voice is meant both figuratively and literally. Figuratively, the voice of the person on the phone changes because it is deprived of other signatures that accompany it when talking face-to-face. Literally, the voice is being changed during the call. Even today, when the technology is highly developed, to minimalise the service's expenses, our telephone providers have no other choice but to process audio files (our conversations) using compression algorithm, which 'changes' our voices, make them sound different, sometimes or to some even unrecognisably. It causes a feeling of defamiliarisation with the other and with ourselves when we hear ourselves speak. Giving an illusion of closeness with the other, the phone actually emphasises the separation not only by space and, on some occasions, time, but also psychologically. According to Barthes, speaking on the phone evokes a feeling that the other 'is always in a situation of departure' (ibid.). S/he always departs twice – by voice and by silence: 'whose turn is it to speak? We fall silent in unison: crowding of two voids. *I'm going to leave you*, the voice on the telephone says with each second' (ibid.).

Phone calls can be awkward, hard to deal with, even with those we know well, sometimes even with our beloved ones. The problem is that during the phone call we become 'blind', the body of person on the other end is lost; we can only hear her/his voice. Along with the body, we lose over half of the information we could have received while observing the person speak; what we have left from the non-verbal box is only the tone of voice (which still conveys a lot of information, but not enough to make us feel comfortable). The 'voids' Barthes writes about opens up as abysses since we cannot see the person's eyes, their movements, facial expressions, nods of their head. All these and other signs allow or encourage us to talk further and assure us that we are heard, that the information we provide is being processed, that we are at very least presumably understood; in a worst case scenario, informs us that what we are saying does not bother the interlocutor, s/he is bored, etc., she does not seem to understand what we mean, etc. As we can see from the passage above, the medium of phone surely has a constraining effect

on our communication because it is only the (tone of) voice that we can use (and hear) while communicating. Voice *is* important but we, Westerners, as compared to people of the East, put too much emphasis on and trust in it during the process of communication.

In 1966, Barthes went to Japan and was fascinated by the Japanese culture, which resulted in *Empire of Signs* (1983) originally published in 1970. Most of it is about a subjective experience of the East as perceived through the eyes of a foreigner. Among other things, Barthes reflects the means of communication in Japan and the different degrees of importance the Japanese attach to the voice and the body, as compared to the Western culture. For instance, Barthes was captivated by the traditional Japanese puppet theatre, *bunraku*, that 'has a *limited* conception of the voice' (Barthes 1977, p. 175) and has an 'essential trivial' function (ibid., Barthes, 1983, p. 49). In this type of theatre, there is a singing actor, *tayu*, who is placed *on the side of the stage* to perform the voices and convey the emotions of the characters embodied by the puppets. In addition, *tayu* is responsible for showing the facial expressions and gestures of these characters. As Barthes explains, in this kind of theatre, the voice is not suppressed, but 'without being eliminated (which would be a way of censuring it, that is, of indicating its importance), is set aside (theatrically, the narrators occupy a lateral dais). *Bunraku* gives the voice a counterbalance, or better a countermarch, that of gesture' (Barthes 1977, p. 176). If there is something what Barthes learned and what he believes we, Westerners, should learn from the Japanese is the fact that not only voice but the whole body is at work while we communicate:

> [In Japan,] It is not the voice (with which we identify the "rights" of the person) which communicates (communicates what? our – necessarily beautiful – soul? our sincerity? our prestige?), but the whole body (eyes, smile, hair, gestures, clothing) which sustains with you a sort of babble that the perfect domination of the codes strips of all regressive, infantile character. To make a date (by gestures, drawings on paper, proper names) may take an hour, but during that hour, for a message which would be abolished in an instant if it were to be spoken (simultaneously quite essential and quite insignificant), it is the other's entire body which has been known, savored, received, and which has displayed (to no real purpose) its own narrative, its own text (Barthes, 1983, p. 10).

In other words, in Japan, not only the text of the message is important but the whole body, delivering the message, is an important text to be read, perhaps even more important

than the words themselves. To some extent, communication culture is similar to the gift giving culture there: the Japanese attach way more significance to the presentation of the gift and the act of giving than to the gift itself (it can be just a knick-knack). It is the attitude towards the receiver of the gift or the interlocutor in the case of communication that is shown through the body and various gestures; body serves a medium, among other things, of showing respect. As philosopher Andrijauskas puts it, Barthes 'is fascinated by the Japanese rituals and gestures of respect toward another person that can be an example to the Westerners and their flawed ways of communication' (Andrijauskas 2010, p. 501, my translation). An emphasis falls – at least from the subjective point of view of a foreigner in Japan – on the form, not the content (of gift giving, communication, etc.). At the same time, content is (in) the form.

Barthes was captivated by Japan as the empire (full) of signs that are empty, something so unusual to a Westerner 'trained for' the imperative of meaning. Signs are empty in a double sense: first, they are symbols standing for other symbols or emptiness (the box of a gift, the very essence of haiku); second, through the eyes of a Western foreigner, they can be interpreted in a different way. A foreigner experiences the 'sense of being *far away*, *lost* in the emptiness of signs whose essence [s]he cannot hope to understand' (Appignanesi 2001, p. 53). Barthes was especially captivated by the 'murmuring mass of an unknown language' (Barthes, 1983, p. 9) that generates an empowering, liberating feeling of living 'in the interstice, delivered from any fulfilled meaning' (ibid.). It is usual to ask a foreigner questions such as '*How did you deal with the language?*', meaning '*How did you satisfy that vital need of communication*?' (ibid.). Barthes states that there is an ideological layer – related to the Western fetish of logos – underneath the question that '*there is no communication except in speech*' (ibid.). The Barthesian experience of Japan and the Japanese culture suggests that other forms of communication are equally if not more important than the spoken word and should not be devaluated. Furthermore, the encounter with a different culture opens up the possibilities of interpretation and a productive misinterpretation.

With what effect?

In order discuss the effect of communication in Barthesian conception of communication, one has to be very specific about what Barthes regards as communication. The author is critical of traditional views of communication advocated by Western

communication theory and linguistics (by 'linguistics', Barthes means the communication model suggested by Jacobson): 'No one can claim to reduce communication to the classical schema … : sender, channel, receiver, except by relying implicitly on a metaphysics of the classical subject or an empiricism whose (sometimes aggressive) "naivety" is just as metaphysical' (Barthes 1981, p. 36). That being said, he accepts that communication can take place 'successfully', in terms of Western communication theory, in, ideally, spoken discourse. When the message source is determined, the range of receivers is reduced, ideally, to one, and efforts are put in preventing the message from noises or silencing them.

This becomes obvious when one considers the Barthesian description of communication provided from a critical point of view. In *S/Z*, that is perhaps the most poststructuralist of Barthes' works, the author describes 'idyllic', that is, romantic and naïve, understanding of communication as follows: **'**One might call idyllic the communication which unites two partners sheltered from any "noise" (in the cybernetic sense of the word), linked by a simple destination, a single thread' (Barthes 1990 [1974], 1990, p. 131). In such a situation, when a pure message X is transferred directly from partner A to partner B, communication, by all means, can be 'effective' and therefore 'successful'. However, Barthes also points out that 'In relation to an ideally pure message (as in mathematics), the division of reception constitutes a "noise," it makes communication obscure, fallacious, hazardous: uncertain' (Barthes 1990 [1974], p. 145), and introduces the possibility of miscommunication which, one might feel, is a desirable effect, at least with respect to literature.

According to Barthes, 'The more indeterminate the origin of the statement [the more indeterminate the A], the more plural the text [the X]' (Barthes 1990 [1974], p. 41). Furthermore, if there are more receivers than just the B, 'noise' is automatically generated, as, for example, in literary discourse – when a 'message' is sent to multiple 'addressees'. Therefore, on Barthes' account, writing and literature cannot be called communication. The theorist stresses that 'Narrative communication is not idyllic; its lines of destination are multiple' (Barthes 1990 [1974], 1990, p. 131) and hence 'literatures are in fact arts of "noise"' (Barthes 1990 [1974], p. 145). Here, noise should not be perceived in negative terms. On the contrary, good literature celebrates and embraces what Barthes refers to as noise. As Sabine Kim claims, for Barthes, noise is 'a privileged form of *certain* literary

texts' (Kim 2012, p. 177, my emphasis). Thus, having in mind the Western communication theory and its terminology in mind, Barthes separates literature from communication and communication from literature. If we accept the traditional view of communication, literature should be viewed as the opposite of communication or, as Barthes puts it, *countercommunication* (Barthes 1990 [1974], p. 145).

I believe that one of the mistakes the critics of Barthes (and of poststructuralism) make, is that they do not peruse his texts. As it is hopefully clear from the section above, Barthes does not suggest that communication takes place as his texts on literary theory and criticism explains. Barthes, actually, very carefully uses the terms in his own texts: when he speaks of the author and even a modern scriptor, by no means does he speak of the sender; when he introduces the notion of the text, he does not refer to a message; when he speaks of the reader, he does call her/him the receiver, etc. However, if we were to apply his understanding of the workings of literary (counter)communication to interpersonal or mass communication, then, yes, as Nelson claims, noise to some extent becomes the sender, the receiver, the message: 'Noise is not outside the message, nor is it an integral supplement to the truth of the message. Noise is the semiotic process that constitutes messages; it is their substance; it is irreducible' (Nelson 1985, p. 2).

As Patrizia Lombardo rightly observes, 'Barthes is not concerned with precise, impeccable definitions' (Lombardo 2010, p. 11). Having said that, it seems that whenever Barthes uses the term communication, he implicitly refers to the linear model of communication, as exemplified by Shannon's and Weaver's model of communication, also known as the 'mother of all models' (Hollnagel and Woods 2005, p. 11). Their mathematical theory of communication also influenced further studies of Jacobson (Kay 2000, p. 300), whose model of communication, as mentioned earlier, was criticized by Barthes himself (Barthes 1981, p. 36). The main difference between Shannon and Weaver and Barthes (but also between Jacobson [1971, p. 577] and Barthes), is that the former think the noise should be reduced, meanwhile the latter believes it should be increased (Hayles 1988, 1990, p. 191).

Everything can be brought back to the problem of intentionality; since Barthes does not restrict the meaning of the message to the author's intentions, the semantic noise for him is what makes an interpretation open, allows broader understanding and criticism (the struggle with the angel argument). If, according to Barthes, we accept the intentional

fallacy as verity and communication as linear, we can talk only about spoken discourse, but even speech becomes limited. In such a case, there is no way we can refer to the term communication in the context of written discourse. There are two reasons for that: 1) written text conveys more meanings than only those intended by the author, and 2) written text is not linear: neither in the way it is produced nor in the way it is read (the writer can change his text while he is writing, we, as readers, can read only the extracts of it, in different order than it appears, etc.).

The notions of readerly and writerly can be applied to different media; but it can also be applied to messages in terms of interpersonal communication. Some messages are readerly – we use them in our daily communication, usually spoken discourse, while talking to our partners, family and friends as well as colleagues, etc. We send them to communicate our intentions, to tell about our day, report something, ask for help, give instructions, assign tasks, etc. They are characterised by a simple style and, to borrow Basil Bernstein's term (however, with no particular emphasis on class), a restricted code. While sending readerly messages, we manage to communicate meaning more or less successfully. Writerly messages, in contradistinction to readerly ones, appear, more often than not, in written discourse, when we send letters or text messages, communicate online, express our views, opinions, feelings, etc. Their style can be poetic, metaphorical, and they have a propensity to be expressed in an elaborate code. Their meaning, however, is not always crystal clear, they demand for an active position of the receiver and are open for multiple interpretations and sometimes misinterpretations. The truth is, however, that even seemingly readerly messages can be writerly.

To summarise, if we apply the insights Barthes offered analyzing literary discourse to communication directly, then we arrive at the post-foundationalist conclusion that the intentions of the sender of the message are irrelevant, the medium can alter the message, the message can have multiple meanings – their multiplicity is irreducible, the receiver can understand the message the way s/he wants, as all interpretations are no better or worse than others. Therefore, misunderstanding is not only a possibility, but an inevitability which, at the end, is a good thing. And then, yes, all communication is miscommunication. However, one must be careful with such conclusions, drawing on Barthes. The author is very explicit that he does not regard literature as communication; it is, for him, the antipode of communication. Applying his conception of literature to communication

directly, we might end up with very misleading conjectures. Nevertheless, if we carefully apply certain *terms and ideas* that Barthes has devised while typologising and analysing literature to typologising messages and analysing communication, we might come up with fruitful understanding of the way communicative messages and communication work. They might explain why, in some cases, we understand each other perfectly and why sometimes communication 'fails'. Furthermore, Barthes works also stress the importance of non-verbal communication that we could learn from the East.

4. 3. Kristeva: Communication with the Other and Otherness in Communication

Who/To whom?

Kristeva acknowledged the basic accomplishments of the semiotic tradition and structuralism. She espoused the discoveries by the Swiss semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure and the Russian semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin whose theory of 'dialogism' had a profound impact on her theory of intertextuality (Moi, 1986, p. 34)[61]. Kristeva, however, criticised the structuralist semiology for its objective view of language as a structure of stable meanings and have always aimed at showing that these are not fixed and cannot be fixed[62]. In *Revolution of Poetic Language* (1984), the author criticises all theories of language that treat signifying practices formally, i.e., as a formal object of study. She

[61] For Bakhtin, word is the smallest structural unit that is perceived only in connection with other word(s) in a sentence. The same logic is to be applied to larger units on a larger scale: they can only be understood in relation to other elements surrounding them. Therefore, texts are in constant 'dialogue' with other texts. Kristeva points out that signification 'articulates itself' (ibid.) in textual space that involves three dimensions: the writing subject, the addressee, and exterior texts. The word's status, as well as belonging, can be explained in horizontal (writing subject-addressee) and vertical axes (text-context) what Bakhtin himself calls dialogue and ambivalence (Kristeva 1986, p. 37). Kristeva noticed that these two axes in his work are not distinctly distinguished (ibid.). Furthermore, she argued that 'what appears as a lack of rigour is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another' (ibid.). According to Kristeva, 'The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity' (ibid.). After identifying the gaps, Kristeva elaborated Bakhtin's theory and offered two models for 'organizing narrative signification, based on two dialogical categories' (Kristeva 1986, p. 56) and, drawing on Bakhtin, developed her theory of intertextuality which denotes the 'transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another' (Kristeva 1984, pp. 59–60).

[62] Kristeva's works (as well as those of some other poststructuralists) at first balanced between structuralism and poststructuralism and eventually shifted to the latter. Moi points out that her essay 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', for example, is one of those texts that can be positioned between the two schools of thought (Moi 1986, p. 34). As she states, it is on the 'borderline between traditional "high" structuralism with its yearnings for "scientific" objectivity (as revealed by Kristeva's use of mathematic and set theory to illustrate her points) and a remarkably early form of "poststructuralism" or the desire to show how the pristine structuralist categories always break down under the pressure of the *other* side of language' (ibid.).

believes language should be seen not as a homogenous structure but rather as a heterogeneous system, since the signifying process is a dynamic one in which 'language discharges the subject's drives and energies' (Ott and Dominico 2015, p. 238).

According to Kristeva, all modern theories of language (whether American, e.g., Chomskian, British, e.g., Austian, or French) have developed from Cartesian linguistics, focusing on the Cartesian mind (Kristeva and Ree 1998); the transcendental ego advocated by the Husserlian phenomenology are close to it as well. The scholar criticised these theories for not touching upon 'the dynamics of subjective symptoms which ... seem important in life within a society and in psychoanalysis' (ibid.). According to Kristeva, they all 'presuppose a split between the subject and object as well as the solidity of the speaking consciousness' (ibid.). Both the split between the subject and object and the coherence of the speaking subject are 'in contention in pathological states and in situations when the social code is in a state of flux' (ibid.): the situations of revolt, revolution, change, etc. Therefore, Kristeva attempted to offer a theory considering the dynamic nature of such conditions 'where meaning is not always given' (ibid.). The author combined semiotics and psychoanalysis, the combination she called semanalysis (1980 [1969]). In 'The system and the speaking subject', she wrote:

> Semanalysis carries on the semiotic discovery… it places itself at the service of the *social law* which requires systemization, communication, exchange. But if it is to do this, it must inevitably respect a further, more recent requirement – and one which neutralizes the phantom of 'pure science': the subject of the semiotic metalanguage must, however, briefly, call himself in question, must emerge from the protective shell of a transcendental ego within a logical system, and so restore his condition with that negativity – drive governed, but also social, political and historical – which rends and renews the social code (Kristeva 1975, pp. 54–55).

There are two important aspects in this quotation. First, it implies that Kristeva's approach heeds understanding the nature of social interaction and communicative events. However, in order to understand them, one should build a different epistemological stance towards the speaking subject. On Kristeva's account, semiotics should not be separated 'from a theory of the subject that takes into account the Freudian positing of the unconscious' and 'view the subject in language as decentering the transcendental ego, cutting through it' (Kristeva 1984, p. 30). She decentered the transcendental ego by

reconceptualising the speaking subject as a '*subject in process/on trial*' (Kristeva 1984, p. 37). Her conception resists those treating the subject as coherent, unified, final and ignoring the subject's drives and semiotic forces that render the subject always 'in process'. For the purpose of reconceptualising the notion of the subject, Kristeva exhaustively described how the subject is formed and what processes are involved before one starts communicating from the first days. So as to explain these phenomena, Kristeva introduced two concepts: the semiotic and the symbolic. The two 'modalities' cannot be entirely separated: the subject who 'means' is both semiotic and symbolic (Kristeva 1984, p. 24). In other words, these are two elements of the same signifying process (Kristeva 1984, p. 43). When we are already constituted as subjects and communicate, the dialectic movement back and forth occurs between them.

The semiotic is associated with unconsciousness, the feminine, the pre-Oedipal and the pre-mirror stage. It is the dimension of language based on libidinal drives; it is the domain of the articulations of these drives (Kristeva 1984, p. 43). The semiotic does not obey rules of syntax, though; Kristeva points out that the processes of the semiotic are 'anterior to sign and syntax' (Kristeva 1984, p. 29). It may manifest in verbal articulations (i.e., vocal modulations, such as rhythm or intonation), but more generally it refers to extra-verbal articulations as expressed in art (poetry, music, and dance).

By contrast, the symbolic is associated with consciousness, the masculine, and the Oedipalized system. It is the territory of structure, logic, and law. Operating under linguistic rules, the rules of syntax, it encompasses verbal articulations and refers to our attempts to express meaning with the use of words. It manifests in a clear communication of ideas linguistically, as exemplified by the discourse of scientists. In the words of Kristeva, it is 'a social effect of the relation to the other' (Kristeva 1984, p. 29).

The rudiment of the theory of the subject formation, explaining, among other things, the signification process, was Kristeva's observations on poetry. Before even discovering the connection with psychoanalysis, Kristeva 'heard' the 'music' of poetry, i.e., the rhythm that can be discerned, for instance, in Stephane Mallarmé's poems. The scholar noticed that this rhythm dominates the meaning; the latter may not be obvious, but the rhythm is (Kristeva and Ree 1998). She soon recognised the same 'music' and rhythm in the echolalias of infants and later connected this insight with the pre-Oedipal phase[1] that is, as mentioned above, associated with the semiotic.

While discussing it, Kristeva brought in the concept of the semiotic *chora*[63], marked by this rhythm that the theorist at first came across in poetry and later in the repetition of vocalisations of babies[64]. It is a pre-Oedipal phenomenon that refers to 'provisional', 'uncertain' and 'indeterminate' articulation (Kristeva 1984, p. 25). For an infant, not yet capable of language, his/her mother's body works as a mediator of the symbolic 'and becomes the ordering principle of the semiotic *chora*' (Kristeva 1984, p. 27). Thus, the simplest example of *chora* could be the babble that babies produce imitating the language of their mothers' as well as the sounds of the environment (what is also called 'holophrastic enunciations' [Kristeva 1984, p. 43]), which is the result of the movement of libidinal drives:

> Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body – always already involved in a semiotic process – by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are "energy" charges as well as "psychical" marks, articulate what we call a *chora*: a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated (Kristeva 1984, p. 25).

Kristeva's theory was drawn heavily on the theoretical framework of Lacan. The symbolic, or the Symbolic Order, is the Lacanian notion that refers to the universal structure involving, among other things, the function of language. Lacan believed that entering into the realm of language, is the result of lack starting at the mirror stage (an infant's identification with the image in the mirror as an initial stage of ego formation) and ending with castration (which happens when a child is symbolically separated from his mother, seen as a phallic figure, and enters into the Symbolic Order). Kristeva is in line with Lacan[65]: the mirror stage marks the starting point of the constitution of all objects that

[63] Kristeva introduced the concept of *chora* (that she borrowed from Plato's *Timaeus*) while discussing the semiotic. As Moi observes, *chora* is difficult to theorise, as it is essentially untheorisable (Moi 2001, p. 161). According to Kristeva, it is not a model, not a copy, not a sign and not (yet) a signifier but it is 'generated in order to attain to this signifying position' (Kristeva 1984, p. 25). In other words, it is 'the process by which the significance is constituted' (ibid.). Kristeva also calls it 'a modality of significance in which the linguistic sign is not yet articulated' (ibid.). This phenomenon can only be compared to vocal or kinetic rhythm and she generally refers to *chora* as 'rhythmic space' (ibid.).

[65] For Kristeva, however, entering into the realm of language is not only the result of lack and castration but also of excess and pleasure that, according to the author, work as motivators to language (Oliver 2004, p. 2). Furthermore, she insisted that important signification-related processes proceed even prior to the mirror stage and prior to language. In general, part of her criticism for Lacan was that he focused too much on the verbal aspects of language and neglected other modes of signification (Sarup 1993, p. 123).

will be disconnected from the semiotic *chora* (Kristeva 1984, p. 44), and castration marks the final point when the break or splitting of the semiotic is caused, and signification process starts taking place.

She, however, stresses the importance of communication between the child and the mother before the child enters into the Symbolic, associated with language and the figure of the Father. Jeniffer Lemma argues that the mother/child paradigm, as presented in Kristeva's work, opens, protects and preserves 'the possibility of productive ethical discourse through verbal and non-verbal means of communication' (Lemma 2009, p. 92). This paradigm serves as a symbolical representation of first relationship with the self and the other and 'illustrates motherhood's role in the preservation of the potential of new discourse, the potential of ethical reciprocity and the potential of the demystification of the identity of the symbolic bond itself' (Lema 2009, p. 95).

Castration, or the separation from the mother, is a crucial point, since 'the constitution of the Other is indispensable for communicating with an other' (Kristeva 1984, p. 48). However, for this to happen, the thetic phase[66], the dividing line between the semiotic and symbolic registers (ibid.), must be reached. According to Kristeva, language cannot occur if the thetic phase is not completed (Kristeva 1984, p. 72). *Chora* is what precedes it and what is a precondition of the thetic phase (Kristeva 1984, p. 50).

Afterwards, the subject begins to be involved in the symbolic where 'the *chora* will be more or less successfully repressed and can be perceived only as pulsional *pressure* on symbolic language: as contradictions, meaninglessness, disruption, silences and absences in the symbolic language' (Moi 2001, p. 161). However, *chora* is not only a point in subject formation that one must pass through; the subject constantly comes back to the space of *chora*. While (re)producing vocal, gestural and verbal signifiers, one is in the realm of the symbolic. However, at the same time, 'the subject crosses the border of the symbolic and reaches the semiotic *chora*, which is on the other side of the social frontier' (Kristeva 1984, p. 79). As Hugh J. Silverman notices, the semiotic 'brings the bodily, material aspects of language in conjunction with the cognitive and formal aspects', it 'acts

[66] The word derives from the word *thesis*. Kristeva describes the thetic phase as a 'break, which produces the positing of signification' (Kristeva 1984, p. 43). Thetic phase comes out of the mirror stage and is complete in the phallic stage 'by the reactivation of the Oedipus complex in puberty; no signifying practice can be without it' (Kristeva 1984, p. 62).

in occasional concert' with the symbolic (Silverman 1994, p. 178).

This is Kristeva's main point – the very dynamic of language is produced when the two modalities are at work. The author emphasises that 'This dynamic is very clear in some cases in poetic language, for instance, the works of [James] Joyce or [Honoré de] Balzac' (Kristeva and Ree 1998), but also 'in didactic, scientific or political discourse where affect and drive are increasingly mastered' (Kristeva and Ree 1998). According to Kristeva, all human discourse can be classified according to these two modalities (ibid.)[67]. It is obvious that this dynamic is more likely to be discerned in, but not limited to, creative work and especially linguistic creativity. In other words, it is not inherent to and noticeable in all 'utterances'. However, it can be detected even in mundane exchanges.

