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Three Monkeys (2008): Oblivion, Anamnesis and the latent Spectrality of Hope

Nuri Bilge Ceylan's films evoke landscapes, characters and themes of undisclosed longing; with provocative situations of desperation and stranded existences, Ceylanian trysts, landscapes and human encounters also tend to be tinged with the fleeting hue of nostalgic daydream, and the lustre of unspoken aches. So often in Ceylan's films what is most important goes unsaid, and remains unsayable; with the open ciphers of lonely wanderers, something from beyond the images and dialogue of the films stirs. *Three Monkeys* (*Üç Maymun*) starts with a night sequence in which a lone man drives along an unlit and isolated road; he hits something – a human being. With this, Servet, an ambitious politician, takes the decision to drive away and leave the body. This self-interested decision kick-starts a sequence of events which soon implicates the lives and familial relationships of Servet's driver Eyüp. This paper explores, analyses and discusses the characters and narrative of Ceylan's *Three Monkeys*, using the philosophical of Ernst Bloch, Marc Augé, and Friedrich Nietzsche.

Keywords: Ceylan; Bloch; Nietzsche; Augé; oblivion; anacoluthon

Nuri Bilge Ceylan

With international film successes as *Distant* (2002), *Climates* (2006), *Three Monkeys* (2008), *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (2011), and *Winter Sleep* (2014), the contemporary Turkish film director Nuri Bilge Ceylan has established himself as one of the most original and provocative Directors of the 21st century. It is curious therefore that to date there has been relatively little attempt by film and cultural studies scholars to explore the highly distinctive style, mood and thematic preoccupations of his film-making. Ceylan's films encapsulate several acute tensions and seemingly irreconcilable paradoxes, contradictory tendencies that are best understood as

moments of dialectical interplay. His work should also be understood in terms of the presence/absence of relationships and connections, as myths of modern urban living, imbued with alienation and isolation, and populated by estranged characters, who ironically pursue loneliness as a cure for their inability to form meaningful and enduring social and sexual relationships. In this respect, Ceylan's cinema has an indispensable diagnostic value for the atomising tendencies of metropolitan modernity, urban identity, and the ambiguous space of the ambivalent existence of the stranger in exile.

Ceylan's lonely characters, with failing or failed relationships, and unwanted proximities, make for awkward silences. There is a pervasive inability or unwillingness to speak, a communication breakdown on screen that is not a lapse or pause between some kind of silent state of exception, but rather an enduring condition of incommunicability punctured and punctuated by occasional voices. So often in Ceylan's films what is most important goes unsaid, indeed remains unsayable. This is a cinema of silence. Sometimes 'movies', sometimes 'talkies', and sometimes neither. Undisturbed by action, uninterrupted by chatter, the screen is left empty for something else: time as suspension, time as the in-between.

Aspects of Ceylan's films evoke landscapes, characters and themes of undisclosed longing, sympathetic to the philosophical framework of the Marxist utopian thinker Ernst Bloch,[1] Ceylan's films contain (and provoke) traces of stalled and stranded existences. Shifting and drifting, the ubiquitous 'Now' time of Ceylanian trysts, landscapes and human encounters are often tinged with the fleeting hue of wistful daydream, and the lustre of an unspoken ache to progress towards some kind of redemptive moment. Adorning the canvas of each film with

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[1] Ernst Simon Bloch was born on 8 July 1885 to a working-class Jewish family in the German industrial city of Ludwigshafen. After a long and varied life and eventual academic career (Bloch didn't gain his first formal academic position until he was in his 60s), he died in 1977 in Tübingen; for more detailed information and discussion of aspects of Bloch's work see: Hudson (1982), Geoghegan (196), and Hammond (2017).

open ciphers of lonely wanderers, Ceylanian anti-heroes psychically murmur something from beyond the images and dialogue of the film. In concealing the undercurrents of inner moments, the un-narrated traces take us beyond the visual context and narrative specifics of each film.[2] An ideological or cultural surplus dwells, invisibly, on the periphery of Ceylan's films. Beyond the immediate intention and authority of Ceylan as auteur, each film functions as a malleable utopian hieroglyph, which harbours – no matter how distant or obliterated – echoes of transformative possibility.[3] Thwarted hopes and spoiled experiences produce wish-landscapes for a redemption that is not-yet conceivable,[4] but always latent within alternative potential scenarios. Memories and traces embedded in each subjective past give form to unspent anticipations. Thus the uncanny utopian ciphers of death, loss, hopelessness (and, the latency of hope) continually manifest across his films; these remain open enough to chaotically invoke the mirage of a territory that is beyond any grounded conception. Landscapes and fleeting memories, flashback to regrets and hauntings from the past speak with the potent currency of a contemporary relevance.

