Echoes of Opposition

The Power of Dualities in Art. II. Visual Arts

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Resumen: El concepto de dialéctica, arraigado en la filosofía, se ha extendido a diversos ámbitos, desde la política hasta el arte. En esta segunda parte del artículo, sostengo que las obras de arte visual más impactantes —que abarcan la pintura, el cine y la arquitectura— derivan su fuerza estética y emocional de la interacción de elementos opuestos. Así como la dialéctica sustenta el equilibrio dinámico del mundo físico, también constituye la base de la expresión artística, donde los contrastes —luz y sombra, movimiento y quietud, orden y caos— coexisten para generar resonancia con la mente humana. Mediante la recopilación de diversos ejemplos y la incorporación de ideas de una amplia gama de fuentes académicas y no académicas, propongo que la manera en que las contradicciones se entrelazan en una obra de arte es el factor determinante de su efecto cautivador. De este modo, este análisis subraya cómo el gran arte no solo refleja la estructura dialéctica de la realidad, sino que también guía a su espectador hacia un modo de percepción más amplio e integrador.

Palabras clave: artes visuales; dialéctica; pintura; cine.

Resumo: O conceito de dialética, enraizado na filosofia, se estendeu a diversos campos, da política à arte. Nesta segunda parte do artigo, defendo que as obras de arte visual mais impactantes — que abrangem a pintura, o cinema e a arquitetura — derivam sua força estética e emocional da interação de elementos opostos. Assim como a dialética sustenta o equilíbrio dinâmico do mundo físico, ela também constitui a base da expressão artística, onde os contrastes — luz e sombra, movimento e quietude, ordem e caos — coexistem para gerar ressonância com a mente humana. Por meio da compilação de vários exemplos e da incorporação de ideias de uma ampla gama de fontes acadêmicas e não acadêmicas, proponho que a maneira como as contradições se entrelaçam em uma obra de arte é o fator determinante de seu efeito cativante. Assim, esta análise destaca como a grande arte não apenas reflete a estrutura dialética da realidade, mas também guia seu espectador para um modo de percepção mais amplo e integrador.

Palavras-chave: artes visuais; dialética; pintura; cinema.

Abstract: The concept of dialectics, long established in philosophy, has been expanded across various domains, from politics to art. In this second part of the paper, I argue that the most compelling works of visual art – encompassing painting, film, and architecture – derive their aesthetic and emotional power from the interplay of opposing elements. Just as dialectics underpins the dynamic balance of the physical world, it also forms the foundation of artistic expression, wherein contrasts – light and shadow, motion and stillness, order and chaos – coexist to create resonance with the human mind. By compiling a diverse array of examples and drawing insights from a wide range of academic and nonacademic sources, I propose that the manner in which contradictions are interwoven within a work of art is the key determinant of its captivating effect. In doing so, this analysis underscores how great art not only mirrors the dialectical structure of reality but also guides its audience toward a broader, more integrative mode of perception.

Key words: visual arts; dialectics; painting; films.

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1. Introduction

Art, in its most profound expressions, mirrors the fundamental structures of reality. One of those quintessential structures is dialectics. Manifested as the interplay of opposites, dialectics represents the tension between contrasting forces that fuels movement, transformation, and meaning. Just as nature thrives on the balance between opposing elements, so too does art derive its depth and resonance from the synthesis of contradictions. Whether in painting, film, architecture, or performance, the fusion of light and dark, chaos and order, restraint and excess, realism and abstraction defines the aesthetic power of great artistic works.

In what follows, I present a compilation of examples that illustrate this dialectical nature across a wide spectrum of artistic disciplines. Beginning with painting and moving through film, architecture and performance arts, the lyrical exploration that follows will try to demonstrate how the dynamic interplay of opposing elements underpins the most captivating and thought-provoking artistic creations. By examining these works through the lens of dialectics, I argue that their emotional and intellectual impact is rooted in their ability to reconcile contrasts, guiding the observer toward a richer and more profound engagement with art and, ultimately, with reality itself. The sporadic lyricality of the ensuing analysis is justified by the thesis that the authentic discourse on art must be artistic, both in terms of its form and its content.

2. Examples in paintings

Conflicts of colors, shade, symbols, shape, tone, rhythm or other visual qualities are defining traits discernible across the majority of influential paintings. If we were to attempt to systematically categorize and list contrasts amalgamated to a great aesthetic effect in paintings, they would include (a) motion and constancy, as, for example, in Raphael's *Saint George and the Dragon*, in Degas' *L'Étoile* and *Orchestra Musicians* (Fig.1), in the impressionists' portrayals of agile horsemen in commotion against the hush or subdued background, including Degas' *Racehorses Before the Stands* and *The Gentlemen's Race* and Toulouse-Lautrec's *At the Cirque Fernando, the Rider on a White Horse*, and in Jean Metzinger's *Cycle Race*, where the activity of the futuristic bicyclist in motion is contrasted against the passivity of the spectators painted in and around his face; (b) antagonistic foci of attention, as in Gauguin's *Three Tahitians*, Manet's *Railway* and *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* or Renoir's *Bal du moulin de la Galette,* (c) soft curvatures and sharp edges, as in Kandinsky's abstract paintings, such as *Quiet Harmony*, (d) levelness and tilt, as in Malevich's suprematist paintings, (e) contrasts between color tones, producing vibrant complementarities, as in Carl Wilhelmson's *Churchgoers in a Boat*, Matisse's *White Torso and Blue Torso*, and countless still life paintings over the centuries; (f) compulsion and control, as in the style of Johannes Vermeer, where "the

counterpoint of impulse and restraint" is said to have "reflected a society and a culture where rigors of Calvinism are offset by an exuberant freewheeling economy" (Cottet & Cottet 2017), (g) a sense of the whole invoked by the completeness of the canvas coverage, but countered by the fractured nature of the painting, as in Cezanne's *Bathers* and, subsequently, in Modernism, Cubism and Expressionism, (h) various symbolic "ups" and "downs", as in Turner's *Flint Castle*, for instance, where the Sun on the horizon, sending forth elating bursts of energy towards the viewer, is paired with the dark silhouettes of the weary peasants working on the shore, or in Chagal's *I and the Village* wherein the figure of a dancer is painted upside down, standing on inverted houses, next to an upright peasant holding a scythe and walking past regular row houses.

Furthermore, one of the central contradictions that painters have had to find the compromise for since the earliest days of the visual arts was how "to achieve a sense of depth without sacrificing the brightness of color, to achieve an orderly arrangement without sacrificing the sense of depth" (Gombrich 1989, pp. 543 – 544), that is, how to resolve the struggle between sculpturesque effects achieved with the use of contours or chiaroscuro and coloristic effects on the surface plane. Successful tackling of this contrast abounds through the history of painting, from Giotto's *Faith* to Bellini's *Madonnas* to Degas' ballet dancers to Gauguin's *Daydreaming* to Dali's *Persistence of Memory* to Munch's *Starry Night* to Gorky's *Agony* to Tobey's *New York Tablet*. In all these examples, the depth of perspective and a sense of strikingly intimate directedness of expression are found neatly balanced, with the former expanding the viewer's focus, dissipating the rays of her attention in numerous directions, and the latter recollecting these rays and integrating the derived insights and emotions, ideally into a glaring ball of light that is to explode at one point, yielding similar sprouts of artistic impressions all across the world.

In Leonardo's portrait of sixteen-year old Ginevra de'Benci, stark contrasts that alone and in combination with one another "breathe life into the picture" (Anon. 1998) are innumerable and include the bright, sharply featured girl's face posed over a dim, soft and mysterious landscape, which itself contrasts with the skylight emerging through the dark greenery; the austere, waspish temper suggestible from the far view that transforms into sympathy and curiosity upon a close-up; enigmatism evoked by having the aristocrat girl's left eye look at the viewer, while her right eye gazes into the distance, making her appear as if being in the present moment, but also being immersed in the ocean of infinity; the interplay between light and shadow on and around the figure's face; and a simultaneous sense of distance of the landscape and proximity of the figure. All the while, in spite of this myriad of contrasts, the artist attempted to emulate in the appearance of the Florentine figure the spirit of the juniper bush hovering over this figure, whose name represents a version of *ginepro*, which translates to "juniper", thus creating a fine and lively balance between consonance and dissonance where, it appears, the key to the mastery of any artistic expression lies.

The works of Caravaggio, which stood at the point of transition from Renaissance to Realism, embodying

the characteristic features of both, from *The Boy Bitten by a Lizard* painted in 1594 to *David with the Head of Goliath* painted in the last years of the painter's life, brimmed with ambivalent meanings, in part owing to their "paying implicit recognition to the notion of poetic ambiguity, which seeks to probe the secret of ultimate paradoxes through the suggestive power of certain images" (Gash 2003, pp. 23). The drama between geometry and narrative often seen in Caravaggio is also pervasive in the works by Edward Hopper (Strand 2001, pp. 41-45), one example of which can be *Stairway*, a painting where "everything in the house says, Go; everything outside says, Where?" (Strand 2001, pp. 39), where "the open door is not the innocent passage connecting inside and outside but a gesture paradoxically designed to keep us where we are" (Strand 2001, pp. 39), and where we are torn by an ambivalent impulse that "urges us forward while insisting that we stay" (Strand 2001, pp. 41). In Hopper's most popular work, *Nighthawks*, the viewer is equally split between the impulse to stay, as conveyed by the ethereally lit interior of the diner and the surreally clear patterns reflected by it on the adjacent sidewalk, and the impulse to move on, as conveyed by the isosceles trapezoidal shape of the diner window creating a pull toward a vanishing point extending beyond the frame of the painting, as a result of which the viewer remains magically "suspended between contradictory imperatives – one, governed by the trapezoid, that urges us forward, and the other, governed by the image of a light place in a dark city, that urges us to stay" (Strand 2001, pp. 5). In a personal favorite amongst his paintings, *New York Movie*, a different contrast is embedded, namely that between the gloomy and horizontal, almost subterranean depth of the left side of the painting dominated by the outward-looking moviegoers seated in red plush chairs and the three lights arranged in a perspectival progression shining over them and the bright, vertical, chapel-like depth of the right side of the painting dominated by the inward-looking usherette enwrapped in her thoughts under three more intimate lights, which all along with the slightly skewed perspective of the viewer, watching the film, like other spectators, while also being attracted to the usherette, creates the impression of "enacting two contrary impulses – we are looking both *at* and *in* (the painting), moving between the two as we shift our attention from one side of the canvas to the other" (Strand 2001, pp. 45).