Evidently, we are in the symbolic when we express ourselves by the use of words, but the exercise of the semiotic is not always so clear. In her work on abjection, Rina Arya argues that 'In normal functioning adult communication, the semiotic is relegated in importance but we are always prone to post-thetic communication in our lives' (Arya 2014, p. 22), when we experience pain, fear, ecstasy, etc. (ibid.). According to the author, 'These states are so intense and *in extremis* that they often momentarily obliterate consciousness and take us to a place that is anterior to linguistic language where we operate "below the surface" of rational communication' (ibid.).

A couple of theorists compared Kristeva's distinction of the two modalities to other authors' typology of communication modes. Silverman claims that there are striking similarities between Kristeva's the semiotic and the symbolic and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's pure and indirect language, or '"the sedimented"' and 'the creative, revolutionary' language (Silverman 1994, p. 179). What is articulated in indirect language 'is not the established meaning but another order of sense and expression'; it is silent

[67] Kristeva distinguishes two types of texts that describe the ways texts function in relation to the semiotic and the symbolic: genotext and phenotext. Genotext appears in the dawn of the symbolic. It can be seen, detected in language (in the form of phonematic [i.e., rhyme] or melodic devices [i.e., intonation or rhythm]) but is inherently non-linguistic, as is the whole realm of the semiotic (Kristeva 1984, p. 86). Encompassing also the transfer of the drives, it includes their arrangement, splitting and distribution in the body (ibid.), it is, as Barthes argues, the text of 'significance' (Barthes 1975, p. 66). Phenotext refers to the language we use to communicate (Kristeva 1984, p. 87). It 'obeys the rules of communication and presupposes a subject of enunciation and an addressee' (ibid.). As Barthes explains, phenotext is 'the regular code of communication' (Barthes 1975, p. 66); it can be epitomised by the 'text of grammarians, critics, commentators, philologists' (Barthes 1975, p. 16). However, Kristeva emphasises that the process of signification takes place when both genotext and phenotext are included.

language that ‘speaks without always turning into what Kristeva calls the symbolic’ (Silverman 1994, p. 180).

Similarly, Edward F. Mooney argues that Kristeva’s two modalities of signification (the semiotic and the symbolic) ‘have a striking resemblance’ to Kierkegaard’s two faces of communication (indirect and direct) (Mooney 2011, p. 7). The author claims that the semiotic is similar to Søren Kierkegaard’s indirect language, ‘the embodied speech and gesture that impart a particular individual’s feeling and passion’ (ibid.). According to Mooney, ‘Both [Kristeva and Kierkegaard] notice the ease with which theorists overlook the particularities of embodied communication, the non-propositional imparting and transfer of affect, pathos and individualized perspective’ (ibid.). Kristeva stresses the importance of the personalised embodied speech and/or writing, as Mooney puts it, ‘the voice of this person, speaking in this tone of voice – in this physical posture, with this gesture, among these attentive particular (embodied) listeners’ (ibid.).

I speculate that both the symbolic and the semiotic have their material form that in some cases can be observed in everyday life. Although the semiotic is less appreciable or tangible, it can be noticed when we discharge our inner libidinal drives that materialise themselves through the ‘passion’ of our vocal performance: through tone, intonation, and the rhythm of our speech (or writing) but also sometimes through our non-vocal performance, i.e., ‘body language’: gestures, gazes and other countenances. Without the semiotic, our language would be dry, empty, numb, and our statements would appear without ardour.

Kristeva’s distinction of the semiotic and the symbolic suggests that while studying the speaking subject in communicative situations, these aspects should be considered, as well as the idiosyncrasy of the semiotic manifestations in our embodied speech. What is more, Kristeva is in accordance with the poststructuralist train of thought that, as subjects, we are always divided and always in process:

> As speaking beings, always potentially on the verge of speech, we have always been divided, separated from nature... We are no doubt permanent subjects of a language that holds us in its power. But we are subjects in process, ceaselessly losing our identity, destabilized by fluctuations in our relations to the other, to whom we nevertheless remain bound by a kind of homeostasis (Kristeva 1987, pp. 8–9).

Thus, language plays an important role in constituting who we are, it 'holds us in its power'. But at the same time, our identity is influenced by our communication with our interlocutors, who we depend on. As Kristeva asks elsewhere, 'are we not speaking being only if we wish to distinguish ourselves from the others in order to impart to them our personal meaning on the basis of such perceived and assumed difference?' (Kristeva 1991, pp. 41–42). Therefore, any communicative relation with the other destabilises us. Communication with a foreigner, who we can and cannot identify with at the same time, especially shakes up our identity. The encountering with him or her, 'leaves us separate, incoherent' (Kristeva 1991, p. 187).

Says what?

Kristeva notices that a foreigner can be defined only negatively ('not one of them', 'not one of us', 'the other') (Kristeva 1991, p. 95). Historically, the notion was defined according to the law referring to either soil or blood: someone not belonging to the same land or to the same 'tribe' (ibid.). But nowadays the foreigner is understood in the broadest possible sense. It can be a person coming from a different country, race, sexuality, or simply another group. As Kristeva puts it, 'Differences involving sex, age, profession, or religion may converge in the state of foreignness, support it or add to it: they are not and the same' (Kristeva 1991, p. 96). She analysed the figure of the foreigner most elaborately in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991), where she argues that 'the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity' (Kristeva 1991, p. 1).

Some scholars criticised Kristeva for her views on this topic of foreignness (Visker 2005, Tyler 2012, Giorgis 2018, to name a few), including her fellow-poststructuralists (Spivak 1981, Chow 1997). Nevertheless, the criticism she receives[68] cannot disclaim the value of Kristeva's observations on the notion of foreignness through historical perspective

[68] Kristeva's book *About Chinese Women* (2000 [1977]), for example, was criticised by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who found fault with Kristeva for her sanctioned ignorance *par excellence*. According to Spivak, the main weaknesses of Kristeva's account on Chinese women are (almost) no real contact with them and 'no *analytic* experience of' them (Spivak 1981, p. 161). The author's insights, argues Spivak, are mostly based on historical and mythic sources and the representation of Chinese women in literary discourse, some of which she was not even able to study properly (due to language/translation issues). Furthermore, Chow (1997 [1991]) claims that, despite of Kristeva's constant attempts to criticise Western discourse in *About Chinese Women* (as well as elsewhere), she remained within the Western metaphysics by attributing otherness to China and thus othering and feminising it (Chow 1997, p. 7). Chow believes one could escape the metaphysical trap by 'going against Kristeva's reading of China as an absolute "other"' (Chow 1997, p. 8).

and as how it was approached in literary works. Therefore, I agree with Paola Giorgis who argues that Kristeva's 'reasoning [still] gets at the core of the issue of foreignness, problematizing and de-essentializing its definition and representation' (Giorgis 2018, p. 32). Furthermore, she captures and explains our reactions to the foreignness thus 'inviting us all to look inside our reciprocal black mirrors' (ibid.). Her texts, by all means, touch upon the crisis of modernity marked by globalisation (as well as capitalism, religion, rationalisation, etc.). However, the author does not intend to offer a means of solving problems we encounter through encountering others (immigration politics, xenophobia, etc.); she rather intends to raise consciousness and encourage our acquiring understanding of social, cultural, political, historical, and ideological aspects of it.

According to Kristeva, '*Strange* indeed is the encounter with the other – whom we perceive by means of sight, hearing, smell, but do not "frame" within our consciousness' (Kristeva 1991, p. 187, my emphasis). Drawing on Freud, she argues that the psychic structure represses certain contents and processes in the unconscious that are inessential for the pleasure, survival, and adaptive growth of the speaking subject (Kristeva 1991, p. 184). When we encounter a foreigner, who, as Kristeva argues, lives within us, the repressed recurs and causes emotional reaction of uncanny strangeness that manifests in a form of anxiety (ibid.). However, it can also evoke other feelings: feeling lost, indistinct, hazy, etc. The scholar emphasises that 'they all repeat the difficulty I have in situating myself with respect to the other and keep going over the course of identification-projection that lies at the foundation of my reaching autonomy' (Kristeva 1991, p. 187). One might also react to uncanny strangeness by 'shaking it off', convincing oneself that it does not affect, disturb at all ('I laugh or take action – I go away, I shut my eyes, I strike, I command' (Kristeva 1991, p. 190).

Kristeva's work encourages us to understand that it is not a foreigner who is dangerous. As Suzanne Clark and Kathleen Hulley argue, for her, 'It is the refusal to acknowledge the strangeness located within that makes the individual a reactionary and dangerous subject' (Kristeva, Clark and Hulley 1991, p. 154). According to Kristeva, the foreigner, who is locked up and 'sleeps' repressed inside us, 'awaken[s]' through encountering the difference to the foreigner outside us; 'he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities' (ibid.). Kristeva believes that being next to a foreigner allows us to be or not to be (as) her/him.

The philosopher stresses it is not a question of humanistic attempts to *accept* the other. To be (as) the other 'means to imagine and make oneself other for oneself' (Kristeva 1991, p. 13). In other words, it means not to accept the other as such, but our own otherness; only then may real acceptance of a foreigner take place. On Kristeva's account, we have two options: 'To worry or to smile, such is the choice when we are assailed by the strange; our decision depends on how familiar we are with our own ghosts' (Kristeva 1991, p. 191).

The first chapters of Kristeva's book are dedicated to the characterisation of the figure of a foreigner. S/he is characterised as 'citizen of the world, cosmopolitan' (Kristeva 1991, p. 13), ironist and/or believer (Kristeva 1991, p. 10), 'tireless "immigrant worker"' (Kristeva 1991, p. 6), 'immigrant, hence worker' (Kristeva 1991, p. 17), stuck in and yet also rebalancing the dialectics of slaves and masters (Kristeva 1991, p. 19). A foreigner is a strangely happy person, whose 'face burns with happiness' (Kristeva 1991, p. 4). This happiness, according to Kristeva, should be reconceptualised. It is shot through the idea that nothing is more permanent than the constant; it 'consists in maintaining that fleeing eternity or that perpetual transience' (ibid.). The sense of not belonging anywhere (belonging nowhere and everywhere at the same time) sets a foreigner free and allows him to 'feel as appertaining to everything, to the entire tradition, and that weightlessness in the infinity of cultures and legacies gives him the extravagant ease to innovate' (Kristeva 1991, pp. 32).

Wherever a foreigner happens to come from, a new place becomes the promised land for him/her, and s/he makes her/his best to strive for his place under the sun. As Kristeva contends, nothing can stop him/her, 'and all suffering, all rejections are indifferent to him as he seeks that invisible and promised territory, that country that does not exist but that he bearns in his dreams, and that must indeed be called beyond' (Kristeva 1991, p. 5). S/he, however, indeed has to endure difficulties and injustice: 'one mouth too many, incomprehensible speech, inappropriate behavior' (Kristeva 1991, p. 6). All these hardships wound her/him but do not prevent from striking her/his roots in the new land.

No matter what a foreigner has to say, no matter how hard s/he tries to say it, at least at first, we tend to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear. According to Kristeva, a foreigner is never truly heard (Kristeva 1991, p. 16). The locals can tolerate her/him (Kristeva 1991, p.

16), but s/he is quite often ignored and/or rejected[69] (Kristeva 1991, p. 19). In extreme cases, s/he can even be abjected[70]. A foreigner usually does not get a chance to talk and even when s/he does have enough courage to step into a conversation, his/her 'speech is quickly erased by the more garrulous and fully relaxed talk of the community' (Kristeva 1991, p. 20). If mastered, his/her speech can only grasp someone's attention because of its rhetorical strength (Kristeva 1991, p. 21), but, as Kristeva puts it, 'One will listen to [her/him] on in absent-minded, amused fashion, and one will forget '[her/him] in order to go on with serious matters' (Kristeva 1991, p. 20–21).

The messages of the foreigner cannot be life-changing or having any 'practical' implications on the community – at least the community at first thinks so. S/he is marginal due to the lack of power s/he has to make a change in the society s/he wants to infiltrate. According to Kristeva, a foreigner does not have '"social standing" – to make [her/his] speech useful' (Kristeva 1991, p. 20). Because s/he is too little of an influence on the community, s/he is too little of an interest to it (Kristeva 1991, pp. 20–21). Her/his words are scarcely symbols: 'as they are insignificant, they can be done or spoken only for the purpose of precisely doing or saying nothing' (Kristeva 1991, p. 28). To put it another way, even while talking, a foreigner does not make any speech acts.

Silence is the companion of a foreigner. As Kristeva puts it, 'between two languages, [her]/his realm is silence. By dint of saying things in various ways, one just as trite as the other, just as approximate, one ends up no longer saying them' (Kristeva 1991, p. 15). A

[69] Of course, a foreigner can be accepted but only if s/he is beneficial to the community. Actually, 'The foreigner is at once identified as beneficial or harmful to that social group and its power and, on that account, he is to be assimilated or rejected' (Kristeva 1991, p. 96).

[70] The notion of a foreigner is kindred to that of an abject. As Kristeva defines it, abject is 'A "something" that I do not recognize as a thing' (Kristeva 1982, p. 2). It is unrecognisable because it seems uncategorisable: I cannot indicate whether it is a subject or an object, the self or the other. The examples of an abject include but are not limited to a corpse, an open wound or the skin of milk. These as well as other abjects evoke extreme reactions such as horror, disgust, and revulsion. However, Kristeva emphasises that, 'It is ... not a lack of cleanness or health that causes abjection' (Kristeva 1982, p. 4); it is caused by 'what disturbs identity, system, order' (ibid.). On the one hand, abjection is similar to the feeling of uncanniness that can be aroused when one faces a foreigner. Nevertheless, there are important differences, too. The feeling of uncanniness is the result of something repressed but still familiar reappearing in a person's psyche. 'The uncanny', writes Freud, 'is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar' (Freud 1995, p. 121). The abjection, by contrast, is more frightening, more violent and totally unfamiliar. As Kristeva puts it, 'nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory' (Kristeva 1982, p. 5). The notion of 'abjection' was applied in a variety of contexts, for example, examining the disgust of an aged body (Gilleard, Higgs 2011) or the disgust nurses experience taking care of their patients (Holmes, Perron, O'Byrne 2006). However, it was also applied more widely, for instance, analysing marginalised groups and social abjection in general (Tyler 2012).

foreigner, according to Kristeva, is 'Stuck within […] polymorphic mutism' (Kristeva 1991, p. 16). It is *poly*morphic, since silence is forced upon a foreigner and within him: 'a refusal to speak, a fitful sleep riven to an anguish that wants to remain mute, the private property of your proud and mortified discretion, that silence is a harsh light' (ibid.). In other words, silence is the wall to which an alien sometimes strikes against, and sometimes it is the wall that she herself/himself builds and fence in. However, silence also can produce significance, and whilst being silent, a foreigner also makes significant utterances. Therefore, while looking at the communication involving a foreigner, it is necessary to take a glance at the body language of her/his, as well as the bodily responses of the locals.

Which medium?

A foreigner cannot speak her/his first language. However, it allows her/him to seek communication with others anyway. Mother tongue, as represented in Kristeva's work, not simply refers to the main language(s) a child is exposed to from her/his birth, but also 'defines the communication that precedes, transcends and surpasses verbal or written exchange' (Lema 2009, p. 98). In other words, mother tongue ensures the possibility of communication with the other and participation in a genuine and authentic dialogue, despite linguistic, cultural, and social differences.

Although it is difficult for a foreigner to speak a foreign language, s/he is always ready to build the will and make the effort to learn and start speaking it. Becoming proficient in a new language is a promise of his/her new identity. As Kristeva puts it, 'You have a feeling that the new language is a resurrection: new skin, new sex' (Kristeva 1991, p. 15), but it is only an illusion. On his way to a new language, a foreigner has to experience xenoglossophobia, endure a lot of linguistic, second-language discomfort, uncomfortable silences, the embarrassment of not finding the right words, etc.

Inevitably, a foreigner makes lot of mistakes when s/he speaks (Kristeva 1991, p. 15, p. 31, p. 35). On the one hand, no one wants to make her/him feel bad about them; on the other, there are so many errors that no one even bothers to correct them (Kristeva 1991, p. 15). Some of a foreigner's mistakes can be annoying, meanwhile the others – simply funny or 'queer' (Kristeva 1991, p. 35). S/he can say, for instance, '"I have seized a cold" or "that fellow is sympathetic" – merely meaning that he was a nice chap' (ibid.). Thus, a foreigner is a good source for a chortle if s/he is in more hostile environment, and a lot of

misunderstandings occur due to the lack of knowledge of the same linguistic conventions, not to speak of cultural differences.

Kristeva not only stressed the importance of trans-verbal facets of language; she also reflected on the notion of 'gesture'. The philosopher, however, approached the phenomenon from the perspective other than simply 'body language'. Furthermore, the author analysed gesture not as a way of representation or as a means of expression but as an anaphora[71]. In her words, 'Before and behind voice and writing there is anaphora: the gesture that indicates, that institutes relations and eliminates entities' (Kristeva quoted in Michaux 2013, n.p.). To put it another way, gestures come before the meaning is carried by the written or the spoken word; they have indexing value but are not yet constituted as signs. In Kristeva's words, gesture is 'the elaboration of the message, the work which precedes the constitution of the sign (of the meaning) in communication' (Kristeva 1978, p. 267). As Ana Hedberg Olenina and Irina Schulzki paraphrases it, 'In this model, gesture is the work that makes the constitution of a sign possible; and as such, it exceeds the sign' (Hedberg Olenina and Schulzki 2017, n.p.). While answering the question of her essay title ('Gesture: Practice or Communication?'), Kristeva claims: 'Gesturality … can be studied as an *activity* … anterior to the representation of a phenomenon of significance in the circuit of communication' (Kristeva 1978, p. 267, my emphasis). In this understanding, 'the body should be analysed 'in terms of "repetitive elements" in communication and then abstracted, tested for structural significance' (Nuttall 1997, p. 73). These observations of Kristeva lay the foundations for studying bodily communication and gestures, among other cases, of a foreigner and her/his interlocutor.

With what effect?

In Kristevian conception of communication, the outcome of the process can be either 'successful' or 'unsuccessful'. As William D. Melaney contends, 'the Kristevan *semiotexte* offers a basis for both understanding and misunderstanding in which language mediates between semiotic meaning and cultural practices' (Melaney 2007, n.p.). However, I argue that communication itself and the possible effects of it cannot be adequately understood without taking into account her observations on the figure of a foreigner and the notion of otherness.

[71] The word derives from the ancient Greek ἀναφορά that means 'carrying back'.

As regards the communication with the foreigner, the success of our communication depends in point of fact on our ability to welcome foreigner, give the voice to listen to him/her. According to Lemma, 'Kristeva's work at investigating the intrinsic and often unidentified limits of language reveals the disconnect between the desire to express the self and the ability (or means) to express the self' (Lemma 2009, p. 94). Certain historical moments provide examples when the others (women, for instance) wanted to participate in the discourse, but were silenced, excluded from it, in order to maintain the status quo. Thus, whether an ethical dialogue will take place with the foreigner, depends very much on the community. As Lemma claims, 'If particular groups of potential participants are denied authentic engagement, the integrity (productivity and genuineness) of the dialogue is obviously compromised' (ibid.).

We sometimes remain aloof and pay no attention to the foreigner because 'the foreigner challenges both the identity of the group and his own – a challenge that few among us are apt to take up' (Kristeva 1991, p. 41). However, if we can confront our own foreignness, we might maximise the 'positive' effect of communication with the actual foreigner. In the majority of cases, misunderstandings with aliens arise from our reactions to uncanny strangeness and an adversarial stance towards the other rather than barriers of language or culture. As Kristeva argues,

> recognizing what is not doing well in myself – my death drives, my eroticism, my bizarreness, my particularity, my femininity, all these marginalities that are not recognized by consensus – I would tend less to constitute enemies from those phenomena, which I now project to the exterior, making scapegoats of others. (Kristeva, Clark and Hulley 1991, p. 154)

Discovering, recognising, and acknowledging our uncanny strangeness can make no harm to us, nor can it stand to benefit, except perhaps bring the comprehension that there is nothing to be in fear of – in the newcomer and in myself: 'The foreigner is within me, hence we are all foreigners. If I am foreigner, there are no foreigners' (Kristeva 1991, p. 192). Thus, the locals hold power to decide what the course of communication with the other will take and how it will end. However, it might be the case that this communication is very much contingent on the communication with ourselves and whether or not we are ready to make exceptions.

In his article 'The Exceptional Community: On Strangers, Foreigners, and Communication' (2010), Garnet C. Butchart reflects on the political philosophy of Giorgio Agamben and his idea of the relation of exception in the light of Kristeva's observations on foreignness and her concept of paradoxical community[72]. Butchart argues that the concept of exception is an important contribution to critical communication studies, as it 'puts into question some of our deepest beliefs about the logic of community and our experience of communication, illuminating how foreignness haunts the former and how estrangement constitutes the latter' (Butchart 2010, p. 22). The idea of foreigners within and the logic of exception have important implications for understanding of communication:

> To be sure, communication is typically understood as meaningful interaction among people: Everyone is different, separate from others. Hence, communication is the translation of difference into the same (we "get through" to one another in communication). However, communication can also be understood as meaningful interaction within the self, a self that psychoanalysis tells us is different from and divided within itself (split in its recourse to a language that is never one's own). In order for there to be communication, the self must learn to recognize itself as others see it – as an other. For this to happen, the self must make an exception (Butchart 2010, p. 22).

In other words, communication happens when we make an exception and see ourselves through the eyes of others – as others. Similarly, Lyotard argues that communication suggests 'the exchange of roles', it 'implies that I am not just myself with my reasons and my passions, but also the other with his, and further implies that the other is also me, and thus that the other is the other of himself' (Lyotard 2014, pp. 80–81). According to Lyotard, 'In this way, we can together make a speech' (ibid.). In other words, communication can only be successful if we identify with otherness and acknowledge its existence and legality in ourselves. The Kristevian theory in a way supports İlter's reconceptualization of communication as something that happens when one recognizes the otherness of communication as integral part of communication itself (İlter 2017) and

[72] A paradoxical community, according to Kristeva, is an emerging community 'made up of foreigners who are reconciled with themselves to the extent that they recognize themselves as foreigners' (Kristeva 1991, p. 195).

invites us all to do so. After all, we are all just divided speaking subjects, dependent on others, and our communication seems to be dependent on otherness too.

4. 4. Re-evaluation of Poststructuralist Theory

Interpretive standard 1: new understanding of people

The poststructuralist theory clearly provides a new understanding of people. As I demonstrated in the previous chapters, Derrida's theories explicate why the speaking subject's consciousness and intentions are never fully present, why it is always divided and incoherent. For similar reasons, Barthes questions and refutes the authority of the speaking subject as the ultimate source of meaning of the text s/he produces. Kristeva's theories demonstrate that the subject is always in process/on trial due to the movement of the semiotic and the symbolic. As mentioned, the poststructuralist theory puts an emphasis on language and argues that a subject is constituted through language and discourse[73]. A new understanding of the speaking subject offers new ways to interpret enunciations/texts. Objective explanation based on intentionality becomes unattainable; (even readerly) texts/messages can be writerly, as Barthes suggests, and therefore can only be understood in multiple ways. A reader/critic/scholar cannot *explain* them; s/he can only *understand* them by providing a double reading. S/he reconstructs a text, producing new meanings and thus new knowledge of it. Furthermore, a text can be viewed from different subject positions. The understanding of the texts/messages and communication process itself, therefore, becomes subjective, co-produced and co-constructed, and a scholar should include himself/herself as part of his/her construct.

Interpretive standard 2: clarification of values

Referring to my previous comments, poststructuralists disbelieve in the absence of values and objectivity. According to them, the values are what actually influence and condition belief in objectivity. In other words, they are already embedded in the claim of objectivity, and one cannot isolate oneself from these values. For this reason, the research

[73] Foucault, for example, analyses the relationship between the subject and power. Human beings, according to him (1982), are turned into subjects through three different modes of objectification, the first one being that of language. The philosopher (1970) also studies the figure of discourse and concludes that we are all subjects of discourse, as we cannot communicate outside it. Furthermore, we situate ourselves in a certain discourse taking up a certain subject position. We thus become subjected to its meanings and knowledge associated with that discourse as well as power attached to it.

for poststructuralists is always value-laden as well as the object under observation, in this case, communication itself. Thus, s/he should acknowledge his or her values and look for values in the texts/messages/communicative events s/he scrutinises. There are certain values that the poststructuralist authors share, such as the refutation of authority or the multiplicity of meanings. Some, such as social justice, equality, empathy, diversity, and otherness, correspond to the values of the left[74].