Incorporating a further application of Ernst Bloch's work on the *Trace*, Ceylan's films can be understood as having further utopian importance; they activate personal catalogues of

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[2] Benjamin Korstvedt, *Listening for Utopia in Ernst Bloch's Musical Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 36-37, emphasizes this aspect of Blochian thinking, suggesting that art and culture, perceived as puzzle or cipher, provides, 'access to the inner-realm, and this is needed, for in the darkness of the lived moment … we encounter something that reaches beyond and can break through not only the error of the world, but the prison house of the existentially specific'.

[3] Here, Bloch would suggest that, 'every act of anticipating identifies itself to the utopian function, and the latter seizes on all possible substance in the surplus of the former' (See Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, (London: Blackwell, 1986), 150)

[4] Hudson (1982) summarises Bloch's eclectic and fluid use of the notion of the 'not-yet': 'not yet' may mean 'not so far', in which case it refers to the past as well as to the present. Then 'not yet' may mean 'still not', implying that something expected or envisaged in the past has failed to eventuate. Here the stress falls on the past non-occurrence, and in some cases this failure to eventuate in the past increases the likelihood of a future realisation. This ambiguity is even stronger in German since noch-nicht means both 'still not' and 'not yet'. Or 'not yet' may mean not so far, but 'expected in the future' … the utopian 'not yet' … implies that something is 'conceivable now but not yet possible'; and the eschatological 'now and not yet', which implies that the end is 'present now in a problematic manner, but still to come in its actual realisation'. Bloch uses all of these senses of 'not yet' (Hudson, 1982, p. 20)

*t*races and fragments of hope, which in turn elicit murmurs of potential, of alternative and transformed possibility.[5] Confronted with reminders of incomplete material from the past – spectrally lingering in the present – a creative engagement with an unfolding of *thought-images* and undisclosed possibilities can emerge.[6] Traces thus emit a peculiar ability to act as mediatory reminders of stalled hope and possibility. As Bloch insists, nothing 'is more human than venturing beyond what is … [a]nd humans on earth can alter course toward a destination that has not yet been decided – toward redemption or perdition' (Bloch 1998, 345).[7] The Blochian trace within the context of Ceylan's films represents a concentric and powerful principle of loss, mourning and regret. But, in the cyclical perdition of Ceylan's characters and loneliness-reverberating landscapes, there is no immediate or remediable solution for a good or certain future.

Three Monkeys

Three Monkeys (2008) Ceylan's sixth film production starts with a night sequence, a lone man driving his car along an unlit and isolated road. The road is winding, and beyond the traces of the rear lights the car is camouflaged in an unyielding darkness. As the camera shot lingers on the expressionless face of the driver, it becomes evident that he is tired. Navigating the twists and turns of the meandering lane, his heavy and sleep-inducing eyelids keep trying to close. As the car drives on, we see it slip further in to the distance; as the red tail-lights dim and disappear, the car turns a corner and manoeuvres out of sight. And then, out of the enveloping black silence a distant sound of screeching tyres pierces the moment; the approaching headlights of

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[5] Indeed, Bloch offers his own work as a hieroglyphic trace-cipher; as Frederic Jameson notes, Bloch's work radiates, 'a peculiar inner warmth and power, spells and the key to spells, themselves patiently waiting for their own ultimate moment of decipherment'. See Frederic Jameson, "A Marxist Hermeneutic III: Ernst Bloch and the Future" *in* F. Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 158-9

[6] See Jack Zipe's comments in *The Utopian Function of Art & Literature.*

[7] For more detailed and related discussions see Ernst Bloch (1977) 'Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to Its Dialectics', *New German Critique,* Spring 1977, issue 11, p: 31; Ernst Bloch (1976) 'Dialectics and Hope', *New German Critique,* Fall 1976, issue 9, pgs: 6-8; Douglas Kellner & Harry O'Hara (1976) 'Utopia and Marxism in Ernst Bloch', *New German Critique,* Fall 1976, issue 9, pgs: 21-25.

another oncoming vehicle slowly discloses the scene. The rain-glistening road reveals the aftermath of an accident. A body, concealed under the crumpled dark heap of an overcoat, lies motionless in the road; the somnambulistic driver character from the first car has hit a pedestrian. To avoid detection, the slinking character scurries away and hides behind the façade of his now stationary vehicle; and in a cowardly crouch he watches as two concerned but wary witnesses slowly drive past, note-down his vehicle registration and call the police. With this, the first driver, Servet – a cunning and ambitious politician – takes the decision to drive away and leave the body. In the early hours of the morning, Servet calls Eyüp (his driver) at home and demands that they urgently meet up. Against the serene backdrop of a dawn-lit harbour, they meet, and a lighthouse intersperses the dialogue as it emits the pulsing red beacon of a warning. With the following dialogue, Serve*t* sets in place an egoistic and self-interested chain of events that destructively implicate Eyüp and the lives and relationships of Eyüp's family.