Inasmuch as the art of Wassily Kandinsky is concerned, in an attempt to touch upon its having conflict as a most characteristic subject, the artist referred to "his mother's personality as a mixture of contradictory elements – she combined 'pronounced nervousness' with 'impressive, majestic tranquility'" (Whitford 1999, pp. 15) as a way of justifying countless polarities that raged inside him and craved to be expressed, ranging from the "contradiction between his restless, romantic spirit and the tightly buttoned exterior that he presented to the world" (Whitford 1999, pp. 15) to "the equally insistent demands of intuition and reason" (Whitford 1999, pp. 17), of spontaneity and discipline, of improvisation and calculated precision, to "the conflict between the cerebral and the emotional" (Whitford 1999, pp. 18), which his art could be said to have been, in the end, all about. As a result, the ultimate goal of Kandinsky's art, where "each figure is caught in the nexus of tensions" (Volboudt 1986, pp. 59), was "to show that construction can be achieved according to the 'principle' of dissonance" (Whitford 1999, pp. 17), with "the principle underlying his com-

positions being the one of duality, of opposing pairs" (Volboudt 1986, pp. 61), where "the apparent contradiction masked a fundamental principle of unity in which all things were interlinked" (Volboudt 1986, pp. 61).

Another remarkable example comes from one of the essential techniques used by impressionist painters, a.k.a. pointillism (Gowans 1966, pp. 193), which was to paint small dots of different hues adjacent to one another and thus produce a more intense effect on the eye viewing the painting from a distance than when the individual pigments were mixed into a blend and applied to the canvas as such. Essentially, by painting with double brush strokes of contrasting colors, they allowed the two to emphasize each other and create a vivid visual experience for the viewer, indirectly demonstrating how expressions, regardless of their nature, are intensified when impregnated with antagonisms. To this day, the discovery of this technique stands forth as one of the most notable assignment of the aesthetic quality to contrasts *per se* in the history of art.

Many historians of art would argue that no painter antagonized generations of critics as much as Francisco Goya did, a painter whose work often lay on allusive and ambiguous middle grounds halfway between laconic satire and mystical fervor, derogation and celebration, parody and elegy, patriotism and dissidence and other contradictory sentiments. And if close attention is now paid to a typical Hubert Robert's painting, ruins or ongoing demolishment occupying the central place in it are practically always contrasted with a petite figure or two that radiate with an indestructible life force, be it lively shadows in *Démolition de l'église Saint-Jean-en-Grève* and *The Burning of the Opera at the Palais-Royal* or a mother with a child, a pervasive motif in the French painter's work, in *Ruins by the Water*, *The Seesaw*, *The Burning of Rome*, *The Triumphal Arch and the Theater of Orange*, *A Colonnaded Thermal Building*, *the Roof Partly Open to the Sky, with Girls Washing Clothes*, and many others.

And then, of course, there is the ambiguity of Mona Lisa's smile in da Vinci's famous painting, secretive and mystical, disappearing as soon as we shift our focus away from her pious, yet subtly vivacious eyes. Drawing on this expressional ambiguity, Ernst Gombrich (1989, pp. 300), for one, noticed that "like a living being, she seems to change before our eyes and to look a little different every time we come back to her... Sometimes she seems to mock at us, and then again we seem to catch something like sadness in her smile. All this sounds rather mysterious, and so it is; that is so often the effect of a great work of art". The same trick of imprinting expressional duality on a person's face was used by Christian Rohlfs in the portrait of his mother, looking at which one could not really tell if the old lady is grieving or smiling. Vermeer's female characters did not stray far from these ambiguous grounds and oftentimes, as it is the case with the *Muse of History from the Studio* or *The Girl with a Pearl Earring*, one could recognize in them a mixture of pensive sorrowfulness and whimsical liveliness, of poses that seem simultaneously purposeful and natural, of attracting the viewer's attention and warding it off into wider cosmoses, along with countless other equivocal gestures through which "the substance and movement of life remain beyond the artist's grasp"

(Gowing 1952, pp. 57) and the viewer is left to swim amidst myriads of questions in the attempt to untangle the cryptic actuality from reality (Rashid 2014). It is usually said that from a far distance Vermeer's paintings seem realistic, but as the viewer comes closer to them, they begin to reveal more and more features of a highly subjective, self-invented world (Wiseman 2014), and in this process of trying to figure out which is real and which is abstract, the viewer usually becomes tangled in a web of ambiguities, whose purpose, *de facto*, is to keep him intrigued, to draw him back to the picture over and over again. As for Vermeer's art, another contrast intrinsic to his painting style at thefinest level, the level of a line, was that between contrast *per se* and the lack of it. Namely, thanks to his rare skill as a painter, the boundaries between objects in his paintings struck a fine balance sharpness and softness; or, as pointed out by Gombrich (1989, pp. 433), "like a photographer who deliberately softens the strong contrasts of the picture without blurring the forms, Vermeer mellowed the outlines and yet retained the effect of solidity and firmness; it is this strange and unique combination of mellowness and precision which makes his best paintings so unforgettable". Like the backward glance of Vermeer's girl with a pearl earring, the face and the posture of Rubens' Delilah are said to convey a unique meaning to each viewer thanks to their ambiguities: whether the Judean *femme fatale* displays remorse or relief or fondness for Samson or a spiteful smirk or simply all these emotions together is a permanent subject of dispute. Their meaning is also notable for changing literally day to day in the eyes of regular visitors and curators of the British National Gallery in London (Wiseman 2014), where it currently sits, reminding us of an important purpose that contrasts embedded in a piece of art have: to allow the latter to live forever, to always adopt a slightly different meaning when viewed from different angles and/or with different states of mind. Rubens' *Allegory on the Blessings of Peace*, which the Flemish painter presented to Charles I as a gift in the attempt to call for an armistice between England and Spain, is another notable painting explicating a contrast between conflicting visions in a rarely vivid manner, specifically showing Minerva surrounded by children, bowls of fruit, dancing maenads and a playful panther all bathed in light in the forefront and Mars waging wars under dark clouds in the back. Then, perhaps the most beloved and celebrated of all frescoes adorning Serbian churches, namely the one found in the Mileševa monastery, finest level, the level of a line, was that between contrast per se and the lack of it. Namely, thanks to his rare skill as a painter, the boundaries between objects in his paintings struck a fine balance sharpness and softness; or, as pointed out by Gombrich (1989, pp. 433), "like a photographer who deliberately softens the strong contrasts of the picture without blurring the forms, Vermeer mellowed the outlines and yet retained the effect of solidity and firmness; it is this strange and unique combination of mellowness and precision which makes his best paintings so unforgettable". Like the backward glance of Vermeer's girl with a pearl earring, the face and the posture of Rubens' Delilah are said to convey a unique meaning to each viewer thanks to their ambiguities: whnear the town of Prijepolje, dating back to 1223 AD and depicting the scenery surrounding the Christ's grave, contains the image of an angel in whose countenance a myriad of feelings could be read, from determination and eruptive fecundity to cosmic joy ready to burst into sunshiny smiles and laugh it all off to surreptitious perplexity and hush-hush mystery. Likewise, perpetual symbolic tensions could be

recognized in the paintings by the Serbian painter, Milena Pavlović-Barili, allegedly arising from the artist's yearning to bring together the two separated parents, who had both loved her deeply and affectionately. This she often achieved by splitting the centrally depicted character into its diametrically opposite poles, just as a vector in physics is sometimes divided to two complementary vectors with a 180o angle between them, and paintings such as *Composition*, *Girl with a Lamp*, *Self-Portrait with a Shield and an Eagle*, and *A Clever Virgin and a Crazy Virgin* could be cited as examples. Such an artistic approach prompted Susan Sontag to declare that all Milena expressed, in art and in daily life alike, was a form of an internal dialogue (Anon. 2014). This approach based on the constant impregnation of the work of art with various contradictions can be said to have inspired the next generation of Serbian painters of the 20th Century, including those gathered around the collective known as Mediala, a self-invented compound word coined by combining the Serbian words for honey, "med", and dragon, "ala", hinting at the juxtaposition of sweet and soothing on one side and fiery and tumultuous on the other as a contrast lying at the core of these visual artists' philosophy.

And finally, in the domain of street art painting, we could evoke the beauty of that white paint smeared over a stack of automobile tires, as envisaged by Jean-Michel Basquiat, who had based his approach on the depiction of so-called "suggestive dichotomies", some of which included high society opulence vs. poverty of the slums, abstraction vs. figuration, historicity vs. contemporariness, integration vs. segregation, innerness vs. exteriority, political vs. personality crises, and anarchy vs. automatism (Mayer 2010).

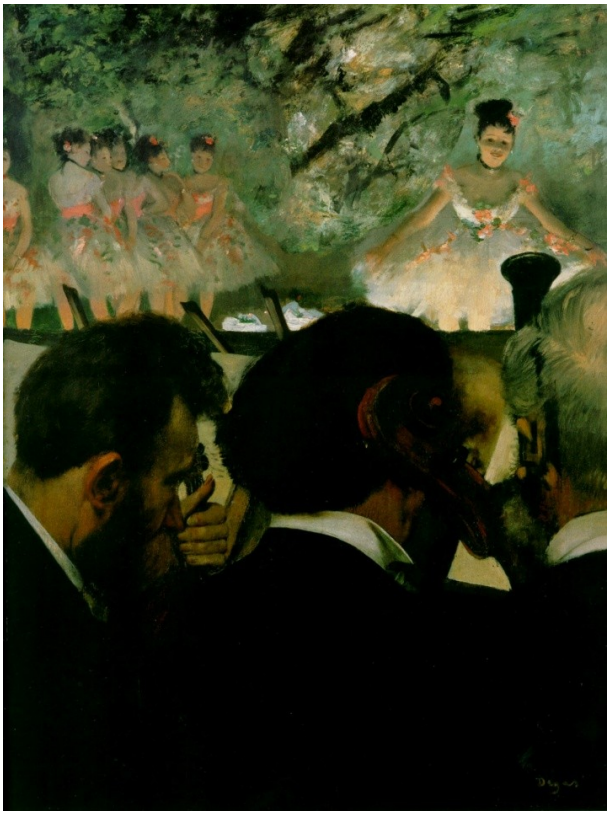

Fig.1. Edgar Degas' *Orchestra Musicians* is a nice illustration of the juxtaposition of contrasts as a key to the secret of the moving character of the works of art. Herein one could notice a striking disparity between the world above the stage line and the one below it. This horizontal line may be interpreted as one dividing a world of souls burning with

the wishes to save all things around them with the sunbursts of enlightening energies emanating from their cores from a world of spirits confined in the webs of excessive rationalization. While the musicians inhabiting this underworld are insecurely huddled around each other, the dazzling dancer placed at the center of the sublime world above stands alone on the stage of life, with arms open and fallen to the side, signaling complete transparency and having nothing to hide. While the dark souls below her listlessly sit and blabber, she stands speechless, enshrouded only by an infinitely enthralling, yet an infinitely delicate movement that inspires, that dazzles and that instills starry shimmer in all eyes around her. They are all made of maps, while she is pure territory. They have their backs turned to the watcher, while she looks straight at us. They gossip and criticize, while she judges no one and smiles cordially, with the innocence and spontaneity of a child, to everyone - to them, to us and to the whole wide world. They are low and painted in black, while she is on the top and all made of light. They are confined within the cages of excessive conceptualizations, while she is liberated, floating freely like a seagull on the air currents of the momentum of her sunshiny intuition. They are many, while she is One. She is truly alive, but they are not. And so forth. The fundamental question around which, as if around the Sun of a kind, the culture of our civilization revolves, evolving our spirits a bit more with every spin around its axis, is whether the artist needs to be counted amongst these Dead in order to draw such fabulous celebrations of genuinely alive, as this painting and every other truly inspirational piece of art are.