I have barely touched upon the questions of power relations and ideological values in the theoretical part of my work, as these topics are not under the scope of my thesis. However, they are salient to the poststructuralists I discuss and especially others who I exclude from the discussion due to space constrains[75]. Deconstruction, as Derrida himself argues, not only provides us with tools to analyse discourse; it is also a mode of political action and it can be applied to the critique of ideology. In her semanalysis, Kristeva defines the basic unit of ideology – ideologeme as a function linking a structure (text) to other structures (historical, political). As Kristeva writes, 'The ideologeme is that intertextual function read as "materialized" at the different structural levels of each text, and which stretches along the entire length of its trajectory, giving it its historical and social coordinates' (Kristeva 1980, p. 36). She thus offers a theoretical framework to study text as ideologeme and examine the ways a text is pervaded with the dominant ideology of a certain time society. Barthes also argues that a novel is a mythological object (Barthes 2012 [1967], p. 33). His theory of modern myth directly encourages a mythologist (or any scholar examining a myth) to unmask the ideology (usually the one of the dominant social group) behind the myth and show how it helps to maintain it. These examples, among many others, testify the importance of the examination of ideological values in the process

[74] Poststructuralism is regarded as the politics of the left, however, in these terms, politics should not be understood as fixed values (Williams 2005, p. 6). As Williams explains, 'poststructuralism cannot depend on certainty and unchangeable convictions' (Williams 2005, p. 7). According to the author, 'Conviction should be open to a change; it should seek to change' (ibid.).

[75] Louis Althusser (1971) and his research on ideological state apparatus, for example, shows how an ideological subject is constituted through the process of interpellation, i.e. his response to the voice of the authority: 'I' become the subject because 'I' am spoken to. Judith Butler (1997) criticises the idea of the sovereign subject and elaborates Althusser's theory by arguing that the subject might not be consciously aware of the interpellation, he might be interpellated despite his or her dissent and not necessarily by a concrete authority. She also brings to the discussion the concept of performativity in connection to the construction of gender (that is, according to Butler, constructed and performed), but the theory can be extended to how subjects become performative political subjects and perform hegemonic ideologies.

of communication. It can thus be concluded that poststructuralism meets the second interpretive standard *par excellance*.

Interpretive standard 3: aesthetic appeal

Having a close relationship with literature (especially Derrida, Barthes, and Kristeva) and other art forms, such as film or painting (especially Foucault, Deleuze, Lyotard and Derrida), poststructuralist authors trespass into the territory of art while analysing it. Based on their analysis of art, they create theories enthralling in their form as much as in their content. In other words, they are characterised not only by sophisticated thought but also by sophisticated rhetoric. Poststructuralists often use or coin words and play on them (*le sujet en procès* – subject in process/on trial, *jouissance*; quite often these are homonyms or homophones – *différance*, *écriture*). Furthermore, their books break established academic writing standards, transcending style and genre boundaries, sometimes balancing between academic and creative writing (Derrida's *Glas*, for example, or even my afore-quoted *Post Card*, are epitomising works in this sense) or academic and journalistic writing (Barthes' *Mythologies*). Although their ideas might be difficult to follow, poststructuralist theories can definitely be characterised as having an aesthetic appeal.

Interpretive standard 4: a community of agreement

Despite their artistic abilities and the gift of writing, poststructuralists are often accused of unintelligible because of their obscurantist writing style and terminological quibbling. Indeed, there is something value-laden in the accusation of ostensibly 'negative' aspects of complexity, obscurantism, and importance put on technical details that for some might seem trivial: it implies that philosophical writing should be simple, easily read, clear, and focus only on general, 'big' matters. However, the prominent poststructuralist Derrida showed that writing is never simple, precisely because it is never absolutely easily read. As Attridge and Thomas Baldwin rightly observe, 'Derrida's writing is strange and difficult because it has to be: to test the limits of what can be thought is to test the limits of what can be articulated' (Attridge and Baldwin 2004, n.p.). However, when it comes to communication, the clarity of articulation becomes something a theorist is expected to have been gifted with and/or have mastered. As Peters rightly observes,

> If a communication theorist is difficult to understand … some will think it fair game to point this out as if it were a damnable irony. The widespread sense that communication means the unproblematic transmission of meaning makes it seem to some people like a funny topic for an academic field (Peters 2014, p. 500).

However, poststructuralists are against the conception of communication as an unproblematic transmission; they believe it is problematic and it is more dissemination than transmission, especially in the written discourse. In the name of poststructuralists, Kristeva admitted that 'the language we used could be excessively technical at times' (Guberman 1996, p. 260). However, in her view, what actually bothers critics is not the jargon itself, but rather the 'nonidentificatory' approach that poststructuralists apply to solving problems they care about (ibid.), including communication. If 'rhetorical validity can be established only when a work is debated in the broad marketplace of ideas' (Zarefsky, quoted in Griffin 2003, pp. 46–47), then poststructuralism can be regarded as a valid theory of communication – it is being discussed widely, however, not necessarily accepted universally. As mentioned before, it can be proud of widespread scrutiny in the humanities and arts, but not necessarily in social sciences. Thus, poststructuralism does not completely meet the fourth standard of interpretive theories – a community of agreement.

Interpretive standard 5: reform of society

Poststructuralist theory challenges seemingly 'natural' cultural assumptions and calls for a social action and change. According to Williams, 'it changes our world and our views of it across a great range of situations, for example, in term of our relations to our bodies, in terms of sexuality, gender, relations with other, and in terms of our relations toward the environment or with the unconscious' (Williams 2005, p. 19). The poststructuralists, whose works I discussed in this thesis, all believe in a change that should not be understood in merely theoretical terms. As Derrida argues:

> the most radical programs of a deconstruction that would like, in order to be consistent with itself, not to remain enclosed in purely speculative, theoretical, academic discourses but rather … to aspire to something more consequential, to *change* things and to intervene in an efficient and responsible, though always, of course, very mediated way, not only in the profession but in what one calls the *cité*, the *polis* and more generally the world (Derrida 2002, p. 236).

Barbara Leckie explains that the change Derrida calls on 'would disturb the very disciplines and categories – law and literature, ideology and critique – through which these disciplines and categories initially gain their meaning' (Leckie 1995, p. 5). Kristeva believes in revolution in and of literature that 'constitute a social, linguistic and political revolution' (Williams 2005, p. 133). Her argument is that literature can move forward and 'shake' not only linguistic structures, but also structures in society and politics (Williams 2005, p. 134). Furthermore, interpreting literature or any kind of work, according to Kristeva, is an act of revolt (Kristeva 2000b, p. 2).

Regarding communication, poststructuralists are suspicious and encourage us to be critical of the media and various channels that our messages are disseminated through. Even speech, according to Lyotard, 'changes what it utters' (Lyotard 2014, p. 78), not to speak of various channels that, according to poststructuralists, are often usurped by power relations. As Derrida argues, 'the "posts" are always posts of power' (Derrida 1987, p. 404). Those with power can have an effect on the message, and of the possible effects is that it can be connoted with ideological signifieds that can be neutralised. Poststructuralists offer critique of those ideological messages along with the tools for the analysis of them. The belief in emancipatory power varies in degrees: some poststructuralists are more open to these ideas than others. Barthes, for instance, who argued that myths can be dismantled, ideology can be uncovered, and thus critical awareness raised, later claimed that signs and therefore mythology have gone through a change: 'the new mythology … can no longer, will no longer be able to, separate so easily the signifier from the signified, the ideological from phraseological' (Barthes 1977, p. 166). In other words, ideology is more difficult to disclose; it is nevertheless possible.

Myths can be compared to simulacra described by Baudrillard. From an ontological point of view, myths come before simulacra; they still belong to signs that hide something (Baudrillard would say 'signs that dissimulate something' (Baudrillard 1994, p. 6), and what is hidden, can be found. The third layer, the ideological meaning of the connoted signified can still be uncovered and the 'truth' can be unveiled. In the case of simulacra, signs hide the fact that they do refer to anything real (they are 'signs that dissimulate that there is nothing' (ibid.). There is nothing outside of ideology, it therefore cannot be uncovered: 'there is no longer any God to recognize his own, nor any last judgment to separate truth from false, the real from its artificial resurrection, since everything is already

dead and risen in advance' (ibid.). Simulacra and simulation are now everywhere; we therefore cannot escape 'hyperreality'. This theory, in other words, pertaining of emancipation from simulacra and ideology becomes impossible. Nevertheless, in poststructuralist literature, emancipation remains a value and a pursuit.

As this evaluation demonstrates, poststructuralist theory meets all the standards of a good interpretive communication theory, except perhaps interpretive standard 4: A community of agreement. However, as I argued in the previous chapter, the community of communication scholars is sometimes hostile to poststructuralists because they misinterpret their ideas. Paradoxically, even Penman, who offers the criteria for evaluation of a postmodern paradigm, while discussing the last and desirable criterion of incompleteness, makes the same mistake arguing that:

> This view, however, does not lead us to the nihilistic position of the deconstructionists (e.g., Derrida, 1976). From their perspective all attempts at discovering underlying order must inevitable fail, and therefore there is no point in attempting such a search. But from the perspective here, while the meanings implicated in communication are always indeterminate, they are not wholly so in practice. We have the capacity for creating order out of the potential chaos of indeterminacy (Penman 1992, p. 246).

In other words, although Penman accepts that meaning is theoretically indeterminate (or, as Derrida would have it, undecidable) and perfect understanding is impossible; however, in practice closure is necessary for us to understand each other and communicate more or less successfully. As I have shown in previous chapters, Derrida would not be opposed to such an opinion; he would actually agree with it completely. According to Penman, poststructuralism would not meet the criterion of incompleteness; however, if the misunderstandings were cleared up, it would perfectly achieve it.

5. Poststructuralist Conception of Communication in Jarmusch's Films

In previous chapters, I have presented three different poststructuralists' ideas on process of communication, which laid the foundations for the analysis of communication in Jarmusch's films. They are suitable for the analysis from this vantage point, as the characters themselves are not only face-to-face interlocutors but also those who exchange messages in a written form. As mentioned in the Introduction, they also communicate using other communication technology, such as payphones, landline phones, mobile phones, etc. But when they communicate *tête-à-tête*, body language elaborates their spoken messages.

The section 'Who/To whom?' will begin by demonstrating the poststructuralist idea of an absent/'dead' author depicted in Jarmusch's films and explaining why the speaking subject and its identity are always divided. I will also briefly discuss the figure of a foreigner as the speaking subject as well as the one who is spoken to. The next section, 'Says what?', examines the messages the foreigner sends and receives. In the section 'Which medium?' different types of media and channels that the messages in Jarmusch's fims go through will be discussed. I will also review writing vs. speech and old media vs. new media. A discussion of non-traditional media and channels falls outside the scope of this thesis. I will, nevertheless, give a brief overview of the alternative ways and channels of communication that Jarmusch explores in his cinematic works. Finally, in the section 'With what effect', I will reflect on the phenomena of misunderstanding and miscommunication between the characters, focusing on the reasons why communication 'succeeds' and 'fails'.

Who/To whom?

Vaguely defined author: People at Dickinson's Metal Works

I begin my analysis of the communicators in Jarmusch's films by looking first of all at the authors of letters and written messages that respond to the poststructuralist conception of the speaking/writing subject. They are ghost-like senders, whose identity is either vaguely defined or unknown and attempts to trace them often fail. One such author is created in Jarmusch's renowned film *Dead Man* (1995). Juan Antonio Suárez rightly observes that the film, has attracted (and, surprisingly, continues to attract) a great deal of

attention from critics and scholars – more than any other film by Jarmusch (Suárez 2007, p. 104)[76]. However, the theme I am interested in, the author and the receiver of the letter, remains unexplored.

In the film, the protagonist William Blake receives a letter from 'the people at Dickinson's Metal Works' offering him a job and travels West to accept it. The viewer does not see whether the letter is signed and, if so, who signed it. However, as the film progresses, it turns out that no one is accountable for sending it or for its contents. William Blake, the receiver of the letter, tries to contact the sender; however, unsuccessfully. Thus, in what follows, I will focus on the dialogue between the possible sender(s) of the letter and receiver of the letter in the film. Greil Marcus rightly observes that *Dead Man* 'might as well be a silent. You can read the whole film off its faces' (Marcus 1999, n. p.). For this reason, I will pay special attention to the interlocutors' body language and other visual signs that help to create the characters and establish their relationship.

When William Blake comes to the office of Dickinson's Metal Works factory and introduces himself as their new accountant, the manager John Scholfield (John Hurt) does not know what he is talking about. The protagonist gives him the letter that serves, or is supposed to serve, as an official document, claiming that 'this letter confirms' his position, yet the manager of the factory only inspects the envelope, noticing that the letter is postmarked two months ago, which makes William Blake 'about a month late'. In other words, he only comments on the object from a detached 'expert's' position. Although the writing subject is unknown, the dialogue between William Blake and Mr. Scholfield

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[76] Several scholars analysed it in terms of genre, discussing, among other things, revisionism, reflection on the traumatic past, Native American history and culture, and the expansion of the West (Rickman 1998; Rosenbaum 2000; Kollin 2000; Hall 2001; Nieland 2001; Bromley 2001; Pelzer 2002; Buchanan 2011). Nieland, for example, examined 'the film's complicated relationship to America's historical archive – a record structured by conflict, hybridity, and violence' (Nieland 2001, 171). The variety of subjects of discourse shows the multidimensionality and richness of the themes explored in the movie: it was investigated from the perspective of gender (DeAngelis 2001), ethnicity (Kilpatric 1999, cited in Suárez 2017, 105; McMahon 2011), otherness (Richardson 2010; Petković and Vuković 2011), communication between the characters (Suárez 2007; Richardson 2010), religion (Curley 2008), mythology (Salyer 1999; Ahmadi and Ross 2012), spirituality and imagination (Rice 2012), technology and capitalism (Salyer 1999). Some scholars examined how *Dead Man* was informed by literature. Hugh Davis (2013) looked at how William Blake's poetry is thematically and structurally incorporated in the film; in a similar manner, Troy Thomas (2012) argued that the film is an unusual and unique adaptation of Blake's work. Suárez (2007) searched for the parallels between *Dead Man* and the *oeuvre* of poet, writer, and painter Henri Michaux, whose words 'It is preferable not to travel with a dead man' serve as the film's epigraph. I interpreted the protagonist William Blake (Johny Depp) as the representative of writing and the fireman he meets on the train (Crispin Glover) as the representative of speech (Kazakevičiūtė 2019).

provides a lot of information regarding the relationship that is being established between the mysterious people at Dickinson's Metal Works and the protagonist. It is, to say the least, unequal. The manager, one of the representatives of 'the people', carries certain signs of the authority and social status: his desk is in front of everybody else's, and while sitting at it, he smokes a cigar that signifies social superiority (Pease 1984). As Pease observes, 'The big-time business executive, the gang leader and people in high-status positions often smoke cigars' (Pease 1984), and Mr. Scholfield belongs to at least two of the clusters.

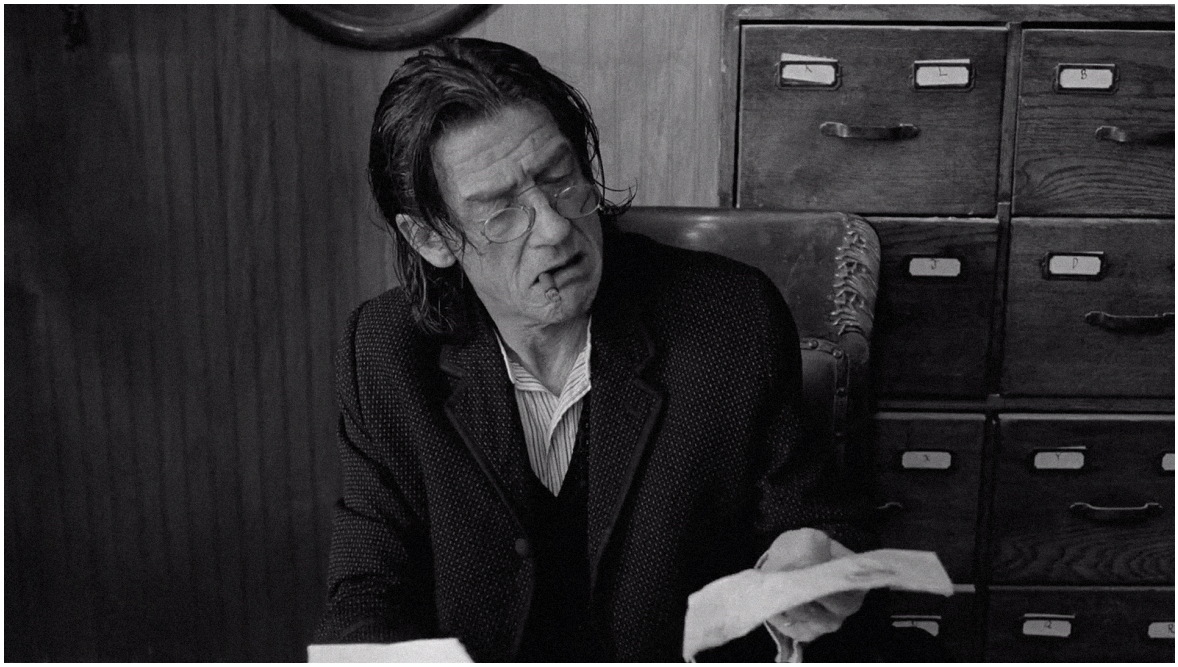

Image 2. John Scholfield, the manager of the factory and the actual author of the letter (see footnote Nr. 77), examining the letter William Blake received from the people at Dickinson Metal Works *(Dead Man* 1995). Source: *Dead Man*. 1995 [2000] [DVD]. Directed by Jim Jarmusch. Köln: Pandora Film.

He looks down on William Blake, showing him gestures of inattentiveness and disrespect. Not only he does not introduce himself, but also does not memorise Blake's surname and mixes up it with Black's, which gives away the manager's treatment of Blake as an unimportant person. Furthermore, the colour 'black' signifies absence in at least two ways: first, due to the fact that black is literally the absence of colour; and second, due to the colour's cultural association with death (black symbolizes 'the state of fermentation, putrefaction, occultation and penitence' [Cirlot 1990, p. 56]) . Thus, referring to Blake as Black reinforces the idea of William Blake being an insignificant, 'non-existing' person (which serves creating William Blake's character as a dead man). Even after being corrected, Mr. Scholfield repeats his mistake. This reiteration confirms that he does listen to his interlocutor and regards the newcomer unworthy of his attention, whereas his self-

description as ‘a very busy man’ implies the William Blake is not worth his time, either. While enunciating the second part of the same sentence ‘and Mr. Dickinson does not pay me for idle conversation’, the manager puts logical stress on the surname, thus emphasising the meaningful unit in it and implying the subject in charge of social and financial contracts. Moreover, he indicates that ‘this ain’t [his] business’. The usage of ‘ain’t’, a nonstandard version of the standard ‘is not’, is characteristic of less educated, appearing often in American English where it has a particular function – to put an emphasis on what is being said. That is to say, the manager emphatically sheds the responsibility to deal with such questions and shifts it to the owner of the factory.

The protagonist expresses his wish to speak to Mr. Dickinson in firm voice and with confidence – while holding his shoulders and head straight. His request, however, is followed by a mock-hidden laugh of the manager and then seconds later – the obsequious, toadying laugh of the rest of the employees; one of them even shakes his head while laughing, which implies the trouble William Blake is blithely getting into. The laugh also creates a katagelastic atmosphere in the office, uncomfortable for the protagonist. At first, he reacts with a short and unsecured smile and without turning his head, he looks to the left, which betrays his frustration. ‘No, I don‘t think you want to do that’, mysteriously says Mr. Scholfield with a smile on his face, marked by his stretched lips in a straight line, indicating that he hides a secret he does not want to share with the interlocutor.

When William Blake adopts a never-say-die attitude and *insists* on speaking to Mr. Dickinson, the manager asks in belittling tone ‘You insist?’ while raising his eyebrows, indicating his surprise. After receiving the confirmation, he repeats the question. However, the same sentence is uttered in a significantly different way. The first one is divided by a pause, and a logical stress is put on the word ‘you’, i.e. the subject of the sentence (which translates into ‘Who insists? You?’); the second one is said louder as well as in a stricter tone, and the emphasis falls on the word ‘insist’, i.e. predicate of the sentence (which translates into ‘What do you do? Insist?’). Put another way, by asking the same question twice, the manager actually asks two: one of them contains an implication that the newcomer with the letter in his hands is *nobody* (which makes him close to the character Nobody who he will later meet in the woods) and the second one implies that he has no rights. This is followed by a suspenseful pause. The manager then slowly licks his bottom lip, a suggestive sign that can mean, among other things, holding a lie or secret

information, or withholding aggression. He then points his eyes to the door, saying ‘Well, go on then, lad. Here’s the door’. William Blake’s ‘acceptance’ of the challenge is again met by a collective laugh. Due to the arrangement of the desks in the scene and the manager’s address ‘lad’ which means a young person and carries an implication of the lack of his experience and knowledge, William Blake looks like a pupil ridiculed in front of class.

It is important to note that Mr. Dickinson, who is the highest authority available, is absent when Blake comes into the room. The viewer gets to see the space and the things in it from the protagonist’s perspective. He observes certain signs of Mr. Dickinson’s recent presence, such as, for instance, a smouldering cigar in the ashtray. From the poststructuralist perspective, this is a significant detail showing that the author (his consciousness and intentions) is never fully present. Thanks to the camera movement we can see that another important sign that captures Blake’s attention is his half-height portrait on the wall in which he holds a cigar in one hand and the gun in the other. Not only the cigar and the gun, but also the portrait itself depicting the owner, communicate his status: power, importance, and wealth. By no accident, William Blake next observes the piles of money, lying on the ground by a safe. There are also various signs of death: the skull on the table, horns on the wall, a stuffed bear standing in the room. They all make William Blake feel tension: he exhales, rapidly expelling the air. His frowned forehead and eyebrows also indicate anxiety.

Suddenly, Mr. Dickinson begins to speak – with a cigar in his mouth – from his arm-chair that a few seconds ago was empty. He appears out of nowhere – like a ghost –without emitting a sound. Pointing a gun at William Blake, he angrily asks ‘Who the hell are you? And where did you get that goddamn clown suit? Cleveland?’ The words ‘the hell’ and ‘goddamn’ are used for emphasis, but also express his anger caused by an unexpected interruption. Just like the manager who made William Blake a joke, Mr. Dickinson’s description of his suit as clown’s motley makes William Blake a laughing stock. The protagonist’s appearance and behaviour indeed falls out of context – he looks different and acts differently than less refined locals. The remark made by the Mr. Dickinson about the his suit and the general atmosphere William Blake experiences in the town and the factory shows the response the foreigner receives in a new environment which is unfriendly, rude, and disapproving.

The name of locality is an important reference, as it is the town where William Blake came from. It could be just coincidence, but it might well imply that the factory owner actually *knows* about the letter, to whom and where it was sent to. William Blake confirms the observation, politely addressing Mr. Dickinson as 'sir', and widely smiles at him. However, his smile disappears when the owner of the factory stands up and loads the gun, still pointing it at him. This view is a visual reiteration of the view of the portrait on the wall. When William Blake, stuttering in fright ('I-I-I') explains to Mr. Dickinson that he came to talk about his job and is about to give him the letter, without even looking at the 'document', Mr. Dickinson tells William Blake that 'The only job you're gonna get in here is pushin' up daisies from a pine box' and commands him to 'get out'. Mr. Dickinson's language is the language of violence: his speech is informal (he uses contractions), vividly threatening (the idiom 'pushin' up daisies') and commanding ('get out'), which makes it close to gangster argot and relates him directly to crime.

Both of the possible authors share quite a few similarities: both detach themselves from it, although both drop veiled hints they might know about it, both smoke cigars, both show William Blake no respect, both mock him and refuse to take him or the letter seriously, both chase the protagonist away. The dialogue thus reveals an unequal power relationship between 'the people' and William Blake. It cannot be equal, as the former is a power structure and the latter – a log in the wheel. Since a factory is the symbol of both the ascendancy of industrialism and capitalism, their relationship represents the relationship the capitalists develop with their workers who are depreciated and easily replaceable. The dialogue then is the symbolic representation of the dialogue between the ruling class and the working class, the exploiter and the exploited. William Blake does not seem to belong to the lowest citizen class. Yet, he is treated as such because he is a foreigner. Therefore, the dialogue depicts not only the response a lower class receives from the dominant class but also the attitude of the locals to a foreigner.

It remains unclear (to the viewer but also to the main character) whether the factory owner is the author of the text and, if not, who is[77]; the only emergent fact is that William Blake will not get the promised job. Thus, in the film, not only the author of text is vaguely defined and divided ('the people') but also the receiver. He is divided in the sense that

[77] Later in the film the viewer gets to see the lost letter in the woods laying on the ground. If one paused the film, one could notice that the letter was signed by John Scholfield, the manager of the factory.

when the letter reaches him, he becomes someone other than he was before the reception. In this particular case, William Blake becomes a successful applicant who is being offered a job, an accountant at Dickinson's Metal Works. However, at the same time, he continues to be a jobless William Blake.