> [Servet]: I just called the lawyer. He says they won't suspect anything since you're my driver. Six months' maximum. A year at the most. At least you'll get a lump sum when you're out. You know I'd never ask you if I wasn't running in the elections. If anyone hears about the accident, on the eve of the elections, my political career will end right there. You know that. They're just waiting to nail me, the bastards. Your son can get your salary every month. I'll pay the lump sum in cash when you get out. How's that? Let's not get the banks involved. Just in case. OK?
>
> [Eyüp]: OK. No problem.

With this verbal transaction, the first two monkeys of the film are revealed. The first is the morally and emotionally bankrupt Servet who 'sees no evil' in the illegal and devastating consequences of the road accident, or indeed the cowardly nature of his request for Eyüp to take responsibility for his actions. Complicit with this, Eyüp's subsequent silence – in going to

prison for the reckless actions of his egoistic and self-serving boss – belies the actions of a character who 'speaks nothing' about the *evil* of the criminal and reprehensible situation. Whilst obviously aware of the difficulty and disruption that this arrangement will cause for his wife Hacer and son İsmail, Eyüp does not allow this to puncture the silence of his unspoken acquiescence. He leaves Hacer to look after the house and to supervise the evidently idle and apathetic İsmail.

Non-Place: Home as Shipwreck

The family home is a precarious and breath-taking edifice of gravity-defying wonder, the construction of the unusual building resembles the jammed bow of a grounded ship, with its wider and upper 'deck' knubbling down to the narrowest part of a hull-type point. This, in turn, slices in to the *terra firma* of land, which seems to (just about) keep it upright, stable and afloat. Aloft the strange and shard-like construction, the family home forms the upper part of the ascending concentricity of dilapidated flats, as though in a stranded location of inescapable and stagnant concrete. The salvage is further buffered by an aggressive and inward-spiking fence, parallel to a sequence of railway tracks. And yet, in the distance, the limitless expanse of the ocean horizon beckons beyond the grounded wreckage; a cruel and permanent taunt. Situated on the top level of the decks, the family habitation serves the nostalgic function of the seafaring trope well. To quote Nietzsche: 'On rope ladders I learned to climb to many a window … to flicker like small flames atop tall masts; a small light, to be sure, and yet a great comfort for stranded sailors and shipwreck survivors!' (Nietzsche 2006, 156). The run-aground characters, physically isolated from the freedom of the sea, can do nothing but play out the suffocating tragedy of their lives against the latent immensity of the horizon.

Hans Blumenberg in *Shipwreck with Spectator*, sympathetic to this perception, proposes that a 'perilous sea voyage … includes coasts and islands, harbours and the high seas, reefs and storms, shallows and calms, sail and rudder, helmsmen and anchorages, compass and astronomical navigation, lighthouses and pilots' (Blumenberg 1997, 7). Importantly, the grounded *ship* of Eyüp's flat, close – but separated from – the serenity of the harbour, and the unspecified journeys of meandering ships, is a disruptive mark which suggests the 'deceptive face of something that is deeply problematic' (Ibid., 10). Jammed in to the sediment of thwarted journeys, Eyüp and his family are subjected to a stagnancy, where 'no one talks any more about voyages and courses, landings and harbours' (Ibid., 73-74). Becalmed on the life-parched and adventureless islands of their lives, a resigned lethargy ossifies the dynamism and freedom of life. Marc Augé corroborates the existential poetics of this view, and notes that those who know how to read the 'resistance and weakness of the shore, of the nature of its rocks and its soil, of its faults and its fractures' (Augé 1995, 20), can see that the 'sea has an initiatory value' (Ibid., 90). In this sense, the tangible immediacy of the harbour, as it reaches out towards the distant ocean, murmurs with metaphysical echoes which elicit a deep yearning and pull towards embarkation and freedom. The inviting immensity of the sea and the harbour conceals a symbolic space of powerful intimacy; a place where memories can either be anchored and crafted or alternatively cast adrift in to the depths of oblivion. This again chimes with Nietzsche

who in *The Birth of Tragedy* calls for us to gaze outwards, as the ocean 'does not always roar, and at times it lies spread out like silk and gold and reveries of graciousness. But hours will come when you will realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity' (Nietzsche 2007, 223).