3. Examples in film

3.1. Charlie Chaplin and Jacques Tati

As for examples in movies, we could start off with "the greatest of all" (Narboni & Milne 1968, pp. 202), as Jean-Luc Godard christened Charlie Chaplin. "I wanted everything to be a contradiction: the pants baggy, the coat tight, the hat small and the shoes large" (Chaplin 1964), said he in his autobiography in an attempt to reveal the creative process behind conceiving the most memorable character in the history of cinema: the little tramp. Indeed, looked at from any given angle, this brilliant character, a tramp and yet a gentleman, reveals a face that is a concoction of opposites, be it agility and sloppiness, elegance and raggedness, dreaminess that touches the clouds and destituteness that rolls in the dust, ingenuity and sweet slow-wittedness, narcissism and selflessness, naturalness and awkwardness, panicky perplexity and lighthearted courage, or, more than anything, joy and sadness, that is, an ability to bring on both a knee-slapping laughter and tears of compassion to the watchers. "Charlie is his own Don Quixote and his own Sancho Panza, a knight and a knave, a fool both damned and divine" (Sarris 2006, pp. 56), are only some of the words of film critics who raved over the ambivalent nature of Chaplin's characters.

This cinematic character, who has served to this day as the greatest symbol of blended joy and sadness in the realm of animated arts, prompted millions of hearts to leap with emotional excitement that Irène Jacob transfused to words when she exclaimed, "Chaplin's films took my heart; they made me laugh and cry and awakened me to my feelings". That Chaplin's cinematic visions arose from a belief that angelic eyes are able to recognize smiles and tears mingled in each and every detail of reality prove his following words: "Life is a tragedy when seen in close-up, but a comedy in a long-shot" (Maddin 2006). The Italian comedian, Roberto Benigni correspondingly observed that "to laugh and to cry comes from the same point of the soul... the crux of the matter is to reach beauty, poetry, (and) it doesn't matter if that is comedy or tragedy; they're the same if you reach the beauty" (Logan 1999), having used his art as a means of build-

ing tragicomedy trails, the travelers on which would laugh and cry at the same time, thus engaging in an act that is genuinely "God-like" (Logan 1999) in nature. Having known that "none yet e'er drank a honey'd draught unmixed with cup of bitter gall, and cup of gall for honey equally doth call, that so, the mixture one may easier drink" (Nyegosh 1846), and that joy is best absorbed after compassionate sadness has softened our senses, or, as Kahlil Gibran (1923) phrased it, "The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain", the little tramp adeptly used tragedy to augment the comicality and the other way around. And although antithetic clashes of opposites *per se* are no guarantee for successful artistic endeavors, the witty style in which this blend is executed, on which the artistic quality of the overall piece will come to depend, rarely turns out to be a failure when these two angelic states of mind, cosmic joy and compassionate sadness, are fused together in our expressions, whatever they may be.

Yet another famous comic character who illuminated the cinematic realm with his spirited appearance is Jacques Tati's Monsieur Hulot, who has been considered a body language antipode to the Little Tramp. For, unlike the latter, who would lean backwards during his trademarked ducky walk and jerkily stomp the ground with his heels, the springy glide of M. Hulot proceeded by his leaning forward while walking almost on tiptoes as well as not in long trousers, but in overly short pants (Bellos 1999, pp. 169-170). Like the Little Tramp, M. Hulot can be said to have owed success to his ability to couple complete gestural opposites in his captivating pantomime: courageous curiosity and concerned timidity, elegant bodily fluidity and a whole lot of clumsiness, "anything goes" nonchalance and meticulous attention to detail, being insubordinate and yet apologetically polite, careless and careworn, and so forth.

3.2. The films of Federico Fellini

Right after this invocation of the little tramp, the first example to come to mind from the cinematic oeuvre of Federico Fellini is the scene of visitation to the Madonna by Cabiria, "a Chaplinesque little prostitute" (Bondanella 1983), "a hooker with a heart of gold" (Thrills 2004) coming from the ruins of borghetto San Francesco, evoking such a broad range of emotions that hardly any seem to have been left out and, as such, being the closest thing in the cinematic realm to fulfilling Gustav Mahler's ideal of composing symphonies that are "everything, everything". From desperation to hope to anger to affability to humiliation and elation and back to despair, all wrapped up in smirks and tears – all of this and far more could be distilled from this scene and from Cabiria's expressive face throughout the course of movie, including, most notably, that touching gaze straight into the camera at the very end of it, as memorable as that of Harriet Andersson as Ingmar Bergman's Monika four years earlier or that of Rosy Afsari as Basanthi in Ritwik Ghatak's *A River Called Titas* sixteen years later, though a million times more poignant.

Thereafter, we could equally call to mind a description of the final scene of another one of Fellini's master-

pieces: "At the end of *La Dolce Vita*, Marcello wanders down to the beach in the early morning, sees the horrible shapeless one-eyed monster, then becomes aware of the girl from the restaurant, clean, lovely, untouched by the tawdriness of the party, calling to him from across an estuary. They cannot hear one another, and soon Marcello turns away, tugged back into the world he can neither live in nor leave" (Richardson 1969, pp. 114). Recollection of this scene through the kaleidoscope of these words, reliving the image of a monstrous sea creature posed side by side with a vision of an angel on Earth and placing us for a moment right along the seashore on which J. Alfred Prufrock found himself in the classic poem by T. S. Eliot, the poet who, himself, was commended "because of the way he was able to bring disparate images together into a cohesive whole via a powerful poetic sensibility" (Whiteley 2011, pp. 139), prompts us to evoke a number of similar encounters of opposites that stretch our spirit in opposite directions, all until it explodes and expands into a ball of light that grasps the whole ungraspable Cosmos in an instant, in whom the secret of all touching pieces of art, movies included, rests.

In fact, one of the most striking, constantly repeating elements in Fellini's movies is the clash between the protagonists' (a) running after divine values emphasized by religious orders surrounding them, portrayed, for example, by Marcello's flying in a helicopter in search of the statue of the Christ similarly flown over Rome in an unknown direction in the opening scenes of *La Dolce Vita*, and (b) indulging in celebration of sensual and unconstrained lifestyles without any ethical borders imposed, culminating in the sexually spiced life of blasphemy of the vacuous jet-set (Fig.2). This inner crucifixion of the central character's spirit provides the most fundamental polarity in *La Dolce Vita*, around which multiple other choreographic, cinematographic and dramatic pulls in opposite directions were built, all so as to "give expression to the classical and contemporary human dilemmas of appearance and reality, superficiality and integrity, intellectualism and emotionalism, sophistication and naturalness, inauthenticity and authenticity – all within the framework of a sacramental universe which demands that we choose to be who we are and to do what we do, with fear and trembling, knowing that every choice is a choice of value, an expression of the *being* we are" (Ketcham 1976, pp. 64).

Correspondingly, the creation of emotional ambiguity in characters was a hallmark of Fellini's directorial style, immortalized in the scene from *8½* where Guido and Claudia ride in a car toward a derelict cityscape and the filmmaker notices that he could not tell if Claudia's smile was judging, forgiving or mocking him, before evoking an ethereal character, Claudia, herself, as "a girl at the springs who passes the healing water... beautiful, both young and ancient, a child and yet already a woman, authentic and radiant", revealing his recipe for the creation of captivation in characters on the movie screen a.k.a. concoction of opposites. When it comes to the contrast between darkness and light, a theme traditionally elicitable in black & white cinematography, a striking example comes from Fellini's preceding the dazzlingly light, perhaps the lightest scene in *La Dolce Vita*, in which the Umbrian angel in the form of a little blonde waitress girl named Paola is introduced, by one of the darkest scenes, involving Marcello's friend Steiner standing alone in the dark and musing out loud over how "sometimes at night the darkness and silence weigh on

me; peace frightens me; I fear it more than anything else; it looks like a façade that hides Hell behind it". The next memorable movie scene comes from the ending of Fellini's cataclysmic adaptation of Petronius' *Satyricon*, the visual portrayal of the times of chaos wherefrom, as Nietzsche's Zarathustra argued, stars, one of which was the Christ in this case, are born; the moment wherein the hero of the story, Encolpio is seen gazing at the open sea for one final time, knowing that he must "do what any decent hero must: set sail" (Alighieri 1321), and then turning into a stone in which the story of him will remain impressed for good, along with an infinity of possibilities, a film critic described in the following way: "He moves toward the open sea and the wing-like ship, and represents, as he walks between the baffled intellectual Greek and the dark instinctual African, the myth-informed vitality of imagination capable of integrating the opposed powers represented by his companions into a new generative system" (Snyder 1978, pp. 186).

Fig.2. In a still from the opening scene from Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, the helicopter on the left, carrying the protagonist, Marcello, follows the helicopter on the right, carrying the statue of the Christ to Vatican, while getting distracted by the leisured life of the jet-set below, with the pull between the two, the ethereal and the earthly, comprising the central subject of the film.

3.3. Yasujirô Ozu and other examples from Japanese cinematography

Another set of illustrious cinematic examples may come from Yasujirô Ozu's movies, most notably *Tokyo Story* wherein the ceaseless reference to the passage of time and the evanescence of life, accentuated by the images of passing trains, chiming clocks, fuming chimneys and boats sailing to an open sea, is coupled to distinctively stationary camera, moving only once in the course of the whole movie, and that so as to subtly suggest that "in each creature a universe resides" (Kauffmann 1975, pp. 154), serving overall as a "a figurative reminder that modern life is in perpetual motion, and that the beauty of life is often found in standing still" (Anon. 1999). A memorable scene in it shows Shukichi and Tomi, the aging couple, silhouetted against the glittering sea in all its incomprehensible vastness, contrasting the man and the universe one against the other, smallness, transience and fragility against greatness, timelessness and strength,

honoring one by honoring the other and thus delicately proving that they are indivisible, one and the same. In another scene, the husband and the wife find themselves standing at the overpass in front of the Ueno station and comment on the intolerable hustle and bustle of the big city, concluding that "if we lose each other, we'd never get back together again" (Kiju 1998, pp. 92); yet, what the camera captures is nothing but the two elderly figures standing under the luminescent sky, yielding a contrast between scrimmage and serenity that bedazzles the viewers of the scene, teaching them *en passant* that peace and beauty could be found in even the loudest and the most discordant situations and landscapes.