The analysis of the dialogue between the characters reveals the authorial conflict of agency. The author of the letter in the film is depicted as absent. Since s/he is unreachable (or at least refuses to answer for the contents of it), the author cannot explain the text, provide, confirm or deny the credibility and validation of the statements in the letter; his or her intentions cannot be known. They are represented as graphematic in their nature. They might have not been serious from the beginning. If this is the case, this written communication can be seen as, to use the Austian terms, an example of infelicity. But they might have also changed over the time it took the letter to reach William Blake. The situation then speaks of the delay caused by the written word and the inescapable paradox of the destination.

Fake author: The mother of Don's son

In *Broken Flowers*, the director creates another divided author of a letter who hides her identity and another divided receiver who becomes someone else when he receives the letter. The protagonist Don (Bill Murray), sharing the name with a famous fictional libertine Don Juan, receives an unsigned letter from his former girlfriend, informing him he has a son who might be looking for him. The whole film revolves around the conundrum of who wrote the letter, in other words, who is the mother of the alleged son. The author cannot be tracked or identified: there is no return address and the postmark is too faint to read. The only identifying 'signature' is her handwriting on the envelope. There are, incidentally, some other pointers: red ink, the typewriter, and the pink colour paper. The most important visual sign, creating the character of the author, is the pink colour. In contemporary culture, it is strongly associated with femininity, as it is 'the colour of flesh, sensuality and emotions' (Cirlot 1990, p. 54). For the same reasons, pink also connotes love. However, as José Duarte rightly observes, in Jarmusch's film, 'This pink letter is a representation of the *deceptive* side of love' (Duarte 2017, p. 231, my emphasis).

Encouraged by his neighbour Winston (Jeffrey Wright), who is fascinated by detective stories, Don sets out on a journey across the land to visit his ex-girlfriends. The hero of the film comes to see them with a bunch of flowers, communicates with them and explores their surroundings, looking for clues and trying to know more biographical facts that might give the author of the letter away. Don, in other words, interprets the form of the letter and its contents by looking more closely at the identity of the possible authors. The tricky part of his detective work is that every time he visits one of his girlfriends, he sees the signs of proof of the author's identity everywhere, especially the pink colour[78]. Although these signs strongly suggest that all of them could be the mothers of his son, at the same time, Don learns some facts about them that deny all the versions.

While visiting his first girlfriend, Don meets her daughter Lolita, but it remains a secret whether she is the only child of Laura. When Don asks her if she has any brothers or sisters, Lolita replies ambiguously: 'Why? Do you think I need some?' Although a teenager, she is very sexual and provocative, suiting her name, referring to Nabokov's *Lolita*. Enunciating the question, she acts alluring and seductive: comes closer to him, puts her hands on her hips, arches her back, unconsciously emphasising her figure, raises her eyebrows a little bit, plumps her lips and then quickly presses them, smiling. Flirting, she does not answer the question directly, leaving Don confused both because of the question she asks and because of her inappropriate behaviour. When all three, Don, Laura, and Lolita, have dinner later that night, Laura also acts the same way. The protagonist learns that she is going to have a yard sale and does not miss the chance to investigate for the possible clues: 'Are you going to be selling any old, uh, typewriters?', he asks. The answer he gets is pretty straightforward – no. However, the next question Laura asks is equivocal: 'Did you come all the way down here to get a typewriter, Don?' Just as her daughter, while asking the question, Laura is flirting with Don: she tilts her head to one side, subtly, almost unnoticeably throws off her hair and smiles widely. However, in a second she becomes earnest, presses her lips and asks: 'What do you want a typewriter for?' The questions she

[78] In Laura's (Sharon Stone) house, one of the walls is pink as well as the string of lights hung on the other wall, her bathrobe is also pink. Her daughter Lolita clearly loves pink: she wears her mother's bathrobe when Don comes; her underwear and accessories are pink as well as her mobile phone. In Dora's (Frances Conroy) house, Don notices a painting depicting a bunch of pink flowers, and the same motif can also be seen on her pillows; what is more, her business card is also pink, however, to make it pink turns out to be her husband's idea. Carmen's (Jessica Lange) trousers are pink; Penny (Tilda Swinton) owns a pink motorbike; furthermore, Don observes an old pink typewriter in Penny's yard.

raises are confusing, as they imply that she might know something about the typewriter and why Don came so far to see her.

The meeting with Dora is no less obscure and confusing. She seems not to have any children; however, it is only clear that she does not have children with her husband Ron (Christopher McDonald). Over dinner, Ron says: 'See, I always wanted to have kids with Dora. You know, I mean, kids of our own'. The second sentence makes Don frown – it arouses his suspicion, as it serves as a supplement for the first one. The words 'kids of our own' is a clarification, however, they also might imply that there might be kids that are not of their own. Furthermore, a proceeding Dora's comment is even more ambiguous: 'Oh, I don't know if I would have had the time and patience to be a good mother… to… to Ron's children'. The first part of the sentence is pretty straightforward – she claims that she is not sure whether she would be a good mother. However, she makes a significant pause before the word 'to', repeats it twice, as if it would be difficult for her to say the rest of the sentence. When she finally finishes it ('to Ron's children'), her language betrays her insecurity and unsureness regarding her relationship with Ron and perhaps even the lack of love for him. At the same time, it implies that to somebody else's children she might have 'the time and patience to be a good mother'. This implication, again, leaves Don confused, especially knowing the fact that Dora keeps a framed photo that was taken by Don and clearly still has feelings for him.

The conversation with the next ex-girlfriend Don visits, Carmen, is also cryptic. When Don asks her directly if she has a typewriter, she sighs and 'locks' her body thus creating a barrier by folding her arms across the chest. This communicates that she does not want to talk about it or perhaps feels insecure about the conversation. When she does not answer the question, Don poses another one – 'Are you married?'. Instead of answering it, she says 'You know, I think you should probably go now'. However, after being pushed, she replies that she is not married but informs him she was once. She also tells him that she has a daughter Lianna who is in Sweden. However, she does not make it clear if it is the only child of hers. Desperately trying to learn that, while telling about himself, Don says 'I don't have any kids. Do I?' Carmen responds with a question: 'How do I know that?', which again, leaves Don confused, as it is not a straightforward answer.

Finally, the last living girlfriend Don visits, Penny, seems very annoyed by Don's visit, so he goes straight to the point and asks: 'Penny, do you… do you have a son?' She

remains silent for a moment and intensively looks at Don, and the viewer can see how her glance slowly grows into a fury one. She finally responds, 'Fuck you, Donny!' and pushes him away from her porch. Again, Don feels frustrated: her reaction might be understandable, having in mind her fierce and tough character; however, it might as well betray that the conversation is sensitive to her – she might have a son, and it might be Don's son. The protagonist does not get a chance to know that. Although she seems to be the most likely mother of his son, especially taking into consideration the pink typewriter on the grass in her yard, her rough and angry tone of hers seems to be incompatible with a calm tone of the letter.

All of the enunciations of Don's girlfriends seem ambiguous, especially if analysed along with non-verbal cues, which suggests that our messages can and more often than not are interpreted otherwise than intended. Furthermore, the letter gets covered with new meanings in the context of a new possible identity of its author, suggesting that every ex-girlfriend of Don's could be the mother of his child – as much as none of them could. In other words, all of Don's interpretations seem equally right and wrong at the same time because none of them are or can be 'authorised'. As a result, the protagonist comes back home with a paucity of evidence supporting one of his versions.

Eventually, it turns out that the mysterious letter might have been a mischievous prank played by Don's last girlfriend Sherry (Julie Delpy). She gives this secret away and discloses her identity by writing another letter that looks the same as the first one, but this time is signed. The viewer does not get the chance to see or hear the actual contents of the second letter, but one can understand from the plot that Sherry, who left him at the beginning of the film, confesses she misses him and still likes him a lot. Everything starts to make perfect sense and finishes the puzzle: she wore a pink suit when Don last saw her and, before leaving the house, and she put the pink letter on the top of all the received mail. The intentions of the author then at least implicitly become clear: the first letter contained an imagined story because Sherry sought revenge for the lack of commitment from Don who has an established reputation as a great lover and seducer of women.

Image 3. Sherry decides to leave Don on the morning the secret letter reaches its destination (*Broken Flowers* 2005). Source: Broken Flowers. 2005 [2006] [DVD]. Directed by Jim Jarmusch. Paris: Bac Films.

However, the signature that is supposed to be the proof of the identity and intentions of the author does not fix them. As Derrida argues, it is inscribed in the very nature of a signature that, in order to function, it must be detached from the moment of signing as well as from all the intentions that are declared during that moment. The situation in *Broken Flowers* supports the idea that the signature does not guarantee those intentions will be present and grasped by the receiver. Furthermore, it suggests that every text, even a signed letter, can be mischievous, or a deceit – a possibility that cannot be excluded while interpreting the text. Interestingly, the denouement of the story does not convince the protagonist. The intentional meaning at least implicitly revealed by the author does not seem to be final for the reader of the text. The revealed identity and intentions of the author do not limit the interpretation of the text: Don continues seeing the signs and suspecting every young man in his neighbourhood of being his son. Therefore, the 'text' keeps living its life and generating meaning. Sherry, the author of the text, at the end of the film, to some extent, appears once again in writing – like a ghost – but she does not 'rise from the dead'.

Hiding author: Ghost Dog

Another author hiding his true identity is the protagonist in the film *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999). Jarmusch uses certain signs to build the character of Ghost Dog as a mysterious sender of cryptic written messages[79] delivered by carrier pigeons. In what follows, I will discuss both internal and external attributes that make him difficult to identify and understand by others and analyse what causes written communication problems between him and his employers, a group of gangsters. He communicates in person only with one of them, Louie, who once saved Ghost Dog's life. But even Ghost Dog's spoken messages are never entirely clear to the mobster.

Jarmusch was very deliberate in choosing the name for the protagonist. It is reminiscent of, as Sonny Valerio (Cliff Gorman) and Ray Vargo (Henry Silva) notice, the nicknames of rappers or Indians – both of whom Ghost Dog, himself an alien to the society and living in its margins, would have much liking for. It could be speculated that it also reminds of pen names writers use instead of their real name to remain incognito. The first part of the name, 'Ghost', refers to the characters ghost-like nature, ability to appear and disappear without leaving any traces as well as to the spiritual world Ghost Dog embraces through his daily spiritual practices. The second part of the name, 'Dog', signifies the sense of loyalty he feels for the samurai's code and his chosen master Louie. Furthermore, he hides behind all-black attire, and the colour black, as mentioned earlier, signifies absence. The homing pigeons he uses as a means of communication with Louie and the other mafiosi is another sign of his hidden identity, as they help him to keep his location and address in secret. In fact, he has no address.

He lives in a shack on a roof of a building, which, as Sharon A. Suh observes, recalls 'the ubiquitous, mediated images of monks meditation on isolated mountain tops' (Sharon 2015, p. 67). His home looks like a modest temple with a shrine full of candles and the smell of incense that creates a Zen-like atmosphere. It is the place where he practices meditation and wielding a sword, maintains his guns and good relationships with his companions – homing pigeons who, as mentioned earlier, also help him to communicate with his employers. Like a real samurai who, among his other duties, during peacetime is

[79] Some authors have already looked at different themes in the film related to the analysis of the protagonist as the sender and the receiver of messages, such as dialogism and otherness (Migliore and Mousinho Magalhães 2019), cultural interaction and translation (Bowman 2008), a sacred text (Curley 2016), tradition, transformation, and transmission (D'Amato 2009), as well as communication (Richardson 2010a, 2010b)[79]. Richardson (2010b) examined the exchanges of the messages in the film the most thoroughly. He, however, did not pay too much attention to the construction of the Ghost Dog's character as the author as well as the receiver of messages from the poststructuralist position, as this was not the purpose of his research.

expected to nurture 'aesthetic sensibilities in scholarly and cultural pursuits' (Bennet 2014, p. 19), Ghost Dog reads a lot. As Rice notices, his collection of books 'reveals a wide range of literally interest and style' (Rice 2012, p. 23). But the most important book that Ghost Dog peruses constantly is *Hagakure*, a practical and spiritual guide for a samurai. It is, in a way, a sacred text for Ghost Dog that he follows almost religiously[80].

This text upholds a tradition that involves martial arts and Zen Buddhism. Therefore, one who reads and follows *Hagakure* can be described as a reader within a tradition. According to 'D'Amato, 'being a reader within a tradition means that one will endeavour to shape oneself in accordance with the tradition's texts' (D'Amato 2009, p. 124). And Ghost Dog does shape himself in accordance with *Hagakure*. However, living in a twentieth-century American ghetto, Ghost Dog has no other choice but to translate samurai's wisdom and bushido virtues and apply them to his life in a creative way.

A samurai, according to *Hagakure*, should perform a daily 'meditation on inevitable death', which is connected to the Buddhist idea of 'transient nature of things' (D'Amato 2009, p. 120), and Ghost Dog implements this idea in his life by choosing a profession of an assassin. However, Ghost Dog perceives himself not as a simple hitman working for gangsters, but rather as Louie's personal retainer, server, which is a direct translation of the word samurai[81]. Killing other people fits into Ghost Dog's code very well, as '*Hagakure* justifies violence in the service of one's master' (Suárez 2007, p. 128). Bennet emphasises that the underlying theme of the book is 'absolute loyalty to one's lord to the extent that a warrior must be prepared to die in the course of duty' (Bennet 2004, p. 8). The author asserts that 'To the samurai … death [is] celebrated as being integral to their honor and

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[80] D'Amato claims that 'being religious can be understood as undertaking particular form of reading', since it is argued that Latin *religio* is derived from *relegere* which means to reread (Griffiths 1999, cited in D'Amato 2009, p. 120). Ghost Dog not only rereads *Hagakure* but also interprets it and tries to apply to his life. However, it is an eighteenth-century Japanese text that he studies, interprets and follows in the twentieth-century American ghetto. Mellisa Ann-Marie Curley claims that Ghost Dog is, in Mircea Eliade's terms, 'a religious man' who refuses to live in historical locations and tries to return to the primordial. He also refuses to live in historical present and attempts to 'regain a sacred time through the re-enactment of [a] sacred [text]' (Curley 2008, n. p.).

[81] Arrows, spears and swords that were used by the bushido warriors in Ghost Dog's life are replaced by modern guns. He knows how to wield a sword, but he uses a gun to accomplish all the tasks he is given by his master. However, every time he uses a gun, as David West rightly observes, 'prior to returning the handgun to its holster, he performs the *iaido* motion *chiburi*. This movement is intended to shake the blood from a sword blade before it is returned to a scabbard, to prevent the metal rusting' (West 2006, p. 240).

way of life … and … it [is] deemed virtuous to train one's mind and spirit to be able to choose death with firm resolve if the situation [calls] for "decisive action"' (Bennet 2014, p. 6). That is exactly what Ghost Dog does – he chooses death, especially at the end of the film, when he decides to let his chosen master Louie kill him, thereby performing his personal version of *seppuku*[82].

He rarely communicates with Louie and the mafia but when he does, he is short-spoken. His messages are usually laconic and terse 'mission accomplished' type of messages that can be understood knowing the context (that recently he has been given a task to murder somebody). In Barthesian terms, these are readerly messages. However, one of the messages Ghost Dog sends is writerly. It goes as follows: 'If a samurai's head were to be suddenly cut off, he should still be able to perform one more action with certainty'. When the mafia receives the message, Sony Valero (Cliff Gorman), a person who runs the bloody business, reads it aloud, however, it does not seem to make any sense to him: 'What the fuck is that that supposed mean?' It is a quote from *Hagakure*; however, the mafia does not seem to know that. The mafia capo, Ray Vargo (Henry Silva), remarks: 'It's poetry. The poetry of war[83]'. However, this understanding of the quote – as being the poetry of war – does not explain the meaning intended by the author. Does the mafia believe he declares the war on them in a poetic note? Did Ghost Dog intend to declare war on the mafia? In Austian terms, it is even difficult to say what type of speech act he wants to perform: a declaration (a statement, an announcement), a commissive (a threat, a promise) or a directive (a challenge, a dare). In other words, neither his intentions (intended effect) nor the actual meaning of Ghost Dog's message is clear or present.

[82] Seppuku is a Japanese ceremony, a ritual suicide.

[83] *Hagakure* is indeed a poetic book with a poetic title, literally meaning *Hidden by the Leaves* or *Hidden under Leaves* and is said to be derived from a poem by a famous Buddhist bard: 'Hidden away under leaves, a blossom still left over makes me yearn to chance upon my secret love this way' (Bennet 2014, p. 24). According to Alexander Bennet, the translator of *Hagakure*, the poem is the most likely source of the book's title, especially with the added allusion to 'secret love', an important theme in *Hagakure* analogous with devotion and loyalty, just as it is expressed in the following quote from Hagakure 'At recent gathering I declared that the highest form of devotion is "secret love"' (quoted in Bennet 2014, p. 25). However, the translator of the book also argues that some parts of it might shock as they are extremely violent: 'the extremist attitudes [to death] and scenes portrayed so vividly in *Hagakure* may repulse the modern reader, [but] the aphorisms … serve to stimulate readers into contemplating challenging questions regarding the human experience' (Bennet 2014, pp. 10–11). In other words, the book has, as scholar Rice observes, not only 'poetically beautiful', but also brutal passages in it (Rice 2012, p. 146).

The presentation of the quote in a form of a message – without any reference and/or signature (Ghost Dog does not sign his messages), among other questions, raises the question of authorship – who is the author of the text: Ghost Dog who sends the message or the author of *Hagakure*, Yamamoto Tsunetomo? The context of the text cannot be saturated. Nobody knows that the 'weirdo', as the mafia calls Ghost Dog, follows the code of the samurai and regards Louie as his master; however, even if they knew, the meaning of the message would still be equivocal and require the author to clarify his intentions. However, since he is untraceable, it cannot be known, which causes miscommunication between him and the mafia.

It is important to stress that Ghost Dog is not only the sender, but also the receiver of messages, and the text he receives must be consumed in a certain way. In one scene, the protagonist receives Louie's message that is written a small piece of paper. It says 'Received your message. We have a big problem. Contact me immediately. Urgent!' The viewer can see Ghost Dog slowly reading the message, then folding it, putting it into his mouth, chewing and swallowing it[84]. The meaning of this action is open to interpretation. On the one hand, eating the message destroys the evidence of the received message. As Rice argues, Ghost Dog 'eats it, ingeniously covering his tracks' (Rice 2012, p. 114). The author also compares such 'nourishment' with that of his pigeons: 'The pigeons are eating to sustain their lives, and Ghost Dog has evolved a power to nourish his soul while leaving "no trace" in the Buddhist sense' (ibid.). On the other hand, the action suggests that the texts have to be consumed as food for thought[85].

[84] The same action, but this time ritualised, is repeated in *The Limits of Control* where the Lone Man (Isaach De Bankolé) meets different people, talks to them and exchanges matchboxes. Each matchbox contains a small piece of paper with a mysterious coded message, involving letters and numbers that do not say anything to the viewer. They do not seem to say anything to the Lone Man, either. Again, on the one hand, eating the message might be the Lone Man's way of spoliation of evidence of the received message. On the other hand, the Lone Man *has* to eat the messages so that he could accomplish his tasks. A coded message *has* to be eaten and digested in order to be decoded and to lead him to the next person having the next message that *has* to be eaten.

[85] In *Ghost Dog: the Way of the Samurai*, as well as in, for example, *Only Lovers Left Alive*, texts are presented as something that has to be maintained appropriately, as if they were sustenance: Pearline carries books in her lunchbox; Eve keeps them in the fridge along with her blood supplies.

Image 4. Ghost Dog and his chosen medium – a carrier pigeon. In the picture, he is depicted sleeping and 'digesting' the message that he ate after he received it from the mafia. Source: *Ghost Dog.* 1999 [2000] [DVD]. Directed by Jim Jarmusch. Köln: Pandora Film.

Ghost Dog takes some time to reflect on the message and process the information he was presented with. It is a well-known fact that the brain processes information and prepares itself for action during sleep. In the film, Ghost Dog eats the message, closes his eyes and falls asleep; in the next scene, the viewer can still see him sleeping. His nap during the day it is depicted as a prolonged one stressing the fact that Ghost Dog does not fall upon responding to the message immediately, despite of the fact that he was urged to do so – he needs some time to 'digest' the contents of it. Thus, the film suggests that the protagonist as not only a passive consumer the messages but an active interpreter of its meaning, which takes time and requires reflection.

After receiving the message, Ghost Dog meets with Louie in person. However, the film suggests that spoken conversation does not lead to the successful communication, either. The miscommunication – in both written and spoken discourses – is caused due to both successful and unsuccessful cultural translation of *Hagakure*. The text is deterritorialized, cultural practices and knowledge from Eastern culture are translated into and transposed to another – Western culture. Furthermore, the text is written a couple of centuries ago, the ideas and practices described in it are obsolete. Louie, who Ghost Dog regards as his master, is not familiar with them, and even if he were, most likely they would not make much sense for a modern man living in a modern America. When he tries

to warn Ghost Dog that the mafia are going to kill him, and maybe Louie too, the protagonist answers: 'Better me than you, Louie'. And when Louie asks to kill him, he politely refuses: 'I'm your retainer. It's against the code of the samurai'. The funny thing is that Louie does not really understand the rules of the game. He appreciates – from a mafia standpoint – the respect Ghost Dog is paying him but he actually does not understand what the code of the samurai or a retainer means. However, he views their relationship as that of a mafia boos and a loyal soldier: 'If you're my retainer, whatever that is, then do what I tell you!' This communicative situation highlights the difficulties of the translation of knowledge into another culture and time. Ghost Dog lives by what he calls an ancient code of a samurai, but the rest of the world lives in their cultures and their historical time.

Divided identity and divided subject: Cate and Shelly

Jarmusch is clearly interested in the question of the subject, how it is constituted as such through the process of communication with the other. In his films, he also examines identity performance, i.e., how the identity is performed in social interaction. In *Coffee and Cigarettes,* he approaches these matters through the theme of the craft of acting. An actor has to lose the real self and to enter, and even subsume, the character self. The line between the two in the film is blurred: the actors play themselves according to the script written by Jarmusch. Some parts of their identity are left identical to the real ones (Tom Waits, for example, is a musician), whereas others are made up (in the film, he is also a doctor). The director, in other words, creatively modifies, fictionalises and, caricatures their real identities. The actors have to emulate themselves and exaggerate their most typical, recognisable traits, at the same time creating a character quite different from their real selves. It such a way, Jarmusch questions the stability of the identity of the actor as well as the character and challenges the viewers' perception of both.

The relationship with the self as well as the relationship with the other is represented through the recurring theme of either real or invented family ties and the communication between the family members: the characters in the film more often than not are siblings and cousins[86]. Real and faked familial relationships help Jarmusch to emphasise the

[86] For example, Joie Lee and Cinqué Lee, who play twins in one segment, are indeed brother and sister in real life, whereas Meg and Jack White, who are siblings in the film, were actually a couple and members of the *White Stripes*. (However, it is important to point out that Jarmusch plays on the myth Jack White attempted to create. At the dawn of the *White Stripes*, Jack White insisted that Meg White, the drummer in the band, was his sister, which later, when their marriage certificate was discovered, turned out not to be the

recognition of the same and the other in oneself through communication with somebody who is relatively close. We usually find a connection with and can relate better to our relatives because they are our own flesh and blood; yet, quite often we feel distant to them despite our consanguinity. This is especially evident in the segment 'Cousins' in which Cate Blanchett excels at playing not only herself, Cate who is an actress, but also her cousin Shelly who she meets and (mis)communicates with. Although physically identical to Cate, Shelly seems to be the opposite of who Cate in both appearance and character: Cate is blonde, Shelly is brunette, Cate's makeup is modest, Shelly's – daring, Cate's style of dress is classical and formal, Shelly dresses alternatively and casually, Cate is very prim, proper and polite, Shelly is informal, straightforward and even rude, etc.

Tension between the two is palpable because of their different personalities and social status. Cate, however, can be regarded as a more mature interlocutor who tries not to focus on their differences as obstacles for rapport. She seems genuinely interested in her cousin Shelly and shows her wish to know and understand her better. Cate asks her questions about her personal life and interests, and most of them are WH questions that should help to communicate in more depth. They do not, however, open up their conversation but rather frustrate interchange. However, it is more of Shelly's problem. She does not involve herself in the conversation, as she barely poses any questions for Cate. Instead of trying to hear what Cate has to say, Shelly seems to be more willing to share the details about her life and simply comment on Cate's – from her own perspective. She, for example, wonders at why Cate is not given another suite for her press meetings, remarking that it 'seems kind of cheap'. Even when Cate explains to Shelly (and thus justifies herself and her team) that the last film she participated in was low-budget, her cousin repeats herself 'Yeah, still. It's pretty cheap, man'. In other words, nothing Cate has to say will change Shelly's mind, as she already has preconceived opinions and attitudes towards Cate's work. Furthermore, when Cate asks what the music of Shelly's current boyfriend's band sounds like, her cousin describes it as 'industrial, kind of throbbing' and adds: 'I don't think you'd get it'. And although Cate expresses a wish to hear it, even to buy a CD until she receives the one Shelly sent her, her cousin remarks: 'I fucking know you're not

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case. Jack claimed that the white lie served to distract people from the interest in their relationship and make them focus more on their music [Fricke 2005]). Furthermore, in *Coffee and Cigarettes*, Alfred Molina tries to persuade Steve Coogan and brings him proof that the actors are second cousins. Wu-Tang Clan members GZA and RZA in the movie play cousins. Last but not least, Cate and Shelly, the duo that I focus on in this section, in the film are also cousins.