The aquatic allegory hued with longing and thirst is further borne out by Ceylan's narrative tactics in relation to Hacer and İsmail's names. Hacer as a name is a variation on *Hagar*, who, in Abrahamic theologies was the slave of Abram's wife, *Sarai*, and, in order to conceive a child for *Abram*, became his second wife (or concubine). As the biblical narrative goes, *Hagar*, pregnant with Abram's child, challenges the authority of Sarai, and in the consequences of the aftermath abandons the tribe. An angel finds Hagar in the desert by a fountain, close to the region of *Shur*.[8] As a result of the encounter, Hagar returns to Abram and Sarai, and, as prophesied provides him with a son named İsmail. A number of years later, as a result of *Sarai's* jealousy of İsmail – being the first born son, and the rightful heir to Abraham's inheritance – both Hagar and İsmail are expelled from the tribe. Depleted of their meagre rations of bread and water, they wander the barrenness of the desert and call out to God for water. Within the narrative context of *Three Monkeys*, the stranded and precarious structure of the family flat (or, *Shur*) serves to shelter the family from a different type of desert, one that is 'surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral' (Augé 1995, 78). In the fractured and disaggregated exile of their lives (a contemporary *state* that Augé would refer to as supermodernity) they 'are always, and never, at home' (Ibid., 19). This transient form of non-place and human experience is lived out in 'places and spaces, places and non-spaces [which] intertwine and tangle together. The possibility of non-place is never

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[8] For the biblical story surrounding Abram, Sarai and Hagar see Genesis 15-17 & 21. Interestingly, Moses could find no water in the desert wilderness of *Shur* (see Exodus 15:22); *Shur* can be translated as an enclosure, a wall, or, a 'part'.

absent from any place. Place becomes a refuge to the habitué of non-places' (Ibid., 107). As such the physically disconnected and existentially stranded context of the vessel of their home is reminiscent of a shelter for shipwrecked survivors, marooned on an alien and inhospitable land.[9]

Further, the ruinous shell of their grounded abode, with its lack of connection to the immediate and surrounding location (throughout the film, there are no significant developments of community, human networks or productive relational connections) is also devoid of historical reference points or mutual legacies of human and cultural heritage. Meaningful traces of other human lives with roots or belonging are markedly absent; the home is therefore a space of mourning; bereft and obliterated, it harbours a dystopian 'now' and apocalyptic future. The architectural space of their domestic vessel is therefore a palimpsest 'on which the scrambled game of identity and relations' (Ibid., 79), are rewritten as on a shifting canvass.

Another trope of isolation and separation within the film, which further emphasises the geographical schism between the stranded survivors and the freedom of the sea is the disruptive slash of the train tracks. Here, the rigid trammelling of the tracks with the scheduled and predictable operation of the timetabled trains is a powerful juxtaposition to the skimming fluidity of the seafaring meander. Interestingly, İsmail makes a regular train journey to visit Eyüp in prison; indeed, as we observe and witness the first of İsmail's prison visits, İsmail makes an initial move to transcend the imposition of separation between the ocean and stranded ship of home. As İsmail successfully scales the inward-spiking fence, his implied escape is headed off by an oncoming train. The train here is a powerful metaphor for the anchorage of his confined and mundane life. Confronted by this mechanized colossus of pre-assigned fate,

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[9] See also: Suner, A (2011) A Lonely and Beautiful Country: Reflecting Upon the State of Oblivion in Turkey Through Buri Bilge Ceylan's Three Monkeys, Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, Vol. 12. No. 1.

İsmail shifts from the azimuth line of his ocean-facing ascent, to the perpendicularity of a walk alongside (and the ultimate journey inside) the rumbling capsule. As de Certeau (1984) notes, once subjected to the confinement of the train carriage, nothing inside or outside really moves:

> The unchanging traveller is pigeonholed, numbered, and regulated in the grid of the railway car … Everything has its place in a gridwork. Only a rationalized cell travels. A bubble of panoptic and classifying power, a module of imprisonment that makes possible the production of an order, a closed and autonomous insularity … the iron rail whose straight line cuts through space and transforms the serene identities of the soil into the speed with which they slip away into the distance (de Certeau 1984, 111-112).