Ozu's prewar classic, *The Only Son*, abounds with equally many subtle dialectical contrasts, one of which could be read from the posture adopted by Ryosuke after his mother tells him that she would love to have him stay with her in a small industrial town, but that he should go and explore the world: slumped, leaning on to a wall, signifying sadness, yet holding the pose of a proud dandy at the same time. Another one of such blends is apparent in the final scene of the movie, where, as noticed by the film critic, Tadao Sato (2011), the image of a closed gate and of the mother leaning sobbingly onto a factory wall, symbolizing despair and dejection, is paired with the American music of lightness and hope, with dandelions dancing on the ground, and with the sunlight washing over the tired mother.

A relatable heartrending scene from another Japanese movie is that showing Tamaki in Kenji Mizoguchi's *Sansho the Bailiff,* the mother of two, all of whom were sold into slavery and scattered across Japan, standing gingerly on a cliff facing the sea and singing the melody that calls for their children to be back in her arms. The rupturing contrast between the calm sea in the back and a spirit wrenched in a torment of sadness in the front is accompanied by confronting melodies: a soft one that resembles the song Tamaki will have sung for decades, blind and immovable, and a rather debilitating one symbolizing the backward nature of feudalists who set up the system of slavery and use of another human being, around which the movie revolves. Yet another example that comes straight from the heart of Japanese cinema is a scene from Masahiro Shinoda's *Pale Flower* where merciless Muraki, who has just pulled out the heart of another man, and Saeko, silent and graceful like a lotus flower, posed like a question mark over the role of Taoist muses who teach the art of beautiful living wordlessly, stand facing each other, immersed in the chorus of angelic voices.

3.4. *Godfather* and other crossroads whereat violence and splendor meet

Speaking of the cinematic blends of violence and transcendent joys, we may start off with Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep*, a low-budget movie in which outbursts of anger and aggression are made to float like ships across the background streams of natural beauties and are immersed in an atmosphere evocative of a cosmic splendor that enfolds it all, yet one that all the protagonists, sadly, appear to be blind to.

The one-hit wonderer in the filmmaking domain, Charles Laughton highlighted the contrast between shadowy eeriness and cradlesong quiescence in *The Night of the Hunter* by both visual and musical means, the style that many future directors of thrillers picked up on, including David Lynch whose talent for maximizing ambiguities (Nieland 2012, pp. 84) can be said to have hidden the key to his cinematic success, all so as to reinstate the message that "mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:13) and that childlike chastity that sees each and every one as intrinsically good will "abide and endure" in the world where the most innocent ones are always uninvitingly dragged into vortices of collective fall from grace, the topic elaborated in a myriad of movies, particularly from the neo-noir genre.

The movie that touches this topic perhaps more impressively than any before or after is Coppola's *Godfather*. Its opening scenes have a captivating effect on the viewer because of the repetitive alternation between the clandestine talk in the quiet and the dark of a backroom of the don's house and the drinking and dancing joyously in the loud limelight and the open air has had a great say in accomplishing so. The same trick of contrasting light against darkness, in this particular case wittily making the black the light and the white the dark, was employed in the opening scene of yet another 1970s American classic, Robert Altman's *Nashville*, yet another "impressive blending of 'box office' and 'art' in American movies" (Ebert 1979), alternating between the view of the major studio, Studio A, and a haughty white country singer recording a dead song in it, and the view of the backdoor studio, Studio B, and a gospel choir recording a song of joy and happiness in it. Another key polarity portrayed in this landmark movie is that between individualism and collectivism; specifically, the twenty-four characters roam around, like in a plotless video game, encountering each other, but without showing any affection or desire to bond, though in a bigger frame, depicted is a sense of connection of them all in spite of the icy, isolationistic individualism that they embody, the cancerous individualism that plagues America and makes its culture rot from the core. Like *Godfather*, another American film beginning with a long wedding scene is *Deer Hunter*, an ode to the calamities of war whose ambiguities culminate in the final scene of the protagonists' singing God Bless America in the wake of a funeral, the diametrical opposite of the merriness with which the film opened, and this singing was such that it, as Roger Ebert (1979) stressed out, "contained such an infinity of possible meanings, some tragic, some unspeakably sad, some few still defiantly hopeful".

Having mentioned *Godfather*, now that we have brought to mind this anchorage of communality in the deepest center of individuality and *vice versa*, impelling some of us to recall how wars, as times of tragic divisions between people, also bring about profounder bonding between them than the periods of phlegmatic peacefulness, it is time to reecho that famous "Mama, is it possible that you love your family so much that you lose it", Michael Corleone's most significant line in the second part of this dark saga and a question that makes us wonder as to how the immense protective and impassionate love for a few selected souls turns into an equally powerful expression of its diametrical opposite, hate, towards the rest of the world, describing the central ethical dilemma around which this dazzlingly dark ode to the train ride from an infinitely pure spirit of a child to a cold, vengeful and desensitized grownup soul revolves. This

complex entwinement of love and hate in the life stories of the movie's main protagonists, father and son, Vito and Michael Corleone, hides the key to the memorable and artistically monumental character of this movie. How journeying on the tracks of trustworthiness, of being genuinely good and respectful to the neighbor, practically saintly in devotion to saving him from the trouble, can lead one to the destination that is the embodiment of worldly sins is an ethical question of paramount profoundness that some other movies elaborated too through the corresponding evolution of their characters, including naïve Thelma from *Thelma & Louise*, John Rambo in *First Blood*, de Sica's Antonio Ricci from *Bicycle Thieves*, and many others.

3.5. Contrasts between the image and the sound

The idea that the musical score should counteract, not accentuate the emotion conveyed by the image dates back to 1928 and the famous statement on sound signed by Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Alexandrov and Vertov, where they agreed that "only a contrapuntal use of sound in relation to the visual montage piece will afford a new potentiality of montage development and perfection", as well as that the ultimate aim was attaining "an orchestral counterpoint of visual and aural images". From this landmark moment on, countless filmmakers, though predominantly outside of Hollywood, used this trick, oftentimes going so far as to insist on the perpetual juxtaposition of image and sound in a contradictive manner. The approach followed by the French composer, Maurice Jaubert, for example, was to fill the gaps in the film's fabric of emotion that words could not express (Tavernier 2016), thus creating musical scores that were complements to the lines of dialogue rather than their simple iteration. Directors who adopted similar methods include the Indian director, Ritwik Ghatak, as in the wedding night scene in *A River Called Titas*, Sebastian Schipper in the two dance scenes in *Victoria* – the one-shot feature film whose realism is in many respects more convincing than that of its more renowned one-take predecessors, from Hitchcock's *Rope* to Sokurov's *Russian Ark* – and the British filmmaker, Terence Davies, most famously in *The Long Day Closes*, where the scenes of bullying in the schoolyard and in the classroom were paired with Robert Burns' *Ae Fond Kiss* and other acapella sung lullabies.

In fact, this juxtaposition of serene music to violent scenes has been a regular trick employed by filmmakers. For example, similarly to what Martin Scorsese did in *The Raging Bull* as well as in the final scene of *Mean Streets*, the South Korean director Park Chan-wook opted to do in *Oldboy*, playing a tender and romantic musical score in the midst of the scene where the protagonist is involved in a fistfight against fourteen other thugs. Then, the single most memorable scene of the 10 h series *Narcos: Mexico* was the capture of Don Neto by the ocean shore, where the bloodshed was accompanied by the idyllic scenery and the sound of Diego Verdaguer's *Mamá Ven a Sentarte Aquí* played to the gangster's ears, insinuating that our brains may be tuned to be impressed most by the combinations of things that the brain, itself, does not

perceive as combinable at all. Akira Kurosawa resorted to the same oddity when he used the jazzy version of *O Sole Mio* in the violent scene of arrest of the psychopathic medical intern and the kidnapper, Ginjirô Takeuchi, flashing guns and frowns and cyanide pills and wrestling grips, in *High and Low*. Before it appeared in his final movie, *Salò*, the same trick was employed by Pier Paolo Pasolini in his directorial debut, *Accattone*, when he used a sacral musical piece by Johann Sebastian Bach as a score for the memorable street fighting scene, in a sloppy, a bit banal attempt to prove that there is a tender side to every thuggish character, that hurt feelings of sacred love stand behind all the worldly hostilities and hatreds, as insinuated by the ambiguously long clinch – maybe a wrestle, maybe a hug – as well as to make us aware that artistic sensibility need not be a shield against descents into delusion and disgrace in real life.

3.6. Westerns and road movies

The cult Western movie, *Shane* owes its magic to showing us that out there where the attitude of "going places one has never been to" and the attitude that spells staying and zealously defending one's hearth and home, held by the two protagonists of the movie, Shane and Joe Starrett, respectively, the petals of a heroic heart unfold and the doors open to the enchantment of pure and chaste, childlike eyes of this world, which would remain gazing at the sunsets into which the hero has ridden for a long, long time, remaining impressed and inspired by his story for life (Fig.3). In this final scene of the film, the hero moves on, to new lands and adventures, while his heart spells staying near the worldly souls in need of defense and protection as a greatest virtue, thus creating an illuminative paradox in the viewer's mind, quite like the one that is intrinsic to the paintings of Edward Hopper, to whom travelling was important, as hinted at by his making passageways, roads, railways tracks and stations the frequent objects of his paintings, but a sense of stillness was what he wished to provoke in the viewer more than anything else; or, as stated by Mark Strand (2001, pp. 3), "These two imperatives – the one that urges us to continue and the other that compels us to stay – create a tension that is constant in Hopper's work".

When in another classic Western, *Stagecoach*, John Ford contrasted the claustrophobia of a stagecoach whereon the Ringo Kid travels with the pastoralism of the open land of the Wild West, he opened the door for the dichotomy between the iron horse and the prairie that was to become embedded deep in the iconography of the western movie genre in general. Road was thus paved for countless subsequent cinematic encounters of the desert and the meadowland, the vivaciously wild and the insipidly cultivated, as in the encounter of two mindsets reflecting these very same qualities, the aboriginal and the civic, in Nicolas Roeg's *Walkabout* and in the South Australian seascape portrayed in one of its memorable scenes, composed of a swimming pool, a symbol of artificiality and limitedness, superimposed on a background that is an ocean, boundless and free, extending into infinity. This scene resembles yet another one having the ocean as a backdrop, albeit with a hand holding a motorcycle antenna as a contrast, along with a voice re-

leasing sighs, unsure whether they are of pleasure or grief. It comes from Djibril Diop Mambéty's *Touki Bouki*, a movie whose ambiance is similar to that of Roeg's *Walkabout* or Malick's *Badlands*, mesmerizing the viewer with hybridization of the tranquilly natural and the humanely energetic. Having brought a moonlike desert to mind, it is time to remember the furry ape sitting in the midst of it in the scene known as The Dawn of Man in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* and ponderously banging the skeleton of a diseased forefather with one of its bones, making the watcher mystified regarding whether discovered in this bone was a tool or a weapon, thus hinting at the age-old Manichean puzzle wherein every sword has double edges and every good deed performed for someone's benefit has its dark side of the Moon in terms of the back of negligence it has turned to someone else, before the view of this sacramental, yet somehow playfully nuanced bone flying through the air is classily cut to show a spaceship traversing the Solar system.