[going to find it]. Because I just remembered I didn't send it to you. I think I just sort of thought about sending it to you'. Thus, she admits violating the maxim of quality and saying something which is not true and making her cousin to feel guilty regarding the situation (that the CD did not reach her). Her pauses indicate she does not feel good about that. However, she does not change her mind: she sees Cate as a narrow-minded person having a very mainstream taste who would not be able to understand very sophisticated, alternative, and marginal music of a rock band[87].

Shelly's feelings towards Cate's style of life of a celebrity are dual. On one hand, she expresses her empathy, saying that it must be 'a real fucking drag' to be always in the spotlight and chased by paparazzi. Not only does she say that very expressively but her pace changes when she utters these words: it slows, thus emphasising the tiresome aspect of her fame and renown. She seems to be disliking the commitments and glamour of the luminary and even subtly ridicules Cate. Her voice gives her attitude away when she slowly pronounces the word 'junket', stressing two syllables, or when she says 'movie star' and drawls the first word. Shelly is nevertheless careful not to violate what is called maxim of manner when she says '*Don't get me wrong*. I mean, it must be fabulous. You got it all. You got a good husband, beautiful baby. Travel all over the world, stay in fancy hotels. Parties...'. Thus, she clearly understands such a lifestyle's merits and one can hear the note of jealousy when she contrasts it with her own ('I mean, not like me. I'm free. Practically broke, but I'm completely free'). However, she remains critical regarding it and appreciative of her prerogative to be a free soul and an ordinary person[88].

[87] Interestingly, the name of the band – SQÜRL – is the same as Jim Jarmusch's band that started being active in 2009, six years after the release of *Coffee and Cigarettes* in 2003.

[88] The segment could be analysed applying Erving Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analysis approach and ideas about the presentation of self. Goffman compared the theatrical performance to social interaction: when we are in contact with other people, we act as if actors on stage in front of the audience. We use certain sign vehicles, such as social setting, appearance, manner of interacting, change and fix them to control our image and achieve the desired impression of ourselves. Just as theatre actors, we have our front-stage and back-stage personalities. Most of the time we have to be 'on stage', but on rare occasions, in private surroundings, we can allow ourselves not to act and to be ourselves. The segment speaks volumes about the curse of public persona – the obligation to play the role of a celebrity, meanwhile underneath a star persona is just an ordinary person. Cate can be interpreted as a front-stage personality of the actress, whereas Shelly could be interpreted as her backstage personality.

Image 5. The eyes of both Cate and Shelly are turned away from the interlocutor after they experience an uncomfortable communicative situation, i.e., miscommunication. The frustration the cousins feel is reflected in their hands. Source: *Coffee and Cigarettes*. 2003 [2004] [DVD]. Directed by Jim Jarmusch. California: United Artists.

Cate truly cares about her reputation as a person, an actress and as a public figure. First, she is extremely polite to both the waiter and Shelly. For example, she reiterates 'thank you/thanks' and uses the discourse marker 'well' at the beginning of a couple of sentences, which makes her speech sound even more polite. These indicators show that she wants to be seen as a well-mannered person. Second, she does not allow herself to smoke not because she would not like to do so but because she does not want others to see her smoking. And although she surrenders the psychological pressure of her cousin and takes a cigarette from Shelly, after inhaling a few smokes, she puts it out, which is the sign of body language that can be interpreted in two ways. Pease argues that 'if the smoker lights a cigarette and suddenly extinguishes it earlier than he normally would, he has signalled his decision to terminate the conversation' (Pease 1984). It could be the case with Cate, as this happens after Shelly's comment on the ostensibly cheap choice of the organisers to interview Cate in the same suite she lives in. This comment could have irritated Cate and caused her wish to finish the conversation. However, there is another important detail: seconds after this exchange, a waiter comes to the table to ask if everything is all right. Cate hides the cigarette from him and quickly extinguishes it when he leaves, perhaps deciding that smoking in public causes more stress than pleasure as it threatens her image. Furthermore, when Shelly tells her that she was once let into the club only when they thought she was her cousin, Cate's face gets stiff, the smile from it starts to disappear, she

leans her head slightly towards Shelly and gives her a slightly sideways glance, meanwhile her eyes open more widely, expressing worry. She does not want to be mixed up with her 'flaky' cousin. Thus, there are at least a few signs that she cares about her reputation.

Having said that, her cousin, so different from her, is a representation of the repressed side of a restrained Cate. Despite the fact that Cate Blanchett is of Australian origin, Cate's pronunciation is closer to the standard British English but one can hear the peculiarities of the Australian accent in Shelly's speech. For example, very open, elongated vowels are especially distinct when she says 'I'm sorry I'm late' or 'kind of hard'. Also, one can sometimes hear high rising terminal what is called Australian question intonation (AQI). Jennifer O'Meara argues that 'Shelly's more pronounced Australian accent suggests an acknowledgment on Blanchett's part that she has suppressed aspects of her background for stardom' (O'Meara 2014, p. 3). Furthermore, Shelly swears a lot; Cate avoids using bad language. However, when she forgets the name of Shelly's ex-boyfriend, the curse word 'shit' slips away out of her mouth. In an uncomfortable situation, she 'slips' and allows herself to be more relaxed – like Shelly. This, again, shows how much of a 'real' Cate is reflected in Shelly and how meeting with her is like meeting the other, suppressed side of her that unlocks her.

Different types of foreigners as senders and receivers

As noted in the introduction, meeting the other is a recurring theme in Jarmusch's films. His close friend as well as a returning actor in his movies Tom Waits claims that certain experiences in the director's adolescence imprinted on his mind the figure of the foreigner: 'The key, I think, to Jim, is that he went grey when he was 15. As a result, he always felt like an immigrant in the teenage world. He's been an immigrant – a benign, fascinated foreigner – ever since' (Waits in Hirschberg 2005). Indeed, as Waits rightfully observes, 'all his films are about that' (ibid.). The director portrays marginals, misfits, and odd ducks, including but not limited to a teenager drifter (*Permanent Vacation*), an insightful prostitute, a credulous pimp and a homeless DJ (*Down by Law*), rappers interested in herbalism (*Coffee and Cigarettes*), a native American whose parents come from competing tribes (*Dead Man*), an assassin fascinated by Eastern martial arts and spirituality (*Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*) or remarkably cultivated and educated vampires-intellectuals striving to survive in modern world (*Only Lovers Left Alive*). They often do not have permanent homes or jobs, they do not have any ambitions, and they are

interested in alternative philosophies or forms of art. Their way of life make them foreigners to their own culture and/or the rest of the society. Quite a few characters in his films are actual foreigners, newcomers to America, often from Europe: Allie meets a psychotic Spanish girl in *Permanent Vacation*; Eva in *Stranger than Paradise* come to visit her cousin Willie from Bulgaria; Roberto in *Down by Law* is an Italian tourist, Helmut in one episode form *Night On Earth* is a German immigrant. However, foreigners come to visit America from other places of the world, too. For instance, in *Mystery Train*, a couple comes to see America from Japan.

Already in Jarmusch's first film, *Permanent Vacation*, we see different types of foreigners, both literal and figurative. The protagonist of the film, Allie (Chris Parker), is a drifter who moves from place to place, from person to person, comparing these people to 'a series of rooms': 'You walk in for the first time curious about this new room – the lamp, TV, whatever. And then, after a while, the newness is gone, completely'. He is drifting in an American landscape reminiscent of a wasteland. In one of the scenes, the viewer sees the main character wandering in an urban space where there are no people, just abandoned, damaged houses, giving a sense of alienation. The protagonist suddenly notices a girl (María Duval) sitting on the stairs by the back entrance of a ruined building and singing a song in Spanish. Her looks do not fit the context: she is wearing smudged makeup, a dress similar to a nightdress with a stain on it and a cross necklace on her chest. She seems psychotic, emotionally unstable but relaxed as she sings, making body moves – as if dancing to the music in her head. When Allie sneaks up close enough, he asks her 'Are you all right?' At first, she does not respond verbally, but her body language betrays her feelings. The girl is surprised by and a little scared of the intruder, which can be observed in her face: she raises her eyebrows, and her eyes open widely. At first, she tries to seize herself: holding the rail with her one hand she fixes her dress strap with the other and begins humming the tune again, nervously touching her feet, which is a sign of her unconscious attempt to de-stress herself – as if giving herself a massage. However, she is curious about the stranger: the girl slowly leans towards his side a little bit, still holding the rail, looks at him attentively for a second, but then quickly turns away, as he starts to speak.

Image 6. The Spanish girl is somewhat interested in and curious about the stranger Allie (*Permanent Vacation* 1980).

Their conversation is very short and incoherent. When Allie asks her ‘What are you singing?’, she becomes very nervous, frustrated, and sad: while holding the rail, she quickly moves her head in different directions, her lips are a bit pressed, their corners are drawn down, she looks like she is about to cry. She finally leans towards him and starts shouting something in Spanish, adding ‘I want you to leave’ in a more tender tone. And when Allie asks her ‘What?’, she says ‘Go’, gesturing pushing something away, and adding with her raised voice ‘Get out of here!’ Her words contradict her actions. When Allie calmly explains that he just wanted to know what she is saying, she starts speaking in Spanish, then loudly says ‘You got to... You got to be quiet!’, putting her index finger to her lips, and after a few fierce words in Spanish in high volume, she screams in English ‘Get out! Go!’ Allie steps back, saying ‘All right. All right’. The last words of his frames their conversation, as it started with the same words, just in the form of a question (‘Are you all right?’). When Allie leaves, she turns away and cowers slightly. She seems moved, almost crying, her body showing the signs of stress: she touches her hair, starts holding the rail with one hand, not knowing where to put the other, she then covers her face with both hands, which is a sign of tension, emotional distress, shame, and embarrassment. While Allie is walking away, the viewer can see the Spanish girl in the background. She is holding the rail, her body is rocking back and forth metronomically: the rail supports her and expresses her wish for stability, and while rocking her body, she unconsciously tries to soothe and calm herself.

During this short conversation, Allie remained calm. He did not seem to be scared of the girl's emotional and psychological state. The protagonist kept the same pace and volume while he spoke to her. The fact that he did so in a calm and gentle tone shows that he wanted to comfort her. Allie stood all the time next to her, not coming too close, keeping the right distance, respecting her private space. His body was turned towards her all the time. When he said 'All right. All right', he showed her his palms, which is a sign of sincerity, cordiality, and frankness as well as submissiveness. In other words, he reacted to her with compassion and understanding as he could relate to her: probably, they both are homeless, jobless, and living outside the ordinary social structure. As Jarmusch explains in one interview, 'he feels a connection with the Spanish girl. She's not totally alien to him. It's not like "Oh, you're crazy, you're weird, you're not like me,' but more like "You don't belong here, neither of us belongs here – perhaps I'll find out something about myself if I figure out a little bit about you, maybe we've got something in common"' (Jarmusch et al. 2001, pp. 8).

However, not all his characters are as open to otherness as Allie. Some of them, especially local Americans, do not accept foreigners. For example, in the beginning of *Stranger Than Paradise*, Willie (John Lurie) learns his cousin Eva will come to visit him, he does not want to receive her for a longer period of time. He says to his aunt: 'I can't possibly babysit her for ten days'. Although Willie is Bulgarian, just as his cousin Eva, he neglects his Bulgarian identity by embracing everything American in his life (for instance, preferring American 'TV dinner') and refusing to speak with his and her relatives in their language. He regards himself as American and treats his cousin as a foreigner. He even tricks her as a foreigner who does not know much about America. Although Eva's English is good, she does not know all the colloquialisms, and Willie finds ways to make fun of this ignorance. For example, he says: 'You know, it's really too formal to say "I want to use the vacuum cleaner"'. When Eva asks what should be said instead, Willie replies: 'Well, you say, um, "I want to choke the alligator"'. He enjoys making fun of her foreignness that is actually his own foreignness. Over time, however, he accepts it and starts feeling close to her – when she leaves, he wants her to stay a little longer. Jarmusch's films illustrate the hardships of a foreigner and his relationship patterns with the locals described by Kristeva in an illuminating way. In what follows, I will focus on two, in my view, of the most epitomic and elaborate examples of foreigners in Jarmusch's films illustrate the meaning of the message the foreigner sends and receives.

Says what?

Down by Law: *Zack, Jack, and Roberto*

Perhaps the most striking example of a foreigner can be observed in his film *Down by Law*. One of the most important scenes in the film, showing the established relationships between the characters as well as those being established, is the scene in the Orleans Parish Prison where most of the action takes place. There is very little dialogue in it, but the body language of the actors says it all. In the scene, cell-fellows Zack (Tom Waits) and Jack (John Lurie) have just had an argument that ended up in a fight. They sit in front of each other on their beds with their faces bruised, looking tired. They do not seem willing to communicate. Zack is blocked out: his arms are slightly crossed; furthermore, he is turned away from Jack. The latter is also looking away from Zack. A new prisoner is brought to the cell (Roberto Benigni) who is, according to the guards, 'homicidal son of a bitch' and 'don't even speak no English'[89].

The foreigner draws attention of both Jack and Zack and they look at the newcomer for a minute but are nevertheless passive and indifferent towards him. Roberto's body, especially his quickly changing eye movement and his hand gestures, betrays discomfort and frustration. His eyes are swivelling around, exploring the new and cold environment and he clearly does not know what to do with his hands. At first, he puts them in his pockets and pulls out after a second, which indicates his lack of confidence and signals nervousness. He then moves around with his wrists clasped behind his back and with his head bent a bit forward giving away his tension and insecurity. Roberto clearly wants to meet his cell-mates, so he plucks up his courage, releases his arms, which is a sign of at least a relative relaxation, wipes the sweat of his hands – caused by stress – on his pants and opens up his notebook – a small vocabulary of English.

We can see the excitement in his eyes when he discovers the phrase that suits the situation: 'If looks can kill, I am dead now'. Zack looks at him slowly shaking his head, thus communicating his incredulousness as well as scepticism and then turns his body

[89] Non-verbal communication is one of the strengths of Benigni, who embodies an Italian tourist Roberto. By the time the movie was made, the actor, just as his character, spoke very little English. But as Nina Darnton rightly observes, Benigni does not need to speak English – the 'actor and director from Tuscany speaks with his eyes, his body and his hands. He leans forward, reaches out, smiles, making his points with a gesture or a touch' (Darnton 1986), and he incorporates it in his acting, too.

away, coming back to the pose of boredom, supporting his head with his hand. With a smile on his face, Roberto reaches out a hand for him and says ‘I am Roberto’ in a strong Italian accent. He reiterates, ‘Roberto. Call me Bob. The same’, giving his hand to Jack. None of them responds to that, either physically or verbally. To be more exact, there is a certain non-verbal reply: Zack turns away and Jack looks him in the eye with his hand emphatically turned to himself, thus indicating that he does not want to meet him. After a moment, Roberto mumbles ‘No good here... for me. Is, uh... Is... Is, uh...’, struggling to find the right words in English. He then takes out his notebook again and finds another phrase that conveys how he feels. A polite foreigner looks towards Zack, seeking for some attention and saying ‘Excuse me’. He tries to grab his attention non-verbally, too, by lifting his index finger up and excusing himself one more time. Roberto repeats the same for the third time, showing a small hand gesture, thus asking at least a little attention with the help of his body. When Zack finally turns to him, he utters ‘Not enough room to swing a cat. [Pause]. Cat. The animal’ with a comical hand gesture, imitating a cat being whirled round by its tail. Still no response: both Jack and Zack turn away and lean their hands on their chins indicating indifference and boredom.

Image 7. Bob tries his utmost to draw Jack’s and Zack’s attention who are ignoring him by looking away (*Down by Law* 1986).

English idioms play an important role in the movie and have a certain function. Even the title *Down by Law* is an idiomatic, prison and street slang expression from the 1980’s, meaning a close friendship: you would defend and protect someone who is ‘down by law’.

Although the Italian's vocabulary is very narrow and he makes a lot of grammatical, lexical, and pronunciation mistakes (e.g., 'you two are an innocent man', 'we was playing a card', lexical: 'closed' instead of 'close', pronunciation: '/hɪk-aʊts/ instead of /hɪkəps/, etc.,), he knows quite a few English idioms. It is often recommended that language learners master the usage of the most common idioms, as they make a foreigners' speech sound more native, and the Italian seems to have adopted this strategy. However, not necessarily successfully: some of his used idioms are surprisingly old and old-fashioned[90]. Mark Cauchi argues that 'It is significant that he uses clichés, because clichés are expressions whose origins are usually unknown by most users of the language. They are habitual, dead expressions, but Bob's otherness gives them new life' (Cauchi 2013, p. 205). By using these idioms, Roberto brings them back from the past to the circulation of the English language. However, this does not impress the locals, Jack and Zack. Actually, Roberto's idioms produce an unwanted effect – they sound anachronistic, alien to modern language, rendering Roberto even more distant to the American couple.

Zack and Jack have a lot in common: they have similar names, both are Americans, both lived alternative, marginal and nightlife lifestyle, and both were set up for the crimes they did not commit (or did not intend to commit). Despite these similarities, the viewer can feel a constant tension between them that reaches the climax when they begin to fight. However, the newcomer's presence connects them again. First of all, he connects them by constantly mixing up their names. These two names, Zack and Jack, obviously, sound similarly, and research shows that phonetic similarity *is* an important aspect of any misnaming; however, not the main one (Deffler et al. 2016). People misname their familiar individuals with the name(s) of other familiar individuals due to the fact that they place them in the same semantic categories in their heads (e.g., my daughters, my friends, etc.). Thus, Roberto misnames them putting them in the same semantic category (American prison-fellows or, as he calls them, 'my friends'). However, such rational explanation does

[90] Indeed, the etymology of some of his used idioms is difficult to trace. The origin, for example, of the phrase 'if looks could kill' (Roberto modifies it by saying 'can') is unknown. The phrase appears in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* that was published in 1897. In the book, the eponymous character claims: 'If ever a face meant death – if looks could kill – we saw it at that moment'. However, it is not certain that the expression occurs for the first time in this particular novel. The etymologists also do not agree on the origin of the phrase 'not enough/no room to swing a cat'. Most likely the phrase derives from the sixteenth-century procedure 'to put a cat inside a sack of some sort and then string it up as a moving target for archery practice' (Flavell and Flavell 1994, p. 48). Linda and Roger Flavell note that 'Shakespeare refers to the practice in *Much Ado about Nothing*' (ibid.) and further explain that 'No room to swing a cat, therefore, meant that there was not enough space available for this activity' (ibid.). There are speculations that the phrase is derived from cat-o'-nine-tails, a punishment that was handed out in the British navy. However, this interpretation is rejected due to the fact that 'the phrase was in use a hundred years before this particular punishment' (ibid.).

not occur to Zack and Jack, and they react to the misnaming emotionally. A constant misnaming annoys both Zack and Jack: one of them says 'I'm Jack, get it straight'; the other one, misnamed not for the first time raises his voice and repeats his name angrily three times: 'Zack! I'm Zack. He's Jack. I'm Zack'. Previously almost enemies, Jack and Zack somehow unite because of a common 'enemy' – the annoying fellow in *their* cell.

Zack and Jack never miss a chance to ridicule Roberto. They make fun of, for example, his foreignness (Jack: 'Cigarettes won't help with hiccups. Not in this country'), his love for American poetry (Zack: 'You killed a man? What'd you do that for, Bob? The guy didn't like Walt Whitman?'), his naivety (when he seriously and sincerely answers, 'I never asked this man if he liked Walt Whitman', Jack puts his hand on his eyes and forehead making a gesture similar to a facepalm, expressing sarcasm) and frankness (Zack: 'Watch out for Bob. He may be cheating' – with the reference to Roberto's confession that he is a 'good cheater'). Bob is especially mocked at for his poor command of English. First, Zack ridicules him for his pronunciation. For example, answering the question why he was sentenced to jail, Zack says: 'I was set up, Bob. Just like Jack. I am an innocent man'. He pronounces 'am' as 'ham' and 'a' as 'hay' parodying Bob's strong Italian accent. Then, Zack mocks Roberto's poor grammar by incorrectly asking for, example, 'So, Bob, for why are you in this prison put?' and pronouncing 'r's' and the word 'put' in an exaggerated Italian accent once again. What is more, Jack is sarcastic about Bob's choice of idioms: he repeats the phrase uttered by Roberto '"I am a good egg[91]"' and adds an interjection 'Jesus!' touching his forehead and eyes with his hands, thus expressing sarcasm. When either Zack or Jack says a mocking joke, the other usually sneers or laughs in solidarity. Teasing the Italian is an activity that both Zack and Jack enjoy, and which make them laugh together instead of fighting.

Thus, Roberto connects Zack and Jack, but his constant attempts to connect *with them* usually fail. As mentioned, he is pushed away from the beginning, but he tries to start a conversation and to bond with his cellmates repeatedly. Clearly an extravert, Roberto feels an urgent need to talk to somebody, and when he is ignored for quite a while, he begins to talk to an imaginary friend. While looking at the fourth – empty – bed, he asks from the subject position of that imaginary person 'Do you like Walt Whitman?' and

[91] This idiom shows up in writing around the nineteenth century, but Roberto's version 'a good egg' which has been more commonly used 'did not come into use until the beginning of the twentieth century' (Flavell and Flavell 1994, p. 80).

answers to himself ‘Yes, I like Walt Whitman very much’. This is done in Zack’s presence, although he is turned away from Roberto and busy drawing tally marks on the prison wall. Bob’s communication with an imaginary friend demonstrates several things: his vivid imagination; his ability to escape the depressing reality of the jail; and his wish to be accepted for what he is – without being judged and ridiculed. But most of all it shows his wish to connect by showing (off) his knowledge and appreciation of American culture, which, as he probably believes, serves as a bridge to that connection. He even recites the poem from Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* in Italian. Roberto is so passionate about American poetry (as the film progresses, it turns out that he also a great admirer of Robert Frost) that it can be regarded a part of his (Italian) identity, which suggests that he has acknowledged the otherness in himself.

The work of the poets Roberto thinks highly of provide a lot of information about the character. Whitman’s poetry is distinguished by democratic imagination and the celebration of the diversity of America (‘I resist any thing better than my own diversity’ – ‘Song of Myself’), thus appreciating the other in the American identity. Although Robert Frost’s poem ‘The Road not Taken’, the work Roberto refers to in the film, is metaphorical – different paths represent different life choices, it is nevertheless about a figure of a traveller who chooses unexplored roads, and Roberto can relate to that traveller. In both Whitman‘s and Frost’s poetry, we can see the beauty in the mundane and hear optimistic notes. These peculiarities of their work clearly resonate with the Italian’s personality and soul. Roberto’s poetic knowledge, however, does not make an impression on Zack, but the Italian remains persistent.

Whenever he has a chance, he sneaks between Jack and Zack like a cat and begins a conversation again. He, for instance, begins a heart-to-heart about the reasons they all ended up in prison. After sharing the reasons they are all locked up, Roberto feels more close to his cell-mates and allows himself to put his arms round their shoulders, saying ‘We are a good egg, my friends’. His choice of words is significant: he uses an inclusive ‘we’ thus stressing he does belong to their small community, furthermore, he describes them all as ‘friends’. However, they both remove his hand and Jack adds ‘Get off’, as if non-verbally saying: ‘there is no ‘we’; it’s us and you, Bob’. Thus, no matter how much effort he puts in building the rapport between himself and them, Zack and Jack do not accept him because they do not accept the otherness in themselves.