Hear no Evil and the Spectre of Oblivion

Desperate to get İsmail in to some form of work, Hacer reluctantly agrees to secure some money to purchase a car. She arranges to visit Servet in his office, to ask him to release a portion of the money promised to Eyüp on his release from prison. The stilted meeting is punctuated by a telephone call made to Hacer's mobile. Somewhat humorously, it takes a considerable amount of time for her to locate the ringing phone in her handbag. In a narrative sense this is fortuitous, as it allows the prophetic lyrics of the ring-tone to play out, lyrics which offer the following warning:

> *I hope you love and aren't loved back. I hope love hurts you like it hurts me. I hope you yearn and are never reunited, like I was never reunited. I hope your heart is made to melt, just like a candle. I hope despair is always at your door, waiting just like a slave. I hope your heart is stolen away, just like wares from a market stall.*

As a result of being offered a lift home by Servet, Hacer is ultimately seduced by him, and the prophecy of ruin and despair, articulated by the lyrics from the song, remain unheard by Hacer. She gravitates towards the betrayal and inevitable shipwreck of the encounter. Indeed, the

lyrical references to yearning, being a slave and despair are again suggestive of the biblical roots of Hacer's name: Hagar the slave, the mother of İsmail, exiled from the tribe of Abraham, denied the rightful inheritance for her son (Isaac, Abraham and Sarah's son, was born after İsmail, and yet Isaac received Abraham's inheritance). Intriguingly, *Three Monkeys* atmospherically reveals the spectre of thwarted heritage, in quite a literal sense, in the form of a ghostly boy-figure. In İsmail's apparition, maintaining the aquatic *leitmotif*, the boy is dripping with *water*. A brief one-word reference from İsmail identifies the spectral vision as a trace apparition of his brother. The young boy-spectre appears one more time, with the drape of an arm over Eyüp's neck, as he rests on a bed in the flat after his release from prison (contemplating his suspicion that Hacer had an affair with Servet while he was locked away). The uncanny apparition of the brother (or, the son) is never explicitly explored or discussed as part of the film's narrative. The spectre of thwarted heritage, and the latency of redemption or restoration disrupts and provokes the unfolding story but is never given a cause, context or explanation.

The *Three Monkeys'* spectral apparition is therefore anacoluthic.[10] In this sense the dead child – as younger brother or lost son – as *spectral-anacoluthon* inserts an interruption or discontinuation in to the otherwise steady flow of image and dialogue. From this definition, the non-narrated *anacoluthon,* located on the threshold of the regular syntax of the film, represents a deviation, a rupture, a break and fragment of incompletion. Derrida defines the speculative nature of anacoluthon, emphasizing that it is 'more than a figure of rhetoric, despite appearances, it signals in any case toward the beyond of rhetoric within rhetoric. Beyond grammar within grammar' (Derrida 2002, 167).[11] Linking the disruptive principles of anacoluthon to the spectre, Derrida and Stiegler further note that the 'spectre is first and foremost something visible. It is of the visible, but of the invisible visible, it is the visibility of a body which is not present in flesh and blood' (Derrida and Stiegler 2002, 115). Similarly, de Certeau suggests that the uncanny space projected and provoked by spirits and spectres produces a 'poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, or permitted meaning' (de Certeau 1984, 105). A spectre therefore consists of debris, a lingering remnant loaded with rich silences or wordless stories, 'opaque acts … articulated by lacunae' (Ibid., 107). As such, spectral meanings:

> do not speak any more than they see. This is a sort of knowledge that remains silent. Only hints of what is known but unrevealed … fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state (Ibid., 105).

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[10] A literal translation of *an-akolouthos* suggests "not following" or disruption in relation to an otherwise patterned sequence of communication, which serves to fracture the synthesis of the whole.

[11] Many thanks to Nathaniel J. P. Barron for affording access to his unpublished PhD thesis: 'Language in Ernst Bloch's Materialism: A Reading of Anacoluthon', and in so doing expanding my understanding of anacoluthon.