Fig.3. Shane leaves, but the key trait of his character is the will to stay near the souls in need of defense and protection, yielding an irresolvable paradox evocative of the simultaneity of connection and separation intrinsic to the symbolism of the Way.

3.7. Westerns and road movies

The Sumatran tiger gazing at the eye of Apichatpong Weerasethakul's camera in *Tropical Malady*, combining dullness and alertness, fervency and sluggishness, peacefulness and aggressiveness, obtuseness and depth, curiosity and drowsiness, down-to-earthiness and sublimity and a whole lot more in its stance and look, may be reminding us that similar juxtapositions of opposites are the key to producing every striking expression, in art and life alike. Then, critics have ascribed the genius of Francois Truffaut's second feature, *Shoot the Piano Player*, to its "mélange of tones" (Brunette & Insdorf 2012) where one knows not whether one views a film noir, an existential comic tale, a tragic love story or a grotesque comedy, for they are all mixed into one, alongside telling a captivating story as a metaphor of life while also reflecting on the process of telling the story and on the art of cinema itself, handing us the guidance for marvelous creation

in every other domain of human creativity as well.

Next, Alexander Payne's *Sideways* can be said to owe its captivating ambience to placing a depressed character, Miles, into a comical context and making the spectators internally confused as to which of these two sentiments will prevail following their long and strenuous wrestling on the movie screen: depressiveness or funniness, downheartedness or spiritedness, tragedy or comedy. Mike Leigh's tragicomic masterpiece, the black comedy-drama and the story about the wretched fate of honesty and truth in a world governed by "secrets and lies", *Naked*, like the rest of his cinematic oeuvre, was marked by Roger Ebert (1994) as being "painful to watch, but also exhilarating, as all good movies are". In addition, the movie is said to "explore the tension between the domesticated and the anarchic" (Coveney 1996), evoking the antagonism between order and chaos, stability and freedom, that most fundamentally ontological polarity that all other polarities in life could be reduced to. David Thewlis got catapulted to stardom in this movie thanks to his role of Johnny, the "nauseated Nineties" (Coveney 1996) version of the Christ that resurrects people from the dead, albeit in a hard and painful way, the way every delicate medical procedure does. The actor has been praised for the multilayered nature of his character, shifting "from fear to cynicism to hopefulness" (LaBute 2005) in a matter of milliseconds and alternating from a Good Samaritan to a misogynist and back as the multifaceted diamond of his character is being rotated in the viewer's hands. Epitomizing a searcher *par excellence*, in whose nature it is to make intense choices and thus swing from extreme goodness to extreme wickedness like a pendulum (LaBute 2005), he helps his ex, Louise, by his mere presence, offbeat as it were, transform from an unsightly figure to a Mancunian goddess in the spectators' eyes, displaying the entwinement of the diametrical opposites that life is composed of at its best.

Throughout his prolific career as a filmmaker, Wim Wenders (2014) has considered himself a painter, *i.e.*, an artist rooted in the visual and the spatial, searching for ways to express time. More often than not, in such an approach based on striving to glorify the exact opposites from the qualities one embodies is where the key to true inspirational power and creativity lies. That in the absence of the counterpoint the point in question crumbles is a point also implicitly corroborated in the majority of movies of another giant of the contemporary European cinema, Lars von Trier, who has relentlessly infused the sense of realism captured by a handheld camera and iterated by improvised dialogues and the obsessive usage of Take 1s with cinematic elements evocative of the romantic, the supernatural and the dreamy, all in an attempt to create a mesmerizing concoction of the two, whereby both are being intensified in effect.

Finally, *Mulholland Drive*, a movie about movies directed by elusive and mystical Montanan, David Lynch, who had earlier created a cult cinematic masterpiece known as *Twin Peaks*, a "melodramatic common denominator – a mode crossing genre and media and linking televised soaps, the postwar film noir, the police procedural, the suspense thriller, and the family melodrama" (Nieland 2012, pp. 81), has dizzied the spectators by immersing them into a cinematic reflection of reality co-created by our thoughts and dreams to such an extent that untangling where our drives begin and the drives of reality end is an impos-

sible task; in view of that, it comes as no surprise to notice that with the memorable coupling of bright, trustful, positive and sunshiny Betty and mysterious, amnesic and confused Rita, this movie has also provided an invaluable musing in movement on the relationship between the two brain hemispheres antipodal to each other: analytical and intuitive. This complex cinematic rumination evoked Ingmar Bergman's earlier depiction of the encounter between two contrasting personalities and their swapping traits in *Persona*, the movie which the moviemaker, symbolically, wishing to highlight the essentiality of the blending of opposites, intended to name *Cinematography* at first. It is also similar to another cinematic clash of diametrically opposite characters by the seaside, one represented by wood and the other one by steel, which its creator, Agnès Varda, in this film that served as a precursor and a seed for the nucleation of the French New Wave, namely *La Pointe Courte*, supplemented with numerous other contrasts, from the superposition of professional acting of the young couple over the amateur acts of the villagers to the use of documentary stylistics to counter the fictional plot. It also bears resemblance to Lars von Trier's subsequent portrayal of two sisters in the movie *Melancholia*, Justine and Claire, representing the unconscious and the conscious, respectively, along with a myriad of other characters, each of which was meant to signify a different concentric circle of the human psyche. Like Edouard Manet's pairing in *The Railway, a.k.a. The Gare Saint-Lazare* Victorine on the left, dressed in black and intently viewing the viewer, with the little girl dressed in white on the right, holding her back turned to the canvas and looking away from the viewer, toward passing trains behind the gate that she holds on to, we ought to know that coupling the logical, rational activity of the left side of the brain to the intuitive, creative activity of its right side is the key to displaying the traits of a blazing consciousness, the one that touches deeply, at the most subliminal of levels, everything that comes to its view.

If in the balance of these two hemispheres depicted by the two central characters of these many visual artworks lies the key to opening gates for an inflow of the gushing streams of an absolute creativity, this may explain why artistic pieces that combine similar clashes of antipodes, serving as metaphors for this perfect balance dormant in our minds and signs that point in the direction of attaining it, have such an unexplainably enlightening effect on us. And just as the process of retrieval of sanity of the dark side of the moon of a consciousness in *Mulholland Drive* began from a kiss and a love affair between the two characters, so is it that wherever we let the diametrical opposites merge with each other, the doors to exhibitions of paramount peaks of creativity open up. Therefore, when Donna Hayward, a character from Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, confesses her bipolar feelings to her mother, saying "It's like I'm having the most beautiful dream and the most terrible nightmare at once" (Lynch 1990), we should know that she points at the Way, risky and slippery, wherefrom we could fall into an abyss and be pulverized in an instant, but the only Way leading to the enkindling of stars of wonder in the eyes of those who would come to absorb our artistic expressions and the striking of their hearts with the lightings of enlightenment.

4. Examples in architecture

From groundbreaking kisses on the movie screen to the grainy walls that we hug and dance over in ecstasy, we come to architecture; speaking of it as of yet another domain of visual arts, according to the French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard (1958, pp. 112), the dialectical juxtaposition of "large and small, hidden and manifest, placid and aggressive, flabby and vigorous" can be unveiled as the secret of the captivating nature of innumerable "poetical" spaces through which our starry spirits roam. Perhaps most notably, the American architect Robert Venturi argued in favor of contradictory compositions where structural ambiguities and exciting superimpositions of complexities over simplicities and the other way around are not suppressed, but encouraged to conceive of (Weston 2011, pp. 170). The Indian-English architect and sculptor, Anish Kapoor has obeyed this fundamental principle and he was correspondingly said to "combine several ideas into one – the outside and the inside, the additive volume and the subtractive volume – as the dichotomy of opposites characterizes his work" (Neugarten 2018). The French-Californian architect, Anne Fougeron, a long-time admirer of Robert Irwin, a wizard in combining expressive spaces that promote contact and those that induce solitary retreats and self-oriented reintegration, has accordingly seen her art as an exploration of various stylistic, spatial, figural, textural and chromatic contrasts, including shadowy and light, urban and pastoral, technological and ecological, Victorian and hypermodern, utilitarian and Dadaistic, industrial and residential, roofed and outdoorsy, protected and transparent, communal and private, and, most notably, the refinement of Dr. Jekyll and the roughness of Mr. Hyde (Fougeron 2011, pp. 17), bringing them into dialogue out of which new and unforeseen beauties are born, just like this very reality of ours, being continually recreated from the dialogue between the human mind and Nature (Uskoković 2011).

Gazing at innumerable architectural works and musing on them relentlessly brought Alain de Botton (2006, pp. 201) to conclusion that "if certain subtly balanced buildings touch us, it is because they stand as exemplars of how we might adjudicate between the conflicting aspects of our characters, how we, too, might aspire to make something beautiful of our troubling opposites", reiterating the feeling that art, especially when at its best, speaks to the deepest secrets of ourselves and stands forth as a guidepost on our paths toward higher, diviner forms of being, inevitably tied to the conjunctions of complements. One such encounter of opposites can be experienced by looking at the photographs of the Post Palace No. 2 designed by the Serbian architect, Momir Korunović in 1927. Inwardly folding edges and caved entrances suggestive of souls being stowed away inside an awe-inspiring interior combined with arch-top windows that evoke the elegance of Venetian romanticism, along with colonnaded roofs and balconies and two elongated clock towers, let alone the baroque-style coalescence of convex and concave shapes, yielded the impression of frightening heaviness and cumbersome gray and voguish vividness and sprightly flair brought to majestic unity in it.