However, the relationship between the three slightly changes over time. In the next scene the viewer sees them all playing cards, an activity that was probably initiated by Roberto. The social significance of card playing as a leisure time activity is proved by research (Crespi 1956) but playing itself – any game – helps to develop social skills and form friendships. So does this game, especially bearing in mind that they do not have anything to win or lose: their 'capital' that stands as a 'prize' is cigarettes, but the winner cannot even smoke them – matches are not allowed. While playing the game, Roberto hears Jack saying the word 'scream'. The Italian suddenly remembers that he has an entry in his vocabulary with the same word. He takes out his notebook, finds it and reads it out loud: 'I scream-a, you scream-a, we all scream-a for ice-cream-a[92]'. With a smile on his face, Roberto repeats the phrase again and again, emphasising the play on words and the rhyme. Furthermore, his body language expresses his wish to join him: when he says 'I' he points at himself; the first time he says 'you', he points with his hand to Jack, the second time – at Zack; and whenever he says 'we' he is showing at all of them. Led by Roberto, they start repeating the phrase with gradually higher volume and faster pace. The childish chant creates a playful and rebellious atmosphere – at first in the cell, but later – in the whole prison: Jack throws his cards in the air, they all get up and start going in circles and chanting, thus inflicting with the energy the rest of the prisoners who join them and scream in concert.

Their movement reminds of a ritualistic tribal dance, especially having in mind that their bodies rock, and each of them show different hand gestures or express: Roberto (but later also Zack) shows the signs of a conductor, holding up the index finger and thus setting the rhythm, tempo as well as the pitching of the chant, he then shows the ring gesture which, in English-speaking countries 'represents "O" in the "OK" signal'[93] (Pease 1984); Zack, among other signs, shows a raised fist, which a universal symbol of community, solidarity as well as support; Jack raises both of his hands and balance them in the air, looking like a bear, which is a symbol of courage and strength, and spiritual power, especially in Native American tribes. It seems that the chant and the dance invoke in the characters' soul's ecstasy, even catharsis. To some extent, one might argue, they stir up a short-lasting revolt in prison that it is promptly put down by the guards. Nevertheless, the chant and the dance serve as the act of bonding for the three fellows and making them 'a

[92] The line appears in a 1927 song by Howard Johnson, Billy Moll, and Robert A. King.
[93] It might also refer to 'zero' (France), money (Japan), and homosexuality (Mediterranean countries) (Pease 1984).

tribe'. It is important to stress that, just like the old idioms, an old chant is brought back to life by the foreigner. Also, he creatively interprets and alters the phrase while by adding 'ʌ' sound to the words 'scream' and 'ice-cream' which makes a perfect example of what Derrida called iterability. This also suggests that he 'resurrects' a dead chant (Zack and Jack might have used it in their childhood) and thus, in a way resurrects Zack and Jack who were comparatively passive characters and interlocutors until the chant and the dance. The foreigner thus revives their psychological but later also physical freedom, as he soon he comes up with a successful plan of escape.

The escape operation cements their relationship even more in the view of the fact that they have to unite and take care of each other in order to survive. Zack, for example, helps Roberto to cross the river, since the Italian does not know how to swim. Interestingly, on any occasion Zack and Jack are left alone, they begin to argue and fight again; when Roberto comes back in, he separates them. What is more, the foreigner is the one who brings food to the table and prepares it for all, catching a rabbit in the woods and roasting it over the fire. Alice P. Julier argues that 'the material and social aspects of providing food are central to social life' (Julier 2013, p. 4). Thus, meals are another unifier helping to construct good social relationships between them. First, the ritual of eating brings together the members of the 'tribe'. Second, while eating together, Roberto, Jack and Zack become more favourable towards one another due to the fact that eating gives pleasure, and therefore we relate these positive connotations with the ones who eat together with us. Also, as Mary Douglas observes, 'Food is ... a metaphor or vehicle of communication' (Douglas 2003, p. 12). As they eat, they communicate and, again, miscommunicate. Seeking some acknowledgement, Bob asks his fellows: 'Of course, I haven't garlic, rosemarino – very important – and olive oil, but is good, eh?'. Jack responds: 'It's disgusting, Bob', and the Italian reacts to that like many foreigners when they do not understand what is being said – by smiling and saying 'Yes'. When Zack says 'Bob, it tastes like a tire', Roberto responds: 'Yeah, I know, is very good'. The Italian with his poor English vocabulary clearly does not to know the meaning of the words 'disgusting' and 'tire' but he reads his interlocutors' body language: since both Zack and Jack are starving, they smile and even laugh with joy while watching the food; they eat the meat hungrily and devouringly. These non-verbal signs make Roberto think they actually enjoy it.

Last but not least, the foreigner leads them to an isolated house in the middle of nowhere. The signboard on it says, 'Luigi's Tin Top'. Roberto is sent to check the place, and it turns out that it is a restaurant owned by an Italian woman, Nicoletta, who Roberto quickly falls in love with. Both Zack and Jack are invited for a dinner, during which they are offered food and wine. They laugh as they eat, since the situation they get into looks surreal and utopic. Furthermore, they are allowed to stay the night, and in the morning, they are both given Nicoletta's uncle Luigi's clothes. Thus, Zack and Jack are provided food, shelter, and clothes thanks to Roberto and his Italian identity. Not only eating Italian food and drinking Italian wine, but also putting on Uncle Luigi's clothes on is a visual metaphor of 'trying on' and 'wearing' the Italian identity. By accepting the kindness and hospitality offered by these two foreigners, they, in a way, accept their otherness and thus the otherness in themselves. This acceptance of otherness renews their own American identity, and, as Cauchi argues, their freedom (Cauchi 2013). Meeting the Italian changes both Zack's and Jack's lives and make them different – less indifferent, more open to otherness and therefore more themselves.

Night on Earth: *YoYo and Helmut*

In one episode from *Night on Earth*, an American meets a German immigrant in New York. YoYo (Giancarlo Esposito), who is a local New Yorker, wants to take a cab to go to Brooklyn. Although the streets are filled with taxis, none of them stop to give him a lift or refuses to do so after hearing the name of the borough. Finally, YoYo sees a badly driven cab that stops to take him. It turns out that the taxi driver, clearly a foreigner, does not really know the city. When he hears the destination (Brooklyn), he does not know where to go. His body language betrays it: he touches his chin with his finger that signals thinking and clenches his fist trying to empower himself, symbolically making himself feel stronger while encountering a challenge. Not only YoYo understands that and agrees to show him the way but tries to instruct him how to drive, which is something the taxi driver paradoxically is not good at. However, eventually the passenger runs out of patience and asks him to pull over. The taxi driver, whose name is Helmut (Armin Mueller-Stahl), does not want to lose the passenger and begs him to stay for the journey by claiming that 'You are my most best customer' and explaining to him that 'It's important. It's very, very important to me'. YoYo agrees to stay only on the condition that he himself drives.

Although ‘it is not allowed’, Helmut lets his passenger to have his seat but asks him to ‘drive careful’.

While the strangers travel through the city, they have a conversation; however, it is full of misunderstandings due to Helmut’s poor command of the English language and very limited range of vocabulary. The fact that YoYo speaks informal and colloquial English, uses a lot of contractions and non-standard versions of words, (such as ‘gonna’/‘gotta’, ‘ain’t’, ‘nah’) and slang words or phrases (‘cool’, ‘hype’, ‘get the fuck outta here’) causes even more trouble for them to understand each other. What is more, YoYo speaks in African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) dialect (and ethnolect as well as sociolect), also known as Black Vernacular English (BVE), that can be heard when in YoYo’s pronunciations of certain vowels and consonants (‘all right’, ‘sure’, ‘cab’) as well as noticed in his use of grammar (for instance, in the sentence ‘What you mean – no?’ where the auxiliary ‘do’ is missing).

The communicative situations in which they find themselves are indeed amusing. For example, when Yoyo says ‘It’s New York. It’s cool’, Helmut replies ‘Ja [‘yes’ in German]. It’s cold. It’s cool’. Helmut misunderstands YoYo: he uses the word ‘cool’ in slang, meaning, ‘awesome, great’, and Helmut only knows the formal meaning of the word (‘of/at a fairly low temperature’). However, after YoYo explains himself, Helmut gets the meaning: ‘It’s cool – is good’, he says[94]. However, they do not always manage to clear up the misinterpretations and therefore miscommunicate now and then, notwithstanding the attempts to avoid misunderstandings. For instance, when YoYo finally arrives at his destination, he gives some Helmut directions how to find his way back to Manhattan: ‘You’re gonna make the opposite of every direction we made to het here. So if… If we made a right, then this time you’re gonna make a left. And if we made a left, you’re gonna make a right, right?’ Helmut responds to that: ‘Ah, yeah. Two rights’. Helmut does not understand that the first ‘right’ YoYo refers to in the last sentence is the adverb, meaning the direction, and the second ‘right’ – said in a rising tone, indicating question mark at the end – means ‘Correct?/Do you agree with that?’ Although YoYo immediately reacts to that by repeating ‘no’ for six times and giving him alternative directions, when Helmut drives back by himself, he reiterates his wrong understanding: ‘Two rights’. Yet, although

[94] In the episode, Jarmusch plays on the word ‘cool’ all the more. Later, when YoYo sees his sister-in-law on the street and stops the car to pick her up, he says to Helmut ‘Just be cool’ that is an idiom having another meaning – ‘stay calm’.

Helmut sometimes fails to understand YoYo, Jarmusch does not depict his poor English knowledge as his weakness by demonstrating that not only Helmut misinterprets YoYo, but also YoYo misinterprets Helmut due to the fact that he does not speak German. When YoYo tells him that 'you gotta to put it in 'D.', you see?'", Helmut responds in German 'I know that, it is clear to me' and even adds 'I know that' in English. YoYo believes that has said something insulting in German and comments: 'Hey, don't be saying nothing bad, man. I understand that shit', though he clearly does not understand it, as the foreigner has not said anything 'bad'.

The relationship between the local and the foreigner has a certain dynamic. At first YoYo is annoyed by the foreigner and his incompetence as a taxi driver. At the beginning of their journey, the car is jerking because Helmut cannot find the correct gear. YoYo instructs him quite forcefully, raising his voice and even shouting at him: 'D is to drive. Put the motherfucker in drive!' When he utters these words, he uses pointed finger. On one hand, he tries to show the driver the right mode, in other words, he wants to point Helmut to the right direction. On the other hand, he commands him from the position of an authority, despite the fact that he sits in the back, and the driver is (or supposed to be) in control. Although 'The pointed finger is one of the most irritating gestures that a person can use while speaking' (Pease 1984), Helmut, being too focused on the driving mode, does not get to see it – neither the pointed finger, nor a clear sign of YoYo's annoyance – his rolling eyes. YoYo's tone of voice and his gestures towards the interlocutor, however, change completely at the end of their journey. YoYo gives the directions to the foreigner how to come back to the city centre with a considerable amount of respect and compassion: uttering the words slowly, gently and as clearly as possible – like a teacher to a student, in other words, taking into account that Helmut does not understand English perfectly. Before they say good-bye to each other, he touches Helmut's red clown's nose, thus entering his personal space, which is a sign of their developed friendship and mutual fondness. Furthermore, when YoYo says 'Later for you, Helmut!', he gives him a submissive palm-up handshake which means that he 'give[s] him control and allow[s] him to feel that he is in the command of the situation' (Pease 1984). The change in their relationship happens, among other reasons, because the foreigner shows YoYo that they are not as distant as it might seem at first glance.

Being quite different, they still share some similarities. One of them is their fur caps, and Helmut is quick to notice that: 'We have the same hat'. Their caps are not identical, but they do look alike: it is the same model of a hat that has its origin in Russia where it is called *ushanka*. Jarmusch uses the sign of the hat (as well as their moustaches) to convey the idea that, despite their differences (national and linguist – Helmut is German, speaking very little English, Yoyo is American, speaking fluently in his mother tongue; age – Helmut is clearly older than YoYo, and stylistic – Helmut is dressed classically, wearing a classical coat and simple shoes, YoYo's style of dress is more alternative, influenced by street fashion – he wears a wider jacket and colourful sneakers that are highlighted with a close-up while he waits for the cab), the strangers do have something in common. YoYo, however, disagrees with Helmut: ''No, no, no. Mine's different. Mine's the newest, latest. Mine's fresh'. He puts an emphasis on the word 'different', which symbolically highlights his attitude – to search not for sameness, but for difference, and reluctance to acknowledge sameness even when it is pretty obvious. Helmut remains persistent and points to the ear flaps to prove his argument: 'No, the ear things here – the same'. YoYo still does not want to acknowledge the point: 'Mine is the hype'. He even looks indignant by the fact that Helmut finds their caps similar – his lips are pursed, indicating his supressed anger. At this the point, YoYo is at the stage of denial that he and the foreigner can share something in common. However, in his remark 'mine is newest/latest/fresh/hype' there is an implied admission that the hats do look similar, just one is old-fashioned and the other is more up-to-date. In other words, YoYo's awareness of their differences is perceived in dichotomies old/new or bad/good (my hat is 'fresh', my hat is better). However, a conversation about their names helps him to move towards a more productive direction.

When Helmut introduces himself, YoYo starts laughing at his name. 'Helmet?' checks YoYo. 'Helmut[95]', clarifies the foreigner and shows his name written on his taxi-driver's card. However, YoYo does not seem to hear or see the difference between 'Helmut' and 'Helmet' (and keeps calling him the latter for the rest of the way) and starts laughing out loud: 'That's a fucked-up name to be naming your kid. Helmet. See, 'cause in English, a helmet would be, like, you know, like something you wear on your head, you know?' Although Helmut clearly wants to say something and starts gesticulating (he raises his hand) before saying the words out loud, YoYo interrupts him and makes a gibe about

[95] It is a German name, deriving from Old High German and meaning 'a healthy spirit' or 'a fighting, combative spirit'.

his name: ‘In English, that’d be like calling your kid, uh… Oh shit… Uh… Lampshade! Some shit like that. No, but… “Hey, Lampshade! Come here and clean your room!”’ Helmut, nonetheless, does not seem to be aggrieved at YoYo’s words, he looks at him calmly and smiles watching him speak. He does not react to them but truly listens and is open to what YoYo has to say even if what he says is critical and even offensive. However, when YoYo introduces himself, his name sounds funny to Helmut, too. He starts giggling and imitating with his hands the game with a toy yo-yo. YoYo’s face changes, he becomes serious and clearly annoyed, even if it is a friendly mockery: ‘Ain’t got nothing’ to with that. It’s my name – YoYo’. He puts a stress on the word ‘name’, as if trying to say that ‘You should not joke about it! My name is a part of who I am’, although a minute ago he ridiculed Helmut for his name and his identity. In other words, he becomes defensive of protective. It could also be speculated that he has some insecurities regarding his name, for example, was laughed at it in the past. Despite his inability to express himself clearly in English, Helmut can be regarded a more mature communicator among the two, as he is the first one to step back and acknowledge he is fine with their names: ‘Okay, okay. Your name – YoYo, my name – Helmut. YoYo. Helmut. It’s good’. After this remark, YoYo still sceptically smiles at the foreigner’s name, but does not allow himself to be sarcastic about it – at least verbally. The conversation about their names proves that they have more things in common (weirdly sounding names, having certain associations) which not only make them similar, but also equal.

Image 8. Helmut enjoys a free driving and English lesson from YoYo and repeats both the moves and the words used by his passenger who has taken the driver's seat (*Night on Earth* 1991).

The foreigner impels YoYo to see the foreigner in himself. This idea is conveyed, among other ways, through changing subject positions of the characters and is metaphorically conveyed through their seating. The characters literally change positions in the car. YoYo takes Helmut's seat and becomes a taxi-driver in New York, which makes him, symbolically, step in and walk a mile in Helmut's shoes, whereas Helmut, sitting in passenger's seat can see the city through the eyes of a local (for example, YoYo shows him the Brooklyn Bridge) and experience it as a passenger in a cab. It is important to note that Helmut does not sit in the back, which, on one hand, shows he is eager to converse with YoYo and at least partially remain in control of his job. However, it is probably the director's intention to 'seat' them in same – 'first row', showing that there is no hierarchy between them; they are equal people as well as interlocutors and should be regarded as such. Furthermore, it could be argued that they are both foreigners and changing the positions help them to see it. For both of them, an unplanned acquaintance is a valuable and enriching experience. Helmut gets some driving and English lessons for free. Furthermore, YoYo teaches him to be count the money he is given so that he would not be deceived. Meanwhile Helmut's presence allows YoYo to recognise his own foreignness and start valuing what perhaps he had not valued. For example, Helmut notices the beauty of the Brooklyn Bridge, which is also something that the inhabitants perhaps no longer see, as their eye might have been used to. In addition, he appraises the beauty of his sister-in-law, Angela, who YoYo argues with all the time. Despite of the fact that the most common

thing they say to each other is 'fuck you', Helmut describes them as a 'nice family'. In other words, Helmut, who has no family, sees the beauty even in mundane familial conflicts of YoYo and Angela. Furthermore, at least for a minute, Helmut unites them. His playing with reed-pipes cheers both of them up, and instead of shouting at each other, both Angela and Yoyo start laughing together – at Helmut. Helmut reacts to that by saying 'thank you', since for an ex-clown people's laugh stands as a compliment. To sum up, both Yo Yo and Helmut get a chance to see the world from the vantage point of a subject position different to their own and benefit from it.

The two examples I chose to analyse clearly have the same pattern – very similar to the one described by Kristeva: a foreigner comes to a new country, tries to assimilate in a new society or community. At first s/he is rejected and mocked at. No matter how much effort a foreigner puts into learning and using the new language, s/he inevitably struggles to express herself/himself clearly and experiences difficulties while communicating with the locals. However, the relationship changes over time, as the foreigner helps locals to recognise the otherness in themselves just as it is suggested in Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves*. What is more, the foreigner connects the locals, renews and revitalise their identity thus strengthening it.

Which medium?

Writing vs. speech

Whereas Derrida is interested in the relationship between the written and the spoken word from a theoretical perspective, Jarmusch explores it in an artistic way. One of the most obvious examples of this is the opening scene from *Dead Man*. Here, Blake rides to the West on the train, where he meets a fireman, who starts a very strange conversation with him. As good dialogue should, this sequence conveys quite a bit of information about the (anti-)hero[96] William Blake and his past. However, along with this information, Jarmusch also subtly introduces the themes of the movie, which are encoded in the

[96] If the film is an anti-Western (Gurr 2006; Buchanan 2011; Thomas 2012, p. 57) in the sense that it is not a conventional Western, the main character is an anti-hero in the sense that he does not possess the traits of a conventional Western hero. William Blake is not an active protagonist, he is not 'tough and strong' (Tomkins 1990, p. 11), he does not have the power inherent to Western man (Tomkins 1990, p. 18), etc. What is more, as many characters in Jarmusch's films, he can also be called an antihero in Beckettian sense (Petković and Vuković 2011, n. p.).

etymologically salient toponyms Cleveland and Lake Erie. Cleveland derives from the surname Cleaveland, which sounds the same as Cleveland, although the written form of the two words is different. 'To cleave' is one of those paradoxical concepts having two oppositional meanings: *to join* and *to split apart*. Thus, the main character, the representative of *pharmakon*, comes from the place having a name that indicates undecidability as well as the trace of otherness in itself. What is more, Lake Erie etymologically refers to the Erie tribe that once lived by the lake – Indians representing the American other. These two references are significant, since, as the film progresses, William Blake becomes both a living dead man and, to some extent, a Native American. Just as in Derrida's writing, in *Dead Man,* there is not only a strong theme of logocentrism, but of ethnocentrism, too, which Derrida related to logocentrism in the first pages of *Of Grammatology* (1997).

The dialogue also introduces another important theme – that of the relationship between the written and the spoken word. I would like to suggest that, in this scene, the two characters who sit facing each other, in opposition, are the personifications of speech and writing. The fireman is the representative of the spoken word and the long Western metaphysical tradition. Blake, who shares his name with the famous eighteenth-century English poet, is an agent of the written word. What is more, as Salyer insightfully observes, he 'holds the same occupation as the first *writers* in Sumeria in 2000 BCE – accountant' (Salyer 1999, p. 29, my emphasis).

It would not be difficult to justify which character in the hierarchical binary opposition is the primary figure. In the scene, the fireman very clearly dominates the proceedings: *logos* dominates *graphos*, *dictum* dominates *scriptum*. The fireman is the one who utters the first spoken words in the film ('Look out the window') and he is the active character who starts a conversation, asks questions and generally speaks more. Blake is a passive character, both in this scene and in the whole film, providing answers to his interlocutor, but not engaging in the conversation. Symbolically, he is the one who holds the letter in his hands that serves as a document, an official record of his job offer. However, when the letter is passed into the hands of the fireman, he denounces everything that is written there – without even knowing how to read. The fireman's reaction can be interpreted as a fear of the unknown – the information system that he is not able to use. He can also be compared to King Thamus, who, in Plato's legend, rejects writing. The King,

just as the fireman on the train, is illiterate. Derrida explains: 'God the King does not know how to write, but that ignorance or incapacity only testifies to his sovereign independence. He has no need to write. He speaks, he says, he dictates, and his word suffices' (Derrida 1981, p. 76). The fireman does not need literacy because he is in the superior position already: he is the one who knows about the inferno William Blake is about to enter; he is the one who can alert him. The King has the right to approve or disapprove writing, just like the fireman in this scene seems to have the right to approve or disapprove the letter.

'I wouldn't trust no words written down on no piece of paper, especially from no Dickinson out in the town of Machine' is a crucial line of the opening dialogue. When the fireman utters the line, he changes the pace of his speech, speeds up the tempo, which is an indication of emotion and insistence. It is important for him to be understood, and he cares about what he says. The construction of negation using the word 'no' is generally regarded as having a stronger effect than a simple negation. A double negation ('wouldn't' and 'no') used in this particular case as well as the repetition of 'no' three times, along with the rhythm it creates, reinforces the idea suggested by the fireman and speaks volumes about his personal position with regard to writing. Furthermore, the sentence is grammatically incorrect ('wouldn't trust no' instead of 'would trust no') which is characteristic of colloquial English more appropriate to spoken language rather than writing. Such little components help the viewer learn more about the character (his social status, his preference to the spoken word) and about one of the themes of the film (speech and writing).

The line also illustrates a problematic relationship, the supposed incompatibility between truth and writing. From the point of view of this illiterate fireman, who is the representative of the spoken word, writing is indeed derivative – thus representative – and therefore an untrustworthy medium. Since there is no one to assure the letter's meaning, it is ambiguous, plural – the text might mean many things, or, as the fireman implicitly suggests, nothing at all. The job offer might appear as true, but it might as well be not true. Just as it is inherent to metaphysical thinking, speech for him is higher in the hierarchical system and is the primary medium for obtaining knowledge, consecrating social agreements and attesting to their validity. Writing without the author's presence is unauthorised and illegitimate. The absence of the author, of a controlling voice confirming a social consensus, makes it just 'dead letters' or 'dead repetition' (Derrida 1981, p. 135).

Just as writing in the texts of the authors who Derrida criticised, the letter in the film leads to miscommunication. It is a perfect example of why the written word is characterised by distance, divergence and delay. As mentioned earlier, when William Blake shows the letter to the manager of the factory, he is told that 'This letter is postmarked two months ago. Makes you about a month late'. The protagonist learns that the position is no longer available, but he feels that there must have been a misunderstanding ('I'm sorry. I think there's been some mistake') and therefore insists on talking to Mr. Dickinson. However, he is too late: their personal contact does not help to clarify the situation. As in the fireman's vision, not only was the letter untrustworthy, it also led to misunderstanding and misfortune.

Just like in metaphysical texts, writing as a means of communication in *Dead Man* connotes mischief. It is represented as a maleficent technique that causes harm; as *pharmakon*, the written word becomes not medicine, but poison. Interestingly, writing in the opening scene is interrelated with the theme of death. William Blake expects that the way to the West will lead him to his new life, but during the film, we find out that this way leads to his own death. At the end of the scene, the fireman even prophesies future events by saying the words 'You're just as likely to find your own grave', which echoes Derrida's observation that 'Writing's case is grave' (Derrida 1981a, 103). It is important to stress that along with the word 'grave' we hear the gunshot, suggesting the way William Blake will meet his death. The fireman thus warns William Blake that he might not escape his destiny – to become a dead man.

Thus, on one hand, in this scene writing is depicted as in Plato's and Socrates' conception of writing. Both *Dead Man* as well as, for example, *Broken Flowers* suggest that writing is not be trusted: it might be deceitful, ambigious, misleading – it might lead to misinterpretation. However, in his films Jarmusch shows that spoken word is no less ambiguous, thus it does possess all the characteristics that are ascribed to writing. Elsewhere, I interpreted the figure of William Blake as an embodiment of writing in both literal and Derridean sense (for this interpretation, see Kazakevičiūtė 2019). As the analysis of the authors of letters and messages in Jarmusch's films suggest, both written messages *as well a*s spoken words, when they are uttered, are ambiguous, double, if not irreducibly plural in meaning. This has been seen in the cases of written – and writerly – message from Ghost Dog to the mafia in *Ghost Dog: the Way of the Samurai* or the spoken

words of Don's ex-girlfriends in *Broken Flowers*. Jarmusch is clearly interested in the undecidability of meaning; just like Derrida in his theoretical work, in his films, the director problematises the dualisms by playing on the meaning of words in English or other languages. The way the director plays on proper nouns and homophones, for example, epitomises his strategy *par excellence*.