The anacoluthic and spectral image of the boy in *Three Monkeys* harbours the historical wreckage of a wordless hollow space, and the oblivion of memory. Here the past sleeps 'in the everyday acts of walking, eating, going to bed, in which ancient revolutions slumber' (Ibid., 108). Further, Augé observes that 'memory itself needs forgetfulness' (Augé 2004, 3), and that the forgetfulness and silence of oblivion is necessary for both society and the individual as it is essential to forget in order to, at some point, remember the incomplete character of the present. Thus, memory and oblivion 'in some way have the same relationship as life and death' (Ibid., 14). Where the forgetfulness of oblivion is associated with death, the defibrillation of memory is associated with birth and life. This 'brings in turn conceptions of death into play (death as another life or death as inherent to life) that in turn command the roles given to memory and oblivion' (Ibid., 15). From the oblivion of forgetting, to the spectrality and shocking re-emergence of remembrance, the feeling that something is missing opens up, revealing a void that is imbued with the fleeting ache for restoration and fulfilment. Through the stifled and constricted burden of their confessional aches, İsmail and Eyüp – loaded with their spectral revelations – lumber through their lives with a nostalgic burden of incompleteness.

Here we must also consider the importance of the astonishment associated with the impromptu appearance of the spectre, which irrupts out of the experience of the *empty-space*. In this context Bloch, in 'Excavation of the Brocken' makes a tentative connection to the beauty of the Harz Mountains in Germany and the notion of the Brocken Spectre (Bloch 1998). The Harz mountain range is the location of the Brocken mountain peak from where the spectral apparition known as the Brocken Spectre derives its name. Bloch's analytical flirtation with the evocation of the beautiful mystery and emptiness of the Brocken tentatively develops this notion of spectral astonishment, and is well worth elaboration and development, particularly in relation to the spectral apparition in *Three Monkeys*. Bloch notes that the Brocken spectral

apparition is like taking a pilgrimage back in to childhood, where no adequate word exists for the space and emptiness generated by its haunting apparition. The ancient knells which ring from the soundbow of the spectral hollow-space, act as reminders that poignant and unsettling visitations, hearken to the intriguing centre of a primordial *astonishment* – the revelation of a *secret in broad daylight* (Bloch 1998, 388-89).

The Brocken Spectre is a phenomenon traditionally associated with the study of *atmospheric optics.*[12] As an optical effect, it appears in places of higher altitude. Brocken spectres only reveal themselves under specific atmospheric conditions, notably, when a low-lying sun flanks a hillwalker or mountain climber (on one side), complemented, on the opposing side, with a mist or fog-bank. When both altitude and climatic conditions are conducive, a Brocken-spectral optical effect may be produced. The effect itself consists of a bright, concentrically ringed glory, which surrounds the 'shadow of the observer's head' (Talman 1913, 275). *Punctured* through the centre of the glory, we find the projected empty-space of a dark and vacuous shadow, an emulatory emptiness, which mimics the particular shape of the climber's human form. Significantly, the initial appearance of the spectral visitation in *Three Monkeys* closely resembles this depiction.

This particular atmospheric phenomenon has been embraced and creatively explored by writers such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth and Thomas De Quincey. This is due to the fact that the Brocken Spectre constitutes a potent symbol of an alienated

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[12] Naylor, J. (2002) *Out of the Blue: A 24-hour Skywatcher's Guide,* p: 39-46. Cambridge Uni Press; Lynch, D. K. & Livingston, W. (2001) *Colour and Light in Nature,* 2nd Ed, p: 11. Cambridge Uni Press. See also Tape, Walter. (1994) *Atmospheric Halos.* Antarctic Research Series, Vol. 64. American Geophysical Union, Washington; Tape, Walter. & Moilanen, Jarmo. (2006) *Atmospheric Halos and the Search for Angle X,* American Geophysical Union, Washington.

subject (Wright 1980). The Brocken-spectral effect produces a human shadow which is created by but separated from nature. Further, the haunting apparition of the Brocken Spectre has a peculiar ability to reveal to its witnesses their 'alienation' who 'rather than recognising [their] shadow as a projected Form of [their] own Being ... recoil from it as from a Spectre' (Gaston 2004). This is attributable to the metaphoric power of the idea (and also meditations on) the emptiness of the human-shadow; the spectral apparition articulates in some way an outward manifestation of something hidden or concealed within the human psyche. Thus the Spectre stands as a projected alien 'in opposition to its creator' (Prickett 1970, 23).