A few hundreds of miles to the southwest, in the eternal city of Rome, a city owing its charm to being "an

urban setting where extremes come together into a recombinant whirl" (Soja 2014), the nearly unnoticeable source of enthrallment behind the viewer's immersion in the generous water streams, splashes and sounds of Fontana di Trevi (Fig.4), a masterpiece of urban design that took 122 years and 14 popes to complete, is, according to Nicola Salvi, one of the architects involved in its creation, owing to the central statue of Oceanus being surrounded by two Tritons, one of whom grittily leads a horse by its mane and blows a conch shell, representing the ocean in an invasive and angry mood, while the other one is fettering a rearing sea horse, standing for the ocean in its tranquility (Morton 1966, pp. 80). While the former Triton appears to have tamed his horse and has a triumphant expression on his face, glowing with the sense of conquest and victory, looking straight at the gazer, the latter Triton, with a face concealed and seeable from the lowest, cobblestoned level only when the viewer is positioned on the line connecting the Triton's face and the gelato sign on Oceanus' right-hand side, radiates with wonder and uncertainty, as it struggles to seize the rage of the horse whose hair he feebly holds on to. With Oceanus gazing at him supportively, while the goddesses standing above Oceanus' shoulders rejoice in the view of the victorious, seashell-blowing Triton, one could argue that this struggling sea deity presents the focal point of the whole fountain. At the same time, the two goddesses overseeing the Tritons' struggle in turbulent waters maintain a peaceful and capriciously pleased countenance, allowing Oceanus to act as a mediator between the hardships below and the placidness above and providing yet another contrast that captivates the viewer. Added to all of this is the smooth-hewn stony basin of the fountain and the polished texture of the marble Tritons contrasting the piles of rugged rock and the foamy flows of water.

The same trick of architectural artistry was employed later by Frank Lloyd Wright in the design of *Falling Water*, a piece that decorates the forested Pennsylvanian countryside known as Bear Run: in this case, however, it was rusticated stone blocks that were placed behind the smoothly sculpted figurines, yielding a lively, dramatic and aesthetically pleasing contrast between the frighteningly forceful and rough on one side and the soothingly graceful and elegant on the other (Rasmussen 1959, pp. 75-77). This work of the American organic architect who described his approach to creation as "illumination of the insignificant" is, of course, only one out of many in which he employed the concept of "a mishmash of a variety of conflicting shapes and parts" (Galloway 1995) to produce an enchanting experience of objects in space. A similar "contradictory portrait" (Upton 1998, pp. 29) is ascribed to an early "touchstone for exploring the histories of American houses" (Upton 1998, pp. 20), Thomas Jefferson's *Monticello* in Charlottesville, Virginia, a "densely-layered, half-resolved agglomeration of visual images, social ideas, and spatial relationships" (Upton 1998, pp. 20) that captivates as a result of its being "organized according to a series of dichotomous categories" (Upton 1998, pp. 21), combining huge halls with hidden spaces, sociability with solitariness, hospitability with reclusiveness, and representing "a villa and hermitage, a place of sociability and of retreat" (Upton 1998, pp. 31) at the same time.

With its domed rotunda in the center, suggestive of closeness at heart, and a versatile landscape extending from it toward a striking geomantic opulence of its immediate surrounding, suggestive of radiant open-

ness, San Francisco Palace of Fine Arts, that "modified sadness or sentiment in a minor key" (Upton 1998, pp. 127), as conceived by its designer, Bernard Maybeck in 1915, conveys the same spirit of the symbolism of the Way, that is, of finely balanced closeness and openness, alongside owing its aesthetic splendor to the placement of a colonnade evocative of Roman ruins against an authentically neat and tidy backdrop composed of an artificial lagoon and a park, let alone the shipshape natural and residential backdrop of the Marina neighborhood. Speaking of the Classical Orders, rarely ever were they so strikingly impressed in my memory as on the early April night in 1999 when I, a homeless refugee at the time, made a tiny flight of stairs descending to Coliseum from the park of the Oppian Hill in Rome my bed for the long hours of darkness, covered only by a blanket of stars and guarded by the goddesses of cosmic wonder. Right in front of me I could devour with my artistic eye the combination of round arches and upright columns partly swallowed by the round walls of the amphitheater and partly exposed on their surface: Doric on the first level, Ionic on the second and Corinthian on the third, increasing in gracefulness from the bottom to the top, thus exhilarating a weary spirit and keeping it aroused and ready for the adventure.

Fig.4. Fontana di Trevi owes its mesmerizing effect on the viewer to the combination of vehemence and tranquility conveyed by the Tritons standing near Oceanus, along with a number of other visual contrasts embedded in this architectural work.

Another architectural masterpiece hidden among the crooked and narrow Roman streets is the Church of Santa Maria della Pace, stunning at the first sight not only as the result of a fine interplay between curved and angular forms on its façade, but even more due to the impression of its sunshiny openness – created by the rounded portico set out in a sunny courtyard, appearing as if it bursts out of the bricked edifice that homes it – encroaching upon the cool and shadowy web of murky passageways that lead to it from all sides (Upton 1998, pp. 66-71). A similar vision of merging the earthly darkness with the sunshiny openness as a metaphor of an encounter between the dead spirits and the living souls has driven Enric Miralles

and Carme Pinós in designing the Igualada cemetery in the suburbs of Barcelona, one of the most poetic graveyards on Earth. In creating this spatial impression of meeting Life and Death, whereby their frightening antithetic relationship to one another becomes lightly erased, all along with the landmark path running through it, curved and irregular, "filled with memories, with back-references, with associations" (Hauxner 2006, pp. 19 - 25), the Catalan architects were influenced by the aesthetic concept that emphasized contrasts between convex and concave, columnar and rectangular, solid and hollow, sturdy and dissipative, propagated by the Danish architect, Carl Petersen (Rasmussen 1959, pp. 81). One such captivating mishmash of contrasts can be seen on the front façade of the basilica of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, designed by Leon Battista Alberti in the 15th Century, whereon squares, circles and their regular subdivisions blend and breed, creating a mesmerizing effect on the observer.

Circles and squares, the former representing life and the latter symbolizing death, were combined in quite a different manner in Dušan Džamonja's abstract and rather minimalistic *Monument to the Revolution* in the village of Podgarić in today's Croatia, one of many Brutalist monuments to the victims of World War II in Yugoslavia, whose unforgettably asymmetric wings, broken yet extended to their fullest, symbolize the juxtaposition of these two profoundest opposites in the grand story of our existence as the starting point for the spectator's soaring to the heavenly blissful experience of it. Contrasting rectangular shapes against a round central object was also the trick Henri Matisse used to make the appearance of the plump, oval body of Carmelina striking, though he did not end there and supplemented these geometric contrasts with the contrasts in lighting, especially around the details of the painting depicting the robust figure of the nude. Then, in the Cathedral of Notre Dame of Strasbourg, one finds thorny curls and spires, evoking horror and fear, and interposed angelic figurines rosily holding suns of grace and love in the arms of their spirit engraved into stone, creating a typically Gothic combination that stuns with its blending of fear and love, the two existential qualities as extremely antipodal to each other as any two qualities of life can be imagined to be. Like the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, using fear as a spear to throw the spirit on its knees in prayer and open it up to penetration of the healing waves of love floating through the air, so do these upward-pointing spires on this and other Gothic architectural gems serve the purpose of making the churchgoer more receptive to the message of love embodied in its form.

5. Other examples

Examples from literature are not being discussed at length here, but one example from this domain may suffice. Namely, the Serbian essayist, Isidora Sekulić exemplifies a thinker who had reservations about the "dominance of extremes", who was "haunted by contrast" and who valued the "subtlety of equilibrium... a mighty law common to all ideologies and systems, philosophies and faiths as the precondition for the existence of the material and the spiritual world, of logic, of music, of morality", and who, for this reason,

praised the famous collection of poems for children by the Slovenian poet, Oton Župančič, having recognized in it a counterbalance to the "pure playfulness" of the "absurd-nonsensical-grotesque-comical" style of anglicized poems and songs for children. Having been suffused with shadows, with gravity, with "peers beyond the edge of the fairytale and the children soul", Isidora saw in them the incarnation of her own "reservation toward both the nonsensical and sententious in the literature for children... a poetry able to make laugh, unleash, engage in play, but also give rise to wonderings, to teach, to provoke spiritually, intellectually and emotionally, to hint at the complexity of the world and man's existence... a poetry equally respectful of the naïve-fantastic-frolicsome childhood needs and the ethics and the lore shaped by an adult perspective", wondering in the end who that poetry, "deprived of commodity", is for: "For children? For grownups? Powerful poetry connects the extremes" (Čutura 2014). To succeed in this grandiose endeavor of "connecting the extremes", of course, one has to sense and transmit the vibe of the deep, grave abysses of existence when expressing cheerfulness, but also contain an everlasting sparkle of joy inside one even in the melancholiest and most dispirited states of mind.

Next, with the savory bites of blood and chocolate melting into a cosmic dust of *prana* in our mouths, we could recall how the combinations of tartness and sweetness, of uplifting fruitiness and balsamic, soothing graininess, or of crunchiness and mushiness – with that secret formula of crispiness on the outside and fluffiness on the inside typically being sought after by the chefs – have ever since been considered the epitomes of delicacy in the gastronomical universe and that, consequently, chic fusions of complementary tastes is what seems to always stand behind all the unequivocally delicious meals. This is why the phrase "it hits all the senses" is commonly used to compliment immaculately tasting food, implying that dishes in which every taste under the sun is represented stand for highest achievements in the art of gastronomy.

As far as performance arts are concerned, we could recall that the best approach an actor on the stage can adopt is to constantly surprise the audience by pulling utterly unexpected combinations of signs and gestures. This is a type of approach that Marlon Brando compared to a boxer who always delivers a punch from northwest when the opponent expects it to come from southeast and the other way around (Riley 2015). Moreover, on a broader scale in the theatrical realm one could find conflicts in terms of "various currents which run counter to one another, but frequently they do so in the sense in which themes in a musical composition run counter to one another, touching at different points and producing, not conflict, but harmony" (Ould 1948, pp. 35). Eugenio Barba, for example, has admired the sense of bewilderment awoken among the audience by their witnessing acts on the stage that evoke the dawn of chaos and the rise of immaculate rigor and routine at the same time, as if pushing the watchers into a state of paradox wherefrom cries that spell both Yes and No are let arise in the air from their psyches (Frost & Yarrow 2007, pp. 220). The Polish theatre director, Jerzy Grotowski, consequently talked of *conjunctio oppositorum* as a key to producing successful theatrical impressions and acting performances, highlighting in particular the fusion of Stanislavskian spontaneity and Brechtian discipline as the blend that all improvisers should strive to embody within themselves (Frost & Yarrow 2007, pp. 200). Late in life, Bertolt Brecht sporadically

expressed ideas about the so-called dialectical theatre as a form of art where letting the story unreel in an inherently contradictory manner on the stage is vital in preventing the predictable linearity from lulling the viewer's attention to sleep, producing a collision of ideas, concepts and emotions that stimulate the audience instead. Yet another way to achieve artistically inspiring effects by juxtaposition of antagonistic impressions in theater is through the so-called negation of the storytelling by means of scenery or *vice versa*, that is, by "turning the word against the scene", as the Swiss dramatist, Friedrich Dürrenmatt phrased it (States 1985), such as in the cases where actors confined in a prison cell converse about the merits of freedom or when the topic of inescapable demises of human fate is elaborated in the midst of luscious landscapes that spell eternal peace, sunshine and harmony.