In the movie *Dead Man*, there is a scene in which Nobody and Blake observe three hunters in the woods. Nobody puts his new fellow to the test – Blake has to encounter these hunters on his own. When the protagonist takes on the challenge and approaches them, he is asked who he is travelling with. Blake replies, 'I'm with Nobody'. Such a message is most likely to be understood as the statement that Blake is travelling alone; however, actually, Blake is travelling with somebody whose name is Nobody, which suggests that the same message house two diametrically opposite meanings. In this case, the Nobody (name) and nobody (a pronoun, meaning no person, no one) are homonyms: the word is spelled the same, but has two different meanings. However, both of them make perfect sense in the above-quoted sentence, uttered by William Blake. Interestingly, the 'correct' meaning can only be conveyed in a written form, with a capital N.

A similar example can be drawn from one of the last scenes in *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* when Louis comes to kill Ghost Dog. Wishing to attract Ghost Dog's attention, as he hangs out with Pearline (Camille Winbush) and Raymond (Isaach De Bankolé) by Raymond's ice-cream truck, his boss and future-killer calls Ghost Dog by his name. Raymond reacts to it by commenting in French, 'C'est lui' (in English, 'It's him'). Raymond probably does not know Louie's name, but it might as well be 'C'est Louie' (meaning, 'It's Louie'), as 'lui' and 'Louie' are heterographs, i.e., words pronounced the same, however, having different spelling and meanings. And although in this particular example, the meaning of the message does not change dramatically (the referent is the same – him, the person whose name is Louie), the 'correct' meaning can only be observed in writing as well as in the previous instance. Thus, the messages in his films are enigmatic and equivocal; solitary words or phrases are left intentionally double-edged and open to more than one, and sometimes contradictory, diametrically opposite interpretations. These examples show that both the written word and the spoken word have the same qualities: writing can be deceitful and ambiguous just as speech and none of them should be regarded as primary.

It could be argued that Jarmusch decentres speech by paying attention to writing. If a character quotes from the *Hagakure*, as Ghost Dog does, then the text is presented on the screen in both written and spoken form. If a character reads or writes poetry, as in *Paterson*, we see the verses on screen in addition to hearing them recited in voice-over. The way things are written is sometimes more important than how they are pronounced. In *Paterson*, for example, the little girl who the main character meets on the street introduces the title of her poem – 'Water Falls'. 'Two words though', she clarifies before reading the poem, thus stressing the significance of the written form and the meaning that can be observed only while reading. However, that is not to say that Jarmusch, in the usual mindset of Western metaphysics, prioritises the written word over the spoken word. Rather, he keeps a representational balance and artistically explores the relationship between the two.

Old media vs. New Media

In his films, Jarmusch critically reflects on the progressive force of modern communications technology and new media, implying it might have certain dangers. The characters often prefer old media and view new media with a certain amount of distrust. One of the oldest media depicted in Jarmusch's films, that is no longer used today, is that of homing pigeons, first domesticated by the Egyptians five thousand years ago (Meinel and Sack 2014, p. 30). As Christoph Meinel and Harald Sack claim, 'Carrier pigeons … had a fixed place as an important communication medium until the advent of the telegraph' (ibid.). However, Ghost Dog uses it in the modern times to communicate with the mafia – to inform them when his mission is completed. A pigeon carrying a message is not only an example of an old medium preferred by the protagonist. It also serves as a visual metaphor of (a) floating signifier(s) advocated by the poststructuralist conception of communication. Since a homing pigeon's way cannot be easily tracked, such means of communication prevents the addressees to reach the author and the 'original' source, therefore the meaning of her/his messages cannot be fixed or must be postponed.

The characters in Jarmusch's films still send and receive letters, which is the communication medium that dates back almost to the invention of writing and is still common these days. However, the letters in Jarmusch's films often lead to miscommunication and turn out to be deceptive. They serve as a perfect example of why the written word is characterised by distance, divergence, and delay. As noted before,

William Blake receives a letter promising him a job at the Dickinson's Metal Works, however, when the protagonist comes to his new working place and shows the letter to the administrator of the factory, he is told that 'This letter is postmarked two months ago. Makes you about a month late'. The protagonist learns that the position is no longer available, but he feels that there must have been a misunderstanding ('I'm sorry. I think there's been some mistake') and therefore insists on talking to Mr. Dickinson. However, he is too late: their personal contact does not help to clarify the situation. The communication, in other words, becomes impossible; misunderstanding caused by the delay – unsolvable. Not only was the letter untrustworthy, but it also led to misunderstanding and misfortune. Just like in metaphysical texts, writing as a means of communication in *Dead Man* connotes mischief. It is represented as a maleficent technique that causes harm.

Jarmusch depicts a long journey of the letter through the postal system in *Broken Flowers*. In the opening scenes of the film, we see a women's hand, throwing out the letter to the post box; the post officer collecting the mail and putting it in an open basket; the post truck reaching a mail processing plant; the letter being sorted using the postal equipment and various machines; the same post truck taking it to the delivery point(s); we even see an airplane transporting letters to other states or countries. The way Jarmusch presents this way (for example, by showing how the letters are put into an *open* basket or carelessly fall while they are sorted by the machines), demonstrates that the messages we send through this medium are not really safe enough – the letters can be easily lost during a long process they have to go through and therefore do not always reach their destination. The letter addressed to Don, however, reaches the addressee safely, but it causes a lot of confusion and plenty of misunderstandings, just as in the case of the letter sent in *Dead Man*. Furthermore, it perfectly illustrates the Derridean idea of half-private, half-public letters. Don, the receiver of the letter, shares its contents with his neighbour Winston; the latter gets to examine the letter and read it with a magnifier. Even the viewer gets to see the letter and hear the contents of it. Furthermore, it divides the subject who receives it by changing his life – he literally becomes somebody else than who he was before he received it. However, as mentioned earlier, it turns out to be a prank. Thus, the medium of the letter in Jarmusch's films helps to convey the secretive and sometimes deceptive side of our communication.

The characters in his movies also use payphones – public telephones (for instance, in *Nigh on Earth*) and landline telephones (for example, in *Stranger than Paradise* or *Broken Flowers*) that help to transmit the information immediately, however, not without important losses. Communication through them is often troubled for one or another reason. For example, in *Stranger than Paradise*, Eva answers Willie's phone while he is sleeping and promises the interlocutor to inform Willie who called him. According to Eva, the person's name was 'Courguy', but Willie does not seem to know anybody with such a name. She either got the name wrong because of poorer English language listening skills or could not hear the surname very well due to the obstacles caused by the medium. The latter are pretty obvious in the segment 'Ghost' of *Mystery Train* when Luisa (Nicoletta Braschi) uses a phone in Memphis to call somebody in Italy. The connection is so bad that she has to shout to her interlocutor and repeat the same information for a couple of times. Thus, on one hand, the technology allows us to reach those who are far from us and exchange the information quickly, however, the flow of it is not always smooth and steady.

Jarmusch seems to be especially interested in the invention of cordless and mobile phones – the ones that allow us to be detached from the wires of the technology. He emphasises several aspects of wireless phones: the negative side of the obligation to be reachable instantly and the overwhelming flow of the information that is introduced along with it that divides our attention. In the segment 'Los Angeles' of *Night on Earth*, the viewer sees Hollywood executive Victoria Snelling (Gena Rowlands) using one of the first models of mobile phones. It starts ringing as soon as she steps out of the airplane. We cannot hear the person speaking on the other end but understand that Victoria is being asked why she has not contacted somebody yet. The character explains: 'Oh, I just got in. No, I mean I literally just stepped off the plane. I'm not even in the terminal yet. … Okay, okay, I'll call him just as soon as I get my luggage'. In a moment, we see her calling that person while she waits for her luggage, but the situation is making her feel inconvenient due to the distractions of the environment – she can hear the alarm that is signalling in the terminal and feels embarrassed by it. Jarmusch seems to increase the noise that the characters experience in both literal and figurative sense. This episode suggests that we become the prisoners of the new technology and are forced to be available and contactable at any cost and at any time – even when cannot afford conversations. As the eponymous

character in *Paterson* clearly explains why he does not have a cell phone: 'I don't want one. It would be a leash'.

Image 9. Victoria Snelling experiencing difficulties in communication because of the noise in the airport (*Night on Earth* 1991).

In *Broken Flowers*, Don and Winston are neighbours who live next to each other. However, Winston uses a mobile phone to contact Don while he is walking to his house. Don answers the call with a cordless phone and they talk on it until Winston springs in front of his eyes in his apartment. This suggests that with the invention of this wireless technology, we lose our patience to wait – not even a couple of minutes – for the personal contact. Also, we lose the appreciation of more genuine – unmediated – ways of communication. In the same film, we see Lolita, the daughter of one of Don's ex-girlfriends, answering her mobile phone while talking on a cordless phone. Thus, we see her talking on two phones at the same time, which emphasises the imperative to be available for everybody who wants to communicate with us immediately. Furthermore, the scene suggests that our attention no longer belongs to one person as it used to in the case of a *tête-à-tête* private conversation before mobile phones pervasively enmeshed into our existence. Finally, it implies not only the division of our attention but also the division of ourselves.

Just like Doc (Barry Shabaka Henley), the owner of 'Shades Bar' in *Paterson*, refuses to have a TV, Don, who retired from the computer industry, refuses to own and use

a computer for either communication or other purposes. The reasons for that are unspoken but are implicitly elucidated when he meets one of his ex-girlfriends, Dora. She asks 'How did you track me down, exactly?' and Don replies 'Un, on the computer. They can do anything'. The word 'anything' implies that they can be used either for the good or the bad, and possibly have as many advantages as disadvantages – it remains a question whether the former outweigh the latter. The dangers of the computer technology are not always stressed enough, for example, the increased possibilities of surveillance or the risks of personal data gathering, not to mention the prevention of healthy social interaction and potential retardation of our social abilities. Perhaps this is the reason why none of the characters in Jarmusch's uses social media: although Instagram is mentioned in *Paterson* – through the lips of Z generation, i.e., in the conversation on the bus between two eight-to-ten-year-old boys, none of the characters are actually depicted using it.

Sometimes Jarmusch consciously juxtaposes old and new media. In *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013), an old vampire Adam (Tom Hiddleston) clearly idealises the past: he listens to music through gramophone records – the analogue sound storage medium – and collects vintage instruments. In order to communicate with his wife Eve (Tilda Swinton) via Skype, he sets up a laptop connected to a wood-cabinet tube television.

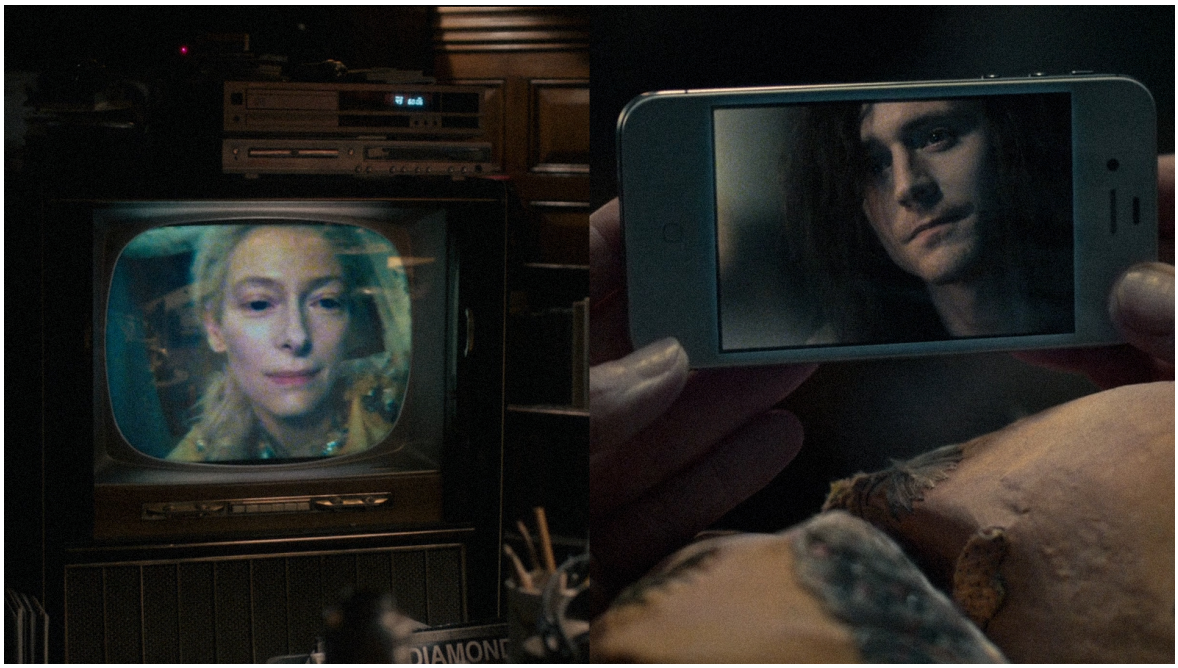

Image 10. Mediated images of Adam and Eve using different – old and new – media for the same video call via Skype (*Only Lovers Left Alive* 2013).

In contrast, Eve willingly uses modern technologies such as an iPhone. However, it should be considered that she is also much older than Adam. Although their age in the film is never divulged, Adam is over 200 years old, whereas Eve is clearly several centuries older. What this might indicate is the idea that familiarity with older media both contributes to one's ability to make use of new media as well as to one's ability to extend – and transform – one's life in a continuously transforming world. Moreover, not only people with the capacity to love survive but also those who are familiar with the old – and genuine – ways of communicating with one another. Otherwise, there is a danger of becoming 'zombies', as Adam appallingly calls modern people. This couple can be compared to the one portrayed in *Paterson*. As mentioned before, Paterson does not even have a cell phone, whereas his girlfriend Laura has not only a cell phone but also a laptop and an iPad. This suggests that it is a personal choice whether to immerse in the new communications technology and benefit from its advantages or to keep away from it as well as from its dangers.

Alternative ways of communication

Jarmusch's films (*Coffee and Cigarettes* and *Only Lovers Left Alive*) promote Nikola Tesla's ideas and inventions that were never built or never fully developed to the extent that Tesla hoped for due to the lack of funding. In 1901, for example, Tesla thought of a plan how to provide the world with a wireless electricity system and wireless connection that would allow people to share information remotely and communicate through distance. He started building Wardenclyffe Tower that had to lay the foundations for his grandiose project, but the financing was soon cut, and he did not manage to realise his ideas. However, Tesla's visions were indeed prophetic. For example, in 1926, 50 years after the first telephone call was made, Tesla thought of a device what could be regarded as the first model of a modern smartphone:

> When wireless is perfectly applied, the whole earth will be converted into a huge brain, which in fact it is, all things being particles of a real and rhythmic whole. We shall be able to communicate with one another instantly, irrespective of distance. Not only this, but through television and telephony we shall see and hear one another as perfectly as though we were face to face, despite intervening distances of thousands of miles; and the instruments through which we shall be able to do his will be

> amazingly simple compared with our present telephone. A man will be able to carry one in his vest pocket (Kennedy and Tesla 1926).

By promoting Tesla's name and ideas through his films, Jarmusch seems to suggest that we could have communicated similarly to contemporary communication almost a century ago. Furthermore, unlike today, we could have done it completely free, as Tesla was a believer in free electric power. There are speculations that a lot of Tesla's ideas were shot down because they were competitive and inconvenient for the industry of the time, i.e. other service providers. Thus, Jarmusch's films speak not only of the communications technology that we have now but also about the communication technology that we could have had and possibly have missed. What is more, it could have been an alternative to internet service providers and modern-day communications technology.

Although in this thesis I am concerned with only traditional means of communication, old and new media, it should be mentioned that Jarmusch also explores the possibilities of very alternative and questionable communication forms, such as communication by distance where no physical interaction and sensory channels are involved. In *Only Lovers Left Alive*, for example, Eve *feels* that Adam is not well as; Eve's sister Eva (Mia Wasikowska) somehow manages to transmit the information about her unplanned visit to Eve and Adam in a very mysterious way – through her incursion to their dreams. The film plays on the theory of entanglement 'Einstein's spooky action at a distance', as Eve puts it, which argues that particles being at different places in the world can still alter and affect each other. If that is the case, the film suggests, perhaps we can communicate through distance without any traditional means. Interestingly, the idea of telepathic communication in the film is related to the scientific explanations of how particles work. Peters claims that 'The term "telepathy" was not originally supposed to be paranormal, in sharp contrast with its current status; it was rather an attempt on the part of psychical research to explain spiritualist phenomena scientifically' (Peters 1999, p. 105). Jarmusch seems to be creatively looking for other explanations or connections between telepathy and science.

Furthermore, Jarmusch explores the (im)possibilities of human and animal communication. Ghost Dog somehow manages to communicate with his spiritual birds – pigeons. Not only he trains them to fly according to the waves of his flag but also can mysteriously speak to them. Furthermore, the dog that Ghost Dog meets from time to time

in his neighbourhood understands what Ghost Dog means when he asks him to 'go on' – he goes away. In *Broken Flowers*, Don's (Bill Murray) ex-girlfriend Carmen Markowski (Jessica Lange), after her dog Winston dies, gets a gift – to hear animals speak. According to the script, the woman has received her doctoral degree in animal behaviour, and among other books, is the author of *Animal Vernacular*. The work, as the back cover informs, is 'An in-depth analysis of the vernacular and how we can communicate with animals'. Jarmusch seems to believe in the transcendence of the boundaries of incommunicability and the possibility of our communication with animals. But perhaps communication with them should not be interpreted directly. In our culture, 'Questions about the inhuman … often serve as allegories of social otherness' (Peters 1999, 229). It could be speculated that Jarmusch uses the same allegory, suggesting that these creatures are just another form of otherness that we have to accept in order to accept our own otherness, which could possibly allow us to understand ourselves and the phenomenon of communication better.

With what effect?

The effect of the communication between the characters in Jarmusch's films more often than not is 'unsuccessful'. As the analysis of the conversations, for example, between Don and his ex-girlfriends in *Broken Flowers* reveal, the messages of the communicators are almost always ambiguous and undecidable in their meaning, which inevitably leads to misinterpretations and misunderstandings. Written communication, exemplified by the letters in *Dead Man* and *Broken Flowers*, also leads to misunderstandings due to either the delay in delivery or unclear intentions of the author that, as the films suggest, can never be fully known. Furthermore, in Jarmusch's films, foreigners, newcomers to America, misunderstand the locals, native English speakers all. The main cause of these misunderstandings is the narrow vocabulary of a foreigner: typically, s/he does not know more complex English words, colloquialisms, or slang. One could conclude that characters miscommunicate because foreigners do not excel in the English language or, more generally speaking, because the characters do not share the same language. However, the example of the communication between Ghost Dog who only speaks English and Raymond who only speaks French contradicts such an insight. The director intentionally leaves Raymond's words unsubtitled, i.e., untranslated into the English language, as he wants the viewer to experience foreignness the way the main character experiences it.

However, if these words were translated, one could see that the two friends understand each other perfectly without sharing the same linguistic code.

The scene on the roof, where Raymond takes Ghost Dog to show him a man building a boat (comparable to Noah's Ark) on the roof of an adjacent building illustrates this mystery and 'magic' of communication *par excellence*. The characters seem to intuitively know what the other utters because of sharing the same *feeling* while observing the same reality and experiencing it together. They are epitomising 'two normal men' described by Derrida who 'have *a priori* consciousness of their belonging together to one and the same humanity, living in one and the same world', standing on the roof (the top of the world that is about to end?) and talking about the Spanish guy's boat – i.e., 'stand[ing] together before the same natural existent' and objectively confronting it as a 'pure and precultural *we*' that ties them together. When Ghost Dog is about to leave the building, Raymond says to him in French: 'I guess you got some business to take care of, because soon the sun's gonna be coming down'. Ghost Dog responds to that in English: 'I gotta go. I got some business to take care of'. This fraction of their dialogue supports the claim that they understand each other because they both observe the sun that is going to come down. Although their communication is not perfectly synchronised, they still manage to understand what the other means pretty accurately, without even trying to understand the words that are uttered in a different language. Thus, a language barrier can be a source of misunderstanding, but it is not always the case. In fact, the analysis suggests that, when the locals accept the otherness of a foreigner, they usually manage to communicate without any bigger obstacles, including linguistic ones.

Image 11. Ghost Dog and Raymond looking at the same object and experiencing the same sensible word as well as a mutual feeling, which allows their successful communication without the same linguistic code (*Ghost Dog* 1995).

Even the people who speak the same language in Jarmusch's films sometimes misunderstand each other. It happens so when verbal cues are not supported by non-verbal cues or when these two cues mismatch, i.e., when the signs of our body language and our words are not aligned. While receiving the message, the characters tend to trust the body language of their interlocutors more than their words, and this is also the case between people involved in real-life conversations. Elizabeth Kuhnke, who is an expert on body language, remarks: 'Not that the words don't matter. They do. But if the words and the delivery don't match, your listeners are going to believe what they observe rather than what you're saying' (Kuhne 2016, p. 2).

In the first segment of *Mystery Train* called 'Far from Yokohama' Mitsuko and Jun miscommunicate because Mitsuku misreads Jun's body language. It is a perfect example of misunderstanding caused by the lack of non-verbal clues supporting the claims of the speaker. Mitsuko asks Jun in Japanese 'Why do you always have such a sad face? Are you unhappy?' and Jun responds to that 'I am very happy. That's just the way my face is'. Indeed, in Jun's face, there are no facial expressions that indicate happiness: he does not smile, there are no wrinkles around his eyes, even the corners of his lips are not raised, etc. Nonverbal vocal cues, vocalizations signalling happiness, such as, for example, giggle or laughter, are also missing. Most likely Mitsuko misinterprets Jun's body as communicating

sadness due to very little movement in his face, which *is* the peculiarity of a sad face – that is why it is more difficult to detect this emotion than, for example, that of happiness. Mitsuko tries to cheer Jun up by showing him a couple of tricks. After she performs them, Mitsuko asks, 'So now do you feel a little happier?' But Jun replies: 'I feel the same. I was already happy'. He says that without looking Mitsuko in the eye, directing his gaze straight ahead, as if non-verbally saying that she does not interest him, and again doing so with an impassive facial expression. All these non-verbal signs do not convince Mitsuko of her boyfriend's happiness; on the contrary, they generate more ambiguousness and cause the girl to feel a bit frustrated, disappointed, and sad.

A similar communicative situation can be observed in the segment 'No problem' in the film *Coffee and Cigarettes*. In the episode, Alex (Alex Descas) smokes a cigarette, drinks coffee and plays dice while waiting for his friend Isaach (Isaach De Bankolé). The latter soon shows up and, after an idle chat in French, the two friends sit down for a cup of coffee and a conversation in English. Isaach asks Alex if everything is ok with him, and he replies 'Yeah. [Short pause]. Everything is okay. Very good. [Short pause]. I am fine.'. However, his body language does not support the same claim that is paraphrased three times. The repetition of the same idea is supposed to convince the interlocutor, however, in this case, produces the opposite effect. First, while saying it is 'Yeah. Everything is ok', he does not move his head, looks down, as if hiding his eyes from Isaach. However, after a second he looks him in the eye and says 'Very good. [Short pause]. I am fine' and lights up a cigarette, which signals the tension he feels (especially considering the fact that there is a smouldering, unfinished one in the astray). Alex does not utter the words with a positive note fitting the meaning. His voice modulation sounds artificial. Alex unnaturally and emphatically lowers his inflection at the end of each phrase, which, if mastered, can be a powerful tool to make the audience believe in your message. Since Isaach can see all these signs of Alex's body language, what he says does not persuade him, and his own body language shows the signs of suspicion, distrustfulness, and incredulousness. Therefore, he asks once again 'So, are you sure that everything is okay with you?' and Alex replies to that with a short and firm 'yes'.

It is important to stress that whenever Alex says something positive he truly feels, for example, 'I am very happy to see you' or 'I wanted to see you', he smiles at Isaach, thus confirming the claim non-verbally. By contrast, when he says he is 'ok'/ 'good'/'fine', etc.,

he does not verify that by his body language, which suggests that he might actually hide some problems he does not want to talk about, and Isaach suspicion is well-grounded. As he plays dice before Isaach comes to see him and rolls three sets of doubles after he leaves, too, it could be speculated that he has some problems related to gambling, perhaps even a gambling addiction or at least *problem* gambling. This interpretation could be supported by the fact that his body language is not very expressive, as if it were trained to be so. Players often master what they call dissociation – the ability to separate oneself from the situation emotionally in order to hide the true emotions from the co-players. However, playing dice might as well be just a fun activity Alex enjoys.