The shock of remembrance

We can also relate the anacoluthic spectrality of thwarted heritage and missed opportunity in *Three Monkeys* to Bloch's work on the *déjà vu*. Here, the disorientating moment of an uncanny experience irrupts as a re-encounter with a place, image or person. The re-visitation emerges in such a way that it appears to contain the experiential roots of having been lived through before (already seen). However, the *déjà vu* via Bloch suggests that such fleeting and momentary experiences contain the undeciphered code of a utopian latency. The strange encounter is inevitably bordered by a sense of shock, as the occurrence interrupts and disrupts the stability and routine of everyday life. As a seemingly forgotten and fleeting fragment, the intensity of the resurfacing of its content ruptures through the temporal experience and routine of the present. A troubling event, it is as though an archived remembrance, of a replicated moment is suddenly lived in the same way. However, for Bloch, the *déjà vu* experience does not contain the replicative material of an already-seen and identically experienced 'life'. Rather, for him, the *déjà vu* encounter is activated by 'an inner state that has been touched upon previously in an identical fashion, in much the same circumstances . . . only the intention, not the content, of an experience occurs' (Bloch 1998, 201-2). The apparition of the ghostly child operates as a cipher which shocks and reawakens the recognition of a disrupted fragment from

the past, one which is littered with associations of aborted beginnings and stalled possibilities. However, the imaginative space which emerges from the shadow of the apparition has the potential to transform into a point of creative growth (Ibid. 39). As such, the latency associated with re-seeing the spectral apparition of the lost brother or son is shocking, because it reflects back to its witnesses an existential fall into *something* that has been broken off, interrupted, or overlooked.

Bloch establishes a further distinction between the act of merely recollecting a memory, which he terms *anamnesis*, and a more active or future-potent form of memory associated with an active recognition, which he terms *anagnorisis*. The notion of *anamnesis*, is taken from the Platonic doctrine that all knowledge arises from the recollection of images and Forms already *seen* in the transcendental world before birth (Hudson 1982, 78). It suggests that we have knowledge only because we previously knew, and that the recollection of memorial matter unfolds as though everything has been already and previously Formed (Landmann 1975). Alternatively, *anagnorisis*, as a quite distinct and separate understanding, refers to the process of recognition. Bloch repurposes this Aristotelian notion to articulate the momentary shock and recognition of *absence* within the immediacy of the lived moment, a recognition tinged with the notion that something is missing and needs to be actively and creatively pursued. As Micheal Landmann usefully notes here:

> *Anamnesis* provides the reassuring evidence of complete similarity; *anagnorisis*, however, is linked with reality by only a thin thread; it is therefore alarming. *Anamnesis* has an element of attenuation about it, it makes everything a gigantic *déjà vu*, as if everything had already been ... But *anagnorisis* is a shock ... In *anagnorisis* there must always be a distance between the former and present reality otherwise it wouold not be so difficult and astonishing (Landmann 1975, 178-79).

Unlike Platonic *anamnesis*, anagnoretic trace recollections are unfinished and contain subjective traces of possibility. *Anagnorisis* therefore takes account of the potential of the future as being loaded with unarticulated traces of alternative possibility; and, with this, the ability to move towards overcoming the past and transforming the future (Luz 1993, 364).

Within the spectrum of different notions of oblivion, memory and recognition sketched out above, *Three Monkeys* contains and develops a set of dominant themes that are quite anamnetic and Nietzschean in nature. In referring to the eternal return, Nietzsche writes, everything 'becomes and recurs eternally – escape is impossible!' (Nietszche 1968, 545), and 'the mechanistic and the Platonic – are reconciled in the eternal recurrence' (Ibid. 546). In more detail, he clarifies:

> The world, even if it is no longer a god, is still supposed to be capable of the divine power of creation, the power of infinite transformations; it is supposed to consciously prevent itself from returning to any of its old forms; it is supposed to possess not only the intention but the means of avoiding any repetition; to that end, it is supposed to control every one of its movements at every moment [but] … the world, as force, may not be thought of as unlimited, … the world [. . . lacks] the capacity for eternal novelty … everything that has been is eternal: the sea will cast it up again (Ibid. 548).

The Nietzschean proposition that the Platonic, anamnetic and inescapable madeness of the world is ultimately replicative and eternal, chimes with the narrrative, characters and characteristics of the *Three Monkeys*; the themes and events constantly oscillate between foreseeable and more-or-less predictable scenarios. Throughout the film there is the continual sense that the characters are trapped within cycles of repetitive and fatalistic actions. Thus Hacer continually returns to the futility of Servet's affections, but more striking, and of particular note, is Eyüp's approach to Bayram in the café, where he repeats the previous pattern

of bribery and corruption (instigated by Servet) in an attempt to persuade Bayram to take responsibility for İsmail's murder of Servet.