Martial arts, finally, are always based on teaching utmost meditative peacefulness that soothes the mind with its waves of serenity, while simultaneously building and releasing mountainously explosive powers from within the body, thus pushing it into opposite directions. A particularly exemplary martial art can be the one of Capoeira, whose masters at work tend to blend the spirit of a playful dance with the spirit of a stalwart fight in each and every one of their moves. On its philosophical grounds, this Afro-Brazilian martial art is made of profound paradoxes too, with scholars often describing it not only as a simple "struggle between positive and negative forces" (Browning 1997, pp. 79), but as an active "exploration of what is negative, painful or malicious within the ostensibly positive, whole and benign" and the other way around, as in harmony with the Tai-Chi-Tu symbol and its showing how antipodes of things reside in their hearts, aside from surrounding them on the sides. Or, as Mestre Pastinha, the founder of the Angola school of Capoeira, originally the truest to this harmony between playfulness and belligerence, who passed on to his followers the attitude of attempting to answer the riddles of "the no in the yes, the big in the little, the earth in the sky, the fight in the dance" (Browning 1997, pp. 79) with each sway of their bodies, put it in a song, quite in the spirit of alchemists' strivings to make up what is down and down what is up as well as of the authentic Christian yearnings to make first what is last and last what is first (Matthew 20:16), "Eh, the moon comes to the earth, eh, the earth comes to the moon" (Browning 1997, pp. 81), thus attaching a sacramental character to the art of ironic, inherently postmodernist inversion of whatever our intellects come to grasp as well as of standing upside-down, strongly, yet flexibly, with respect to all things in this crooked life.

This is all to say that regardless of the type of art we have in mind, common to the greatest of them is complementariness amongst a variety of qualities that, like the simultaneous cursedness and blessedness of Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus, stand in antipodal opposition to each other and yet, miraculously, become brought into a harmonious state wholeness. "Bring things together that don't seem ready to be", was thus one of Jean-Luc Godard's (1998) key distillations of the recipe for creativity into a succinct saw, which, if truly lived up to within every aspect of our being, is certain to expand the latter into a state of oneness with the Universe as a whole, with all that there is, equaling the ultimate destination of the spiritual voyage undertaken on this sad and beautiful rock whose orbit devotedly encircles the Sun, the ever-

lasting sign of that One toward which all of us, with all our arts and sciences and loves and courtesies, stream. This sacral voyage is explicated in more detail in the discussion that follows.

6. Discussion

Examples preceding this discussion were compiled over the years to strengthen the following argument: the most masterful compositions in art are obliged to comprise inextricably tangled antagonistic emotions and energies. Blending qualities that could be seen as antipodes to each other, like Yin and Yang, lying as far from each other as we could imagine them to be apart, but which, together, make up for an immaculate complementary whole, brings us closer to Gustav Mahler's idea of art as "ambiguity made a science... a paradise of double meanings" (Visconti 1971) and the aspiration to compose symphonies that would sound "like the world – they must embrace everything", as if the "whole universe began to ring and resound; there are no longer human voices, but planets and suns revolving" (Hefling 2002, pp. 199 – 223). After all, the dialectical nature of the evolution of the world on all of its planes may have subconsciously preconditioned our cognitive apparatuses to be enlightened by expressions which combine what seems not combinable at all and which have it all, the whole wide world, in them, so to say. "Brains are machines made of conflicting parts... the brain is best understood as a team of rivals", claims the neuroscientist, David Eagleman (2011, pp. 108-109), provoking the thought of naturalness with which sensual impulses composed of dual elements and acting as amalgams of diametrical opposites manage to pass through the protective shell of our mental makeup and touch its deepest and most soulful essence. It could be then said that in this world wherein the most precious things arise from unions of seemingly irreconcilable opposites, the enlightening transformation of the core of our mind into an ocean wherein versatile streams of influence come together is what is accomplished by the most fabulous pieces of art, which, themselves, epitomize middle Ways celebrated by the sages all the world over in their being built around the embracement of mutually antipodal sentiments. Conversely, to wonder out loud, to freely contradict oneself and to separate single worldviews into polarized opposites and place them side by side before creating conditions for their blissful unison seems to be a prerequisite for producing enchanting works of art.

From this standpoint, our propensity to be naturally impressed by the fabulous dialectical encounters of opposites in pieces of art may be a training for our minds on how to understand the signs of the times that our reality is made of and navigate through it flawlessly during the odysseys of our lives. The imperative of the 20th century American activist, Grace Lee Boggs, has thus been to "think dialectically" (Kurashige 2011, pp. 5-6), for only in such a manner can the contradictions that drive the evolution of reality be grasped. Hence, on the creative side of things, this perspective at the aesthetics of arts explains why some of the greatest artistic minds have been naturally endowed with bipolar clashes of blissful and gloomy states of mind. Artists, in fact, have stood forth as social stereotypes of minds that require the in-

ternal conflicts of antipodal emotions or beliefs - typically causing large variations in mood from one hour to the next and from one day to another - in order to fuel their creativeness, the reason for which the American musicologist, Donald N. Ferguson (1969, pp. 163) stated that "ambivalence is one measure of artistic stature". On the other, interpretive side, if our own tendency to be naturally impressed with such dialectical confrontations in art tells us something, it must be the need to fully embrace the entire creation with our heart, to learn to love both the good and harmonious forces in life and those that tend to bring disarray and destruction, bringing them all together into a grand sense of oneness within our heart, which then turns into a stellar core in which billions of elements are fused together, releasing phenomenal bursts of spiritual energy outwards.

From this perspective, every truly moving artistic piece and enriching human expression are seeable as epitomes of Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise*, where the tiny relief sculptures on one wing of this bronze door are perfect antipodes to those on the other, giving us a reason to believe that only the expressions and states of mind that combine emotions and mental streams that are the complete opposites of one another into an enchanting oneness could give us the glimpse of a Paradise. In light of this insight, Nicholas of Cusa (1440) claimed that sheer rationality, irrespective of its richness and intricacy, could never attain vistas of the most supreme knowledge in life and that mixing this logical knowledge with the right dose of its complete opposite in terms of *de docta ignorantia*, a spiritual ignorance, produces an enlightening union of opposites and clears the sky of our mind, enabling the ascent of the starships of our attention into cosmically sublime realms of thought. Immediately thereafter, we could bring to mind the symbol of the Christ on the Cross as a metaphor of inspiring artistic pieces as themselves metaphors of the dialectical nature of the progress of human thought and being, which itself, in this endless train of analogies, might be seen as a metaphor of the universal principle recognized by Aristotle in 4th Century BC, according to which "harmony is a blend or composition of contraries". For, as we see, inherent to the most moving pieces of art can is always a cross of a kind, stretching one arm of our spirit in one direction and another arm into its opposite, thus producing a crack inside of the center of our being, onto which our mind will bow itself and from which the rays of divine light will find their way through to fill our body and soul with their refreshing spiritual energy.

Notwithstanding that it is not the nature of opposites juxtaposed in the artistic domain that ensures the inspirational potency of the resulting work, but the subtleness of their intertwinement that hides the key to success, recognizing all of this can make us wonder whether pieces of art that magically impress us for no obvious reason whatsoever accomplish so because they secretly point to the Way as defined in the Introduction, that is, as a magical blend of separation and unison and the ultimate recipe for fulfilled being in this life. One philosopher who would agree with this viewpoint is Martin Buber, who built his entire ontological universe around a similar concept of simultaneous preservation of individuality, symbolized by "I", and devotion to empathic oneness with the hearts of surrounding creatures, symbolized by "Thou". One such philosophical system is conditioned by the separation of I from Thou and by the incessant quest

for their union and symbiosis, which the meaning of life is being ascribed to, hinting at the polarity between separation and unification intrinsic to it. Consequently, "Buber demanded that the scenic event, like all genuine art, be a synthesis of opposites so that the audience be at once overpowered and observing, abandoned and preserved", Maurice Friedman (1969, pp. 18) wrote, referring to Buber's belief that "the primal duality itself, being and counterbeing, opposed to each other and bound to each other" (Buber 1969, pp. 56) is responsible for endowing art with most sublime qualities, with an impression of "the storm the stillness, the mountain of waves the sandy plain, the contradiction the agreement" (Buber 1969, pp. 59), reflecting the mental and emotional state of the artists "whose force is the force of fire; it burns in contradiction, and it shines in unity; like Enoch, of whom a legend tells that he was transformed from flesh to fire, his bones are glowing coals, but his eyelashes are the splendor of the firmament" (Buber 1969, pp. 74), as he went on to poetically describe one of his staggering theatrical experiences.

After all, the whole concept of the Way, of simultaneous distantness and intimacy which governs all the interactions in Nature, could be found in melodic, tonal music *per se*, with its juxtaposition of dissonant tones that epitomize drifting into new directions and consonant ones that characterize restoration of the sense of harmonious unison. Thereupon, the magnificence of a musical or any other piece of art could be measured by the extent to which it simultaneously pulls the listener both ways, deep to the insides of her starry essence and outwards, so as to expressively open one's heart, freely release the fireworks of beauty concealed therein and shed the stardust of one's spirit all over the face of the world. Enthralling songs and pieces of arts in general manifest their dialectical nature by acting as temporary solaces for the mind, while simultaneously propelling our spirits in the direction of ever more enchanting expressions of our being. As many of us know, the first encounters with works of art bear resemblance to entering cognitive abysses of a kind, which is succeeded by an impression of travelling deeper and deeper into the spheres of our psyche. In such an instant of a sudden inward direction of our awareness, we become like the lidless boy carved onto the wall behind the stage in the atrium of Santa Cruz's Catalyst or like thousands of antique sculptures of figures and figures with eyes for which one cannot tell if they are open or closed, portraying the way of walking through the world idealized by classicists, with "eyes wide shut", immersed into an ocean of bliss that fills the insides of a divined mind. On the other side, however, exiting these magic wells of inspiration, we elatedly emerge projected to journey along the ascending path to heavenly being in his world. The deeper we descend in this meditative plunging into the secrets hidden within a precious piece of art, the more magnificent launching of our spirit into clouds of enlightened imagery and ways of being will be; hence, the metaphor of the Way engrained in our fruitful encounters with artistic works, just as with any other inspirational details of our experiential reality. Each marvelous artistic work thus becomes an epitome of the image of the crucified Christ, making us bow with our awareness inwardly, opening doors to an introspective silence in which we could dig wonderful insights for the growth of our spirits and enhancement of its shine, while at the same time it crushes the gates posed on the way to the outflow of the colorful and exuberant burst of emotions, thus fulfilling the dreams of our beautiful

being in the world, of dancing like a celestial ballerina that drops divine signs with every enchanting move sent into the air, of stretching the arms of our spirit, just as the Christ on the cross did, and starting to live for the world with the fullness of our heart, thus becoming reborn again in the realm of starry spirit. Therefore, the purpose of arts is to lead the way for their consumers to spread their arms in two directions, to mind and Nature at the same time. On one side art thus has to powerfully relate to man in order to be grasped as significant, while on another side it has to open one to the infinity of Nature, to establish conditions for one's growth into something ever more magnificent, thus conforming to Tarkovsky's ideal of a work of art that connects its consumer with "the whole wide world" (Grigor 2017). Or, as the film director, himself, pointed out: "The image is not a meaning that is expressed by the film director, but it represents a whole world, which is reflected in it, as in a drop of water" (Georgiadou 2017).