In any case, the mismatch between his words and non-verbal statements causes misunderstanding. Alex himself notices that. At the end of their conversation, he apologises for disappointing his friend that 'there is nothing wrong', to which Isaach replies 'It's ok. I do understand'. Alex stresses: 'No, you don't understand'. Isaach implies he understands his wish not to share something that bothers him, meanwhile Alex implies that there is nothing to share, therefore he does not understand him. Isaach decides to leave believing that his friend does not want to talk about his problems with him. He is sure that it was the purpose of their meeting. Alex does not stop him – he seems to be tired of proving that everything is fine. In other words, they both stick to their own truths and (mis)interpretations. Indeed, Alex's reaction is understandable: we tend to believe and trust in the signs the person's body sends more in his verbal messages, as words can be faked but it is very difficult to fake body language. However, his decision to leave also suggests that we sometimes fail to communicate with the other in the form of just being here and now, in silence – without sharing words and fixing problems, which in the scene is presented as a problem of modern man itself.

Last but not least, the characters in Jarmusch's films miscommunicate due to different lifestyles, worldviews, and values. In *Stranger than Paradise*, for example, Willie (John Lurie) and Eddie (Richard Edson) take a road trip to visit Willie's cousin Eva (Eszter Balint). At some point in their journey, the couple stops by the sidewalk to ask a person on the street (Richard Boes) some directions. Willie politely excuses himself while addressing the man as 'sir', however, the man does not pay any attention. The man seems indifferent, unemotional, looking in one direction. When he finally notices the couple in the car, he incredulously asks 'What do you want?', and Willie replies with a request: 'Could you

come over for a minute?' They exchange the same questions once again, and although the man remains distrustful, he starts slowly walking towards the car, while saying 'I'm just waiting for the bus'. When Willie asks him the way to Cleveland, the man smiles skeptically, responding 'Give me a break, man. I'm just going to work' and walks away. Willie tries to keep the conversation going by asking where he works. The stranger stops for a second, turns at Willie and tells him that he works in a factory. Although they clearly miscommunicate – the man does not talk to them politely, ignores their request, does not answer the question directly and thus does not help them, Eddie and Willie seem to understand him and sympathise with him (Eddie: 'Poor guy'; Willie: 'Now I feel bad').

Image 12. A suspicious look of a factory worker directed at Willie (*Stranger than Paradise* 1984).

The factory worker and Willie with Eddie are contrasting figures, representing two different extremes. The factory seems to live a completely different lifestyle to that of Eddie's and Willie's. He is on his way to job; Eddie and Willie are on way to vacation. His job is probably exhausting and low-paid, which possibly makes him a victim of an unjust and exploitative social system and asymmetrical power relations; whereas Eddie and Willie get their easy money while gambling and cheating and are completely free to do whatever they want. The factory worker, in other words, lives within the 'system'; Eddie and Willie live outside it. Since the factory is the symbol of the means of production controlled by the capitalist system, the scene suggests an implied critique of the alienating effects of capitalism on human communication. The factory worker in the scene looks both

literally and figuratively cold, unable to respond rationally and/or emotionally, mechanically repeating the same or similar phrases (‘What do you want?’ for a couple of times, ‘I’m just waiting for the bus’, ‘I’m just going to work’). The strangers disrupt his robotic routine; however, due to the dulling and deadening means of his livelihood, the man feels alienated from himself and others and therefore unable to connect with Eddie and Willie. The social interaction between the characters in the film warns of a possible, perhaps imminent breakdown of communication in the capitalist society.

6. Conclusions

This project was undertaken to describe the main elements of communication drawing on poststructuralist works and assessing the contribution of poststructuralist authors to communication theory. The current study also set out to analyse the dialogue and communication between the characters in Jarmusch's films from the poststructuralist vintage point. The main goal of the work was to reveal the poststructuralist conception of communication in Jarmusch's oeuvre. The results of this study indicate that the main elements of communication, drawing on poststructuralist theories, can be described as follows.

Poststructuralists criticise those linguistic and communication theories that are based on or are close to the Cartesian mind as well as transcendental ego and imply the coherence of the speaking subject's consciousness. The speaking subject in the poststructuralist conception of communication is incoherent, divided, constituted by language and through the process of communication. Neither the speaking subject's consciousness nor the speaking subject's intentions, on poststructuralists' account, can be fully present in the moment of enunciation due to the movement of *différance* and the structural unconscious of language. The intentions of the speaking subject retain their place; however, the meaning of the message cannot depend entirely on them.

Poststructuralists subvert the roles of the sender and the receiver. The sender of the message loses a complete authority to have the final word on what the message means; this prerogative now belongs to the receiver who is no longer a passive consumer of the message but an active interpreter of it. S/he not only reads, but also rereads the message, and precisely the activity of rereading introduces the quality of difference in the message itself. It no longer has one single theological meaning intended by the author but is plural in meaning. The meaning itself is, according to poststructuralists, untraceably intertextual and in some cases irreducibly undecidable.

They stress that the message can survive the absence of the sender, the receiver, the referent, the signified and still signify. Even what is not intended as a message can be perceived as such due to the quality of iterability. During the process of communication, the message can be shared, but not the meaning of it in its entirety. Poststructuralists argue that gaps in meaning are inscribed in the very structure of a shared message. Sharing a

message implies a division and a certain loss of meaning. This division is conditioned by its postcard-like nature of the message being half-public half-private.

In the poststructuralist conception of communication, the medium is seized by power relations that can control the contents of the message. In other words, the medium is not transparent; it can alter the meanings of the messages that go through it. Poststructuralists stress that messages function differently in spoken and written discourse. In speech, messages can be 'transmitted' but in writing, they are always disseminated. However, at the same time, speech possesses the qualities distinctive to writing, which suggests that communication in general is closer to the act of dissemination rather than transmission. Poststructuralists emphasise the possibilities of silent communication and body language. They argue that we should analyse gestures not as signs or separate messages, but as elaborations of spoken messages.

Although forming definitions is incompatible with the poststructuralist epistemological commitment to the open structure of interpretation, communication could be provisionally defined as the dissemination of messages that are open to interpretation. Poststructuralists emphasise that it is always subject to failure, as the success of communication is conditioned by the otherness of communication, i.e., the structural and irreducible possibility of miscommunication. The otherness within communication, in other words, is what makes communication happen. The more undefined is the sender, the more there are lines of destination, the bigger is the danger of miscommunication. But there is *always* a chance that the message might not reach its destination. Therefore, miscommunication should not be regarded as a problem that we have to avoid or solve, but rather a paradox that we need to manage.

Derrida's contribution to the poststructuralist conception of communication can never be stressed too much. He introduced the (anti)concepts of *différance*, iterability, and writing that shake the traditional understanding of how communication works. Deconstruction may be seen as a way to criticise communication theories or communication theory as a whole. Chang, for example, has applied Derridean insights to show how and why modern communication theories 'fail'. Drawing on Derrida, he demonstrated that Western communication theory is phonocentristic, idealistic, teleological and therefore unrealistic. However, in this thesis, I suggested that deconstruction might also serve not only as a critique of communication theories but also

successfully exist *in* communication theory as an alternative system of ideas that has numerous implications as well as applications across the field and can be of use studying linguistic and non-linguistic communication, and communication between people who do not even share the same linguistic code. The relevance of deconstruction to communication theory and research is supported here by the analysis and findings of this study.

The results of this study show that Barthes' ideas on literature (especially on the writing subject – the author – and the authorial intent in his famous essay 'The Death of the Author') are sometimes directly and therefore inappropriately applied to the field of communication studies. An overall and informed view of Barthes' theory on literature and communication can only be seen considering the totality of his work. Barthes very thoughtfully chooses the terms he uses (the author or a modern scriptor, for example, does not equal a modern communicator). Furthermore, he does not regard literature as communication. In fact, he insists that literature is the opposite to communication, i.e., anti-communication or counter-communication. What is more, as it was already mentioned above, he reflects on significantly different ways of the functioning of messages in written and spoken discourses. Therefore, his ideas should be reconstructed very carefully while applying them to the field of communication. However, it was suggested that his typology of literary texts as readerly and writerly could be used for the typology of media texts and interpersonal messages. Just as literary texts, media texts and the messages we exchange daily in spoken or written discourses can be either readerly or writerly. As Barthes suggests, even seemingly readerly messages can turn out to be writerly. This also helps to explain why our communication sometimes 'fails'.

The poststructuralist theory recognises the importance and effects of both conscious and unconscious processes to the process of communication. One of Kristeva's contributions to communication theory is her emphasis on not only verbal but also extra-verbal elements, i.e., linguistic articulations and the articulations of libidinal drives. The philosopher explained the acquisition of language and argued that when we communicate, both the symbolic and semiotic are at work – the dialectic movement back and forth occurs between these two modalities. The symbolic can be observed when we express ourselves verbally; the semiotic manifests in our body language – tone of voice, the pace or rhythm of our speech, etc. Kristeva is especially interested in gesture. According to the theorist, gestures come before the meaning is carried by the written or the spoken word; they have

indexing value but are not yet constituted as signs. However, Kristeva contends that gesture elaborates the message. Thus, her theories suggest that while studying communication, we should focus on non-verbal channels and personalised embodied speech. What is more, Kristeva's theory of foreignness provides us with the tools to examine the communication to and with a foreigner that, according to her, lives in ourselves.

The study has identified that communication theorists who argue that poststructuralism should be excluded from the field base their arguments on the following reasons: inadequate evaluation of the contribution of poststructuralist theory due to faulty categorisation of different poststructuralist theories or the misinterpretations of the poststructuralist theories. Previous research findings into the evaluation of poststructuralist theory have been inconsistent and contradictory due to the fact that poststructuralist theory was evaluated using the criteria stemming from an opposite worldview to that of poststructuralism. I argued that the poststructuralist theory, as well as any other cultural theory, cannot be assessed using the 'universal' criteria for evaluating communication theories as these are the most suitable to evaluate scientific theories. The current study found that poststructuralist theory actually meet almost all the standards of a good interpretative theory, except the community of agreement – it is being rejected by some scholars in the field. However, they are often rejected due to misinterpretations of poststructuralism and deconstruction.

Although the poststructuralist theory is not homogenous, the authors classified as poststructuralist share some similarities. At the very least they all apply what Kristeva refers to as 'non-identificatory thinking'. Furthermore, their views on communication sometimes differ (Derrida's and Lacan's, for example), but at least ideas of those authors who are chosen for the analysis in this thesis do not clash. They use the same vocabulary and contra-arguments for other traditions of communication. Due to space constraints, I could reconstruct and explicate the assumptions on communication implied in the work of only three poststructuralists. However, if the same was done with the work of other poststructuralist authors, poststructuralism would have the potential to form a separate tradition of or approach to communication. For this reason, I argued, poststructuralist authors should not be ascribed to different traditions of communication.

In this thesis, Derrida was identified as the main author whose corpus lays the foundations for the poststructuralist conception of communication. The ideas of other poststructuralists do not contradict to the position advocated by Derrida and deconstruction but rather compliments and complements it. However, his deconstructionist work and the whole enterprise of poststructuralism was often misinterpreted. Drawing on Derrida, I dispelled the most common misinterpretations of deconstruction and poststructuralism regarding the notions of objectivity, intentionality, interpretation, and meaning.

I demonstrated that Derrida does not dismiss the value of objectivity as completely inadequate. He believes that in certain areas (science in its strict sense, for instance), it should be pursued and can be achieved; however, only to some extent rather than absolutely. Bearing in mind the movement of *différance* that has an effect on objectivity, one cannot but cast doubt on the claim for absolute objective truth. On Derrida's account, it should be received with cautious mistrust. However, one should not overgeneralise: it would be unfair to say that Derrida rejected objectivity or objective truth. He simply resituated it, put it in a wider perspective, promulgated that this very value emerged under certain circumstances and in a certain context and its meaning is therefore dependent on it.

Furthermore, the study showed that Derrida did not deny intentionality. He argued that the intention of the author cannot be fully present and fully active. The philosopher also claimed that the text does not obey an insistent and peremptory request to mean only what the author intended and can convey other, sometimes even conflicting meanings. However, the intention of the author can function properly and does in Derrida's own texts. If one reads Derrida's texts attentively, one can notice that he does encourage the quest for intention. According to Derrida, the recognition of the authorial intent is a starting point in any exegesis, but it marks merely the beginning of the journey. The further steps to be taken depend on the choice of the protocols of reading. However, Derrida does not believe there can be a universal set of rules on how one should interpret texts; a text itself should dictate the choice of them. In any case, Derrida recommends reading texts responsibly, patiently, attentively and, of course, as probably any other author, wants his texts to be read with the same rumination and examination.

Hopefully, this thesis has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of Derridean take on meaning. Derrida does agree that, on one hand, meaning depends on the context, but, on the other, he claims that the context is undeterminable and always refers to

another context (or more context) and therefore one cannot determine the meaning completely. Proper context is always in the future, therefore the 'true', 'final' meaning or signified is always postponed and yet to come. However, it would be inaccurate to draw a conclusion that meaning is therefore essentially indeterminable. For Derrida, it is rather structurally undecidable. And so is communication – both possible and impossible. That is not to suggest that we are condemned to the curse of miscommunication. We communicate in certain – relatively stable – contexts and can understand each other's intentions more or less satisfactorily. However, we are always exposed to the threat of miscommunication, and this danger of a 'failure' is a positive condition that makes communication possible.

One broad and indirect conclusion drawn from this work is that the aspiration of *successful* communication – in both theory and practice – is a myth in Barthesian terms. Communication theorists and scholars welcome those communication theories that focus on the positive outcome of communication. We, as communicators, are made to believe that we should strive for successful communication in order to be successful on multiple levels and in various aspects of life. Good communication 'is said to be the key to a better and happier life'; if we improve communication, we can 'improve everything else' (Cameron 2000, p. 1). This desire of successful communication and the promise of it given by new communications technology is utilitarian to the hegemonic neo-liberalist ideology[97]. When we strive to be successful in communication, we become political – neoliberal – performative speaking subjects. However, such a conclusion is only provisional. Further work is certainly required to disentangle the complexities in the pursuit of successful communication in relation to ideology.

Several limitations to this thesis need to be acknowledged. First, due to space constraints, the study has only examined the body of work of three poststructuralist authors and their ideas on the phenomenon of communication. There is abundant room for further progress in describing the poststructuralist conception of communication drawing on other poststructuralist theorists. Furthermore, it did not focus too much on subtle differences between the philosophers, as the aim was to highlight the similarities between

[97] By using new media and new communications technologies, we are made into consumers. We self-brand ourselves and thus economise ourselves to respond to the market demands. The relationship between social media and the neoliberal ideology is explored in Julio Cesar Lemes de Castro's (2018) and Tracy L. Hawkins' (2019) studies. For a closer look at the myth of communication in relation to neoliberalism, see Federico Boni's article (2016);

them and show how their theories are in perfect addition to each other. However, a comparative study of the differences between them is a potential topic for future research. What is more, the study is limited by only one tool used to describe the main elements of communication (Lasswell's construct) from the poststructuralist perspective.

This thesis does not engage with all the forms of communication present in Jarmusch's films. In particular, it does not look at, although it does touch upon, the alternative and questionable forms of communication, such as communication between minds, telepathy or communication with animals. Another limitation of this study is that it does not offer a complex view the communication between the characters in each and every film by Jarmusch. Although I referred to all of them at some point of the work, addressing different elements of communication, the examples were selective, serving to illustrate the points, and tended to be drawn from a fraction of certain films more often than from others.

Poststructuralism rejects the simplified view of communication by refining the assumptions about it and offers an alternative one, showing the paradoxes and aporia of communication. The communication between the characters in Jarmusch's films, as my analysis shows, illustrates their points: it often 'fails' when there are all the conditions for it to succeed, it 'succeeds' when there are all conditions for it to 'fail'. The investigation of verbal communication in Jarmusch's films suggests that words make communication easier; yet, other times, they are the source of misunderstanding. Both spoken and written messages, more often than not, are writerly, containing contradictions and ambiguities, and sometimes their meaning turns out to be structurally undecidable. Written messages in Jarmusch's films are sent by vaguely defined, hiding or anonymous authors who cannot be reached and clarify what they mean. Therefore, written messages become more difficult to understand and the receivers are forced to be active interpreters (and occasionally misinterpreters) of their meaning. The written word is presented as either untrustworthy and deceptive or unclear and equivocal, which echoes the Platonic sentiment on writing and suggests the preference given to speech. However, in a number of instances, the 'intended' meaning of the spoken messages can only be observed in the written form, which suggests the superiority of writing. Therefore, the conclusion can be made that Jarmusch balances the representation of speech and writing. The articulation of libidinal drives, body language, as the actors in his films demonstrate, is of crucial importance, and

it can be more eloquent than words. For example, non-verbal communication helps the foreigners who speak little English to express what they mean (or their repressed feelings) as well as help understand the locals. However, body language causes misunderstandings as well – either due to the mismatch between verbal and non-verbal messages or the assumptions and misinterpretations about what non-verbal messages mean, as gestures only elaborate the spoken messages.

The study found that communication with the foreigner is often troubled because s/he leads a very different way of life and understands the world differently than the majority of people due to lifestyle or cultural and/or linguistic differences. Therefore, the foreigner is often misunderstood. Communication with a foreigner from a foreign country usually follows a certain pattern and has a certain algorithm. Although s/he shows initiative to communicate with the locals, at first s/he is ignored and rejected. The foreigner has to endure silence, linguistic discomfort, and even mockery but nevertheless tries to connect with the local community. It is important that the action in Jarmusch's films usually takes place in America that is conceptualised as a melting pot of different cultures. The locals remain aloof from the foreigner as a result of the anxiety they feel caused by the uncanny strangeness. However, being next to and with the foreigner eventually makes the Americans recognise the repressed otherness in themselves – inherent and intrinsic to their own identity. Given a chance, the foreigner changes the lives of the American people: s/he resurrects them, revives their identity and unites the locals by transforming their individualist I-centered community into a more collective we-centered community.

It is not a coincidence that the majority of characters in Jarmusch's films are deliberately developed as unsuccessful communicators, misunderstood misfits, not conforming to the neoliberal American dream. Jarmusch clearly indicated in one interview that he is not attracted to this ideal and therefore intentionally does not create characters 'obsessed with some kind of ambition' (Jarmusch and Jacobson 2001, p. 15), including the ambition to be successful in communication, a successful communication of self or self-mass communication. The director is critical of the dominant strategy in America, as he sees it – to objectify everything and make everything marketable (Jarmusch and Sante 2001, p. 92). To create films showing the non-conformant is his way of private protest. As he himself puts it, 'I react against that by making films about displaced or marginal characters and the seemingly inconsequential little things they do' (ibid.). It is important to

stress that these characters are deliberate about their life(style) choices: they '*consciously* locate themselves outside the zombie mainstream' (Jarmusch and Sante 2001, p. 97, my emphasis).

Jarmusch's films suggest that new communications technology presents us with a constant flow of different types of messages and demands to be always available to respond immediately. It divides our attention and prevents us from healthy social interaction as well as forces us to forget more genuine ways of communication. What is more, it makes us subject to surveillance and subjected to consumerism. Therefore, Jarmusch's characters tend to avoid using new media and new communications technology, preferring old media instead. In some cases, they opt for old media because they idealise the past. Quite a few of the characters refuse to have a TV, mobile phones, and computers. They thus refuse to live by the rules of contemporary society that has replaced all reality and meaning with symbols and signs. Jarmusch's characters seem to believe that the avoidance of new media and modern communications technology helps them to avoid simulation and simulacra and thus make them closer to reality. If hyperreality is all that there is, they still choose to experience their life as authentically as it is possible, which they think they can pursue by staying away from a constant flow of information and mediated communication. When they communicate with people, they prefer the symbolic exchange. However, some of the characters, interestingly, more often women than men, manage to adapt to the modern world and take full advantage of the possibilities provided by new communications technology.

Also, Jarmusch's characters seem to be cautious not to become political performative subjects following the neoliberal American dream by refusing to use new communications technology and social media and thus situating themselves in the margins of the society obsessed with technology, good communication and representation of selves in reality as well as the digital space. However, more research on this topic needs to be undertaken before the association between the possible myth of successful communication and Jarmusch's films is more clearly understood, but an indirect conclusion can be drawn that the director offers a critique of neo-liberalist ideology by developing his characters who are 'logged off' marginals.

In Derridean and Barthesian manner, the characters in Jarmusch's films miscommunicate due to the unapproachability of the author, his hidden, anonymous or

faked identity, which forces the receivers to be active interpreters and decide what the message means. Some receivers are consumers of the messages quite literally – they eat them. However, they take their time doing that, which suggests that the act of interpretation takes time and effort. Sometimes miscommunication is caused due to the nature and the peculiarities of the medium the messages go through, for example, the delay in delivery of the letter. Some characters are unable to process the information conveyed by the receivers due to the linguistic differences. Bias, in particular, inability to accept otherness, is also an important factor leading to miscommunication. It also happens because of the alienation caused by the capitalist social system. However, in most cases, it does not prevent people from being together. Generally speaking, miscommunication and misunderstanding in Jarmusch's films are not regarded as a negative outcome of the process of communication, as they lead to new and productive interpretations of languages, cultures, and people.

Jarmusch keeps referring to the inventor Nicholas Tesla in his films not without a reason. One thought of the inventor is of crucial importance to Jarmusch and he masterfully incorporates it in his film *Coffee and Cigarettes*, the segments 'Jack Shows Meg His Tesla Coil' and 'Champagne'. In the latter, William Rice repeats Jack White's line (that is also repeated by Meg): 'Nicola Tesla perceived the earth as a conductor of acoustical resonance', to which Taylor Mead responds 'I have no idea what you're talking about'. This idea explains the film and the Jarmuschian conception of communication. Although the segments seem to be unconnected, they still resonate because of the recurrent ideas, themes and elements that repeat in them. Regardless of the misunderstandings that keep occurring between the characters, they continue to communicate, smoke and drink coffee (and/or tea) together. In other words, although they are unable to share the same meaning, they keep sharing the same moments, which creates between them a certain level of resonance.

Jarmusch's films suggest that this strange resonance does not necessarily require the same linguistic code, culture, or meaning. The more we are exposed to otherness, the more we experience together with the other, the more likely we are to resonate and form friendships that at first seem to have little chance of developing. This idea resonates with Barthes' thought expressed in his *Lover's Discourse*: 'The perfect interlocutor, the friend, is he not the one who constructs around you the greatest possible resonance? Cannot

friendship be defined as a space with total sonority?' (Barthes 1990 [1978], p. 167). Jarmusch's films seem to suggest just that.

One could draw a conclusion that there is a certain level of sadness and beauty in our communication with the other, and this sadness and beauty is perfectly illustrated in Jarmusch's oeuvre. The sadness refers to the nostalgia of the first bond (with the mother) that we all wish and expect to experience again while interacting with the other as well as to the melancholia that permeates us when we fail to connect, when we mishear and are misheard, when we misinterpret and are misinterpreted, when we misunderstand and are misunderstood. Therefore, this sadness involves the element of disappointment experienced in situations when we are forced to accept that, the romantic ideal of communication cannot be attained and sharing perfect understanding is impossible.

The beauty of communication refers to our attempts to communicate, despite the inevitable disappointment. As Kristeva contends, 'One cannot change the mode of communication in a country, or society, without having experienced a fundamental disappointment' (Kristeva and Midttun 2006, p. 168). It refers to the moments when we accept the uncanny strangeness in ourselves and thus enable ourselves to find ways to be with the other. The potential beauty also lies in those moments of sadness. If we continue to communicate, we will be able to manage the paradox of communication and appreciate the beauty of the productive power of mishearings, misinterpretations, and misunderstandings.

One can notice certain thematic patterns in Jarmusch's films. He started with movies that emphasised the contradictory nature of things, the differences in ideas, people, languages, and cultures, scientific discoveries and art, alienation and communication. In his recent films, Jarmusch captures the current human condition and the condition of our planet. His films suggest that the accomplishments of humanity, on one hand, are beautiful – we have much to be proud of: scientific discoveries, art, an elaborate system of communication; but on the other hand, it is sad that we are one step away from the destruction of everything that we have created, as we are experiencing an environmental crisis and the breakdown of communication.

Just like Ghost Dog with Raymond looking at the Spanish guy making a boat on the roof of the building, we are standing on the edge of the world and observing it before a

possible great flood. However, unlike Ghost Dog, Raymond and the Spanish guy, who mysteriously communicate without sharing the same linguistic code, we miscommunicate about where we are and what we should do about it. Perhaps, the corpus of Jarmusch's works suggests, if we accept the sadness and beauty of the contradictory nature of all things, recognise the sadness and beauty of our differences, if we manage to continue to communicate despite the miscommunication that will inevitably lead us along the way, we will manage to survive. As the director himself said in one of his last interviews, 'I'm not for negativity. I'm not a fatalist. I'm for the survival of beauty. I'm for the mystery of life' (Brooks and Jarmusch 2019).

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