However, with the more explicit tryptich of see, speak and hear no evil, the spectrality of the past murmurs an unspoken message of the future. In some renderings of the proverb of the three monkeys, there is a fourth – albeit missing – element, the monkey that represents the action of "do no evil". This is the missing fourth element within *Three Monkeys*. Plagued by repetition, and a seeming inability to act differently and so escape their fate, the characters each harbour at least the potential to choose to act, and so live differently. Indeed, there is a distinction between 'doing' and 'seeing' (Augé 1995, 80), and one of the difficulties associated with the Nietzschean notion of continuity and eternal return is that the 'discontinuities of lived duration generally prohibit an integral regaining of what one has left' (Augé 2004, 71). In this sense, the spectre of the child inserts a trace of possibility into the film (however slight) which, in turn, suggests a latency of redemptive possibility.

Let us, in order to further articulate this trace of possibility, return to Bloch and his doctrine of the *not-yet*. In conversation with an old friend, Bloch set out the following philosophically loaded formula:

> 'All great philosophers have been able to reduce their thought to one sentence … What would your sentence be?' Bloch puffed on his pipe for a moment and then said, 'That's a hard trap to get out of. If I answer, then I'm making myself out to be a great philosopher. But if I'm silent, then it will appear as though I have a great deal in mind but not much I can say. But I'll play the brash one instead of the silent one and give you this sentence: S is not yet P (Bloch 1970, 9).

With this, Bloch invokes the Aristotelian category of "Subject is Predicate" (or '*S* is *P*'), meaning that 'subject' or *Being* is ultimately predicated, established, or completed. However,

with the addition of his category of the not-yet, Bloch reformulates and challenges the assumptions inherent in this postulate. In order to appreciate the wider implications of Bloch's challenge to the 'S is P' formula, we must also consider Bloch's repurposed notion of Aristotle's related concept of *entelechy* or creative matter.

In *The Metaphysics* Aristotle asserts that 'No one can believe that the same thing both is and is-not ... It is, then, not possible for opposites to be in the same subject at the same time' (Aristotle 2004, 88). However, Aristotle recognizes the need to account for change and transformation. Thus within the Aristotelian schema alterations can and do occur, but these ultimately are a result of transitions associated with non-essential features. Change is therefore a manifestation of superficial flux, which leaves the fundamental constitution of 'subject' unaffected. It is this Aristotelian aspect that 'S is Not-Yet P' challenges. For Bloch, the entirety of matter (whether subjective substance, or otherwise) is open to fundamental adaptations and changes. Matter is 'not yet' in the sense that what the final state of matter can be is undetermined' (Hudson 1982, 137). In this sense the formula 'S is Not-Yet P' fundamentally inverts the Aristotelian proposition 'S is P'.[13] For Bloch, contradictory states can indeed co-habit the same subjective life world. The foundation and matter of 'subject' both *is* and is *not-yet.* This means that the immediacy of *Now*, draped in the apparel of the past, is co-existent within and dialectically coupled with the perpetual immanence of the future. With Bloch, therefore, matter, subject and the future boil down to a latent and mysterious puzzle, which anagnoretically contains the possibility of fresh developments, new knowledge and

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[13] In relation to this, Bloch notes that, 'Aristotle brought out the crucial idea ... of real, objective possibility, according to which matter, apart from being the mechanical condition for phenomenon to arise *Kata to dynaton* ("according to possibility"), was also, above all, the *dynamei on*, the "being-in-possibility" itself. Unfortunately, this was still thought of in passive terms: matter was as undefined as a lump of wax, and the "active, formative idea" impressed the particular form into it like a seal' (Bloch, 2009, p. 215).

transformative actions. Thus Bloch's anticipatory ontology of hope suggests that subjective and wider collective futures are far from settled. Rather, in order to arrive at new destinations, we have to embark and journey towards new possible ideas or *ideals*

Herein lies the crux of the spectral theme of *Three Monkeys*, that whilst the dominant and indeed living characters within the film present themselves as solidified and un-malleable subjectivities, tamed and encapsulated into a stranded vessel of fatalism, a latent and alternative possibility haunts them and lingers. The spectre of the not-yet, on the periphery of the apparent fate of Eyüp, Hacer and İsmail, harbours a latent seed of potential waiting to be invoked. As such, the powerful habits and expectations associated with socially and relationally constrained routines pause the pseudo-finite and enclosed recurrence of a pre-assigned and inescapable fate. Servet, Eyüp and Hacer – see no evil, speak no evil, and hear no evil – play out and embody as anthropomorphic characters the Platonic and Nietzschean doctrines of recurrence and repetition. However, the creative and anagnoretic traces elicited by the spectre of thwarted childhood (the boy spectre), and İsmail's stolen heritage at the hands of corrupt, self-interested and immoral 'others', suggest that redemption and the hidden latency of restoration is indeed possible.

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