If the process of befriending pieces of art and then enjoying their guiding-star company for a whole lifetime follows the line of simultaneous immersion into the depths of our stellar spirit and empathic emission of the sunrays of our spirit so as to trustfully reach out to these suns of moving energy that are built into works of art with the purpose of illuminating our ways, describable by the concept of the Way, then it comes as no surprise that the creative artistic expression engrains the very same principle in itself. Hence, when Jim Morrison of the Doors said that "we hide ourselves in our music to reveal ourselves" (Hart & Lieberman 1999, pp. 155), he grazed the surface of this idea that retreating into the inner space of our soul in order to craft wonderful gems of expression preconditions our artistic shininess to the world. Martin Buber (1923) was on the brink of reaching a similar insight when he said that the only purpose of one's withdrawal into oneself during contemplation or creative work is to "open the door and find a beautiful human face gazing at one". Hence, to open the petals of the flower of one's heart and propel oneself with the fuel of a great empathic desire to embellish the world with ornaments of signs of divine beauty, but still to remain partially shelled and covered by a veil of mystery is the way all fruitful artists in this world ought to be prepared to follow. If the state of a creative mind is indeed describable in the same way the American painter, Mary Cassatt described Paul Cezanne in 1894, then artists in the making should consider working to adopt the same, inherently dialectical, bipolar, Christ-on-the-cross mental states: "There was something surprising, even contradictory, about Cézanne. He spouted profanities yet could recite long passages of Virgil and Ovid in Latin. He scorned priests but went faithfully to Mass. He hated the official Paris Salon but kept submitting his work to its judges. He haunted the Louvre, copying sculptures and paintings into his sketchbooks, yet critics said he couldn't draw. He was obsessed with tradition and obsessed with overturning it. He felt himself a failure... and the best painter of his time" (Trachtman 2006). Furthermore, since successfully crafted works of art present none but a veritable reflection of dialectical contradictions that have crucified the minds who created them, we could be brought straight to the doors of appreciation of the following statement proclaimed by the Italian fashion designer, Donatella Versace: "Creativity comes from a conflict of ideas". A renaissance French artist, Jean Cocteau, who also spent a portion of his creative time designing clothes would have surely agreed with this viewpoint, having no-

ticed earlier how "the spirit of creation is the highest form of contradiction among humans" (Simolo 2007) in the course of his celebration of "habit-abhorring disobedience with which boldness reacts to rules" (Simolo 2007). Therefore, whatever the art we have in mind, whenever we happen to be impressed by it, we could go ahead and search for a striking contrast hidden somewhere in its core. For, cognitive systems subjected to a conflicting pull of competing ideals and drives are those in which a crack is produced, from which the sunlight of a lively spirit within makes its way out, to the surface of their being and the surrounding reality.

However, knowing that the root of schizophrenic acting lies in personality splits, we could reiterate the age-old adage that the line dividing genii in the art of living from deluded maniacs is quite thin. Therefore, those who wish to walk along the artistic path, as defined here, should be prepared to cope with countless traps and challenges that this cracking of the soul from the inside bears. Without allowing these powerful tectonic movements of the spiritual substrate of our mind to occur under the groundbreaking force of blasting emotions and lifesaving aspirations, yielding splits and cracks along which the liveliest mental landscapes arise, no truly innovative lines would be drawn by our creative being in this life. For, just like ruptures in the Earth's crust allow the tectonic shifts and seismic waves that produce continents and create conditions for life as we know it to occur, so could cracks in our consciousness be hypothesized to present the sources for our epistemic edification and the creation of luscious mental and emotional landscapes that adorn our insides, preventing their erosion into flat and lifeless backdrops of the mind. The madman Woodsy from Irvine Welsh's Ecstasy therefore quite righteously convinces the suspiciously looking doctors at a mental hospital in Edinburgh in which he was secluded in the idea that "conflict creates consciousness", the phrase with which Erwin Schrödinger would have surely agreed, as this was his own version of it: "Consciousness and discord with one's own self are inescapably linked up, even that they must, as it were, be proportional to each other. This sounds a paradox, but the wisest of all times... who by life and word have, more than others, formed and transformed that work of art which we call humanity, testify by speech and writing or even by their lives that more than others have they been torn by the pangs of inner discord. Let this be a consolation to him who also suffers from it. Without it nothing enduring has ever been begotten" (Schrödinger 1944, pp. 110-101). If we tend to see a social mind as a whole of a kind as well, we could also get reminded of a concordant claim by Alfred North Whitehead (1925, pp. 207), "Periods of tranquility are seldom prolific of creative achievement... great ages have been unstable ages", aiming to show us that times during which the human spirit is being tempted, torn and crucified amongst various directions of feeling and thought are those during which most precious products of its creativeness are being born.

Various ups and downs in the life of Rembrandt van Rijn are said to have cracked his soul open and created an artist who "seemed like a man on a mountain top, looking on one side to sweet meadows filled with flowers and sunlight, and on the other to a desolate landscape over which a clouded sun is setting" (Anon. 2019), being a bipolar state of mind that inclines one to the greatest creative feats, but also to the

unthinkable mental torments. For, remember, this process of producing cracks in the crust of our consciousness is such that it lives up to the ancient Buddhist premise that the same is the key that unbolts the doors of Heaven and Hell, setting grounds on which an equal probability exists for us to become a genius or a madman. Innumerable splits within our psyche can be therefore seen feeding our creativity, from concurrent inner impetuses to empathically express oneself with an explosion of beautifying energy and introspectively withdraw into a meditative space bubble of a kind, which is exactly the polarity of the Way, to a sense of floating in enlightening oneness with the entire world while somehow simultaneously remaining isolate and remote from others, to feelings of fondness and attraction over one and repugnance over other aspects of living things and circumstances, to a general sense of belonging to two or more places at the same time or feeling as a nomadic refugee and a cosmopolitan all at once, to millions of other spiritually harrowing polarities on which our heart and mind could be crucified.

The same conclusion that points at the lavishing trees of aesthetics stemming from wherever one finds antithetic emotions or directions of thought fertilizing each other can be derived with respect to all other art forms and modes of being. The main reason behind the decadency of Hollywood movies lies in their emotional immaturity, engraining most of the time not even a whit of a wish to make them a place of an exciting encounter of diverse emotions that would enrich the viewer from the inside and split his heart open by their ambiguousness. Films emerging as products of this industry that has been continually becoming more entertaining and less artistic I thus usually see as saddening set pieces of withered emotionality wherein one emotion only is left to reign: fear, an emotion that, itself, is able to mesmerize its absorbent and hold its attention in a tight clutch exactly owing to its intrinsic contradictoriness (A.K., pp. 16); namely, fear simultaneously arouses and restrains the mind overwhelmed by it, incentivizing action while also freezing down the actor. Another one of the key reasons behind the frivolousness of contemporary Hollywood movies can be found in characters that always seem to travel along single tracks of their personalities, executing their plans with a perfect determinacy, as if never coming across internal crossroads, the moments of "confusion, the contradictions, the quiet seconds when a person wrestles with his or her own instincts" (Martin 2010, pp. xviii), hesitantly doubting over the right way forward, thus failing to engrain the exciting multidimensionality within their bleached characters.

What in the world has happened to the complexity of perhaps the most iconic personality to have ever emerged from the movie screen, representing the heart and soul of the American spirit better than any of its likes before or after, Rick Blaine of *Casablanca*, I have incessantly wondered while sitting in darkened cinema halls with a soul disquieted and unhinged by the irksome linearity of characters displayed before my eyes, experiencing them in the same way as David Bowie's "girl with the mousey hair" (1971), a heroine walking "through her sunken dream" did, finding the film she had watched "a saddening bore" and with a giant roll of the eyes of her heart wondering if there is life on Mars to escape to. As if embodying the famous "dual of the anthems" scene from *Casablanca*, playing the glorious, uplifting and spiritually triumphant Marseillaise on one side of the mind and a pedestrian German tune on the other, every moment

in the course of this movie is accompanied by a mesmerizing sense of internal crucifixion of Rick's psyche between desperately selfish carelessness about anything in life anymore and devotedly selfless caring for all that is truly beautiful in it, yet one such "polyvalent" (Pasolini 1969, pp. 39) mental makeup wherein opposites clash like matter and antimatter and produce eruptions of light along the way was long blown in the wind as time has gone by. Inspired, albeit negatively, by the imposition of clear-cut moral distinctions and naïve dichotomizations by the Hollywood cinema, the first and the foremost goal I have set before myself as an instructor that aspires to inspire, elate and enlighten has been to dispel any idolatries that come from the embracement of one points of view at the cost of finding nil value in others. Hence, it is my belief that solutions composed of pairs or multitudes of mutually antagonistic statements rather than linear and unambiguously linear directives apply to every single one of complex existential problems and that the role of arts that aim to veritably represent life and steer clear of providing merely an idealistic, fairytale-like image of it must be to embody this myriad of inherently incompatible points of view in its imagery or sound, thus reflecting in its fabric the overlapping emotional four seasons of the inner world of children, the Earth as a whole spinning in space, always plunged in darkness on one of its sides while the other one is washed in sunshine, or a walk through an idyllic forest drawn in the air by the sound of Mozart's flute in, say, the second movement of Concerto in C, having the sunshiny and the tempestuous, the joyous and the ominous inseparably interwoven with one another.

Still, even though life is obviously all but black and white at all of its levels, from the shallowest to the deepest, an average person is often confused upon coming face to face with an expression wherein the farthest opposites appear blended in one or vehemently swinging from one to another. Mesmerized by it, she may not know how to interpret it and may run away in fear from its extraordinariness, reflecting inside herself the emotion with which Jane Clark advised Audrey Rouget to stay away from Tom Townsend, a sole socialist among the "rat pack" of aristocrats in Whit Stillman's *Metropolitan*: "There's something dubious about Tom. This whole thing about him being a radical, when he's obviously not... anybody with as many conflicts as Tom is better not to get involved with". And if this is the reaction of a stereotypical human being encountering a divine expression that is a composite of numerous mutually contradictory emotions, then the purpose of education can be to make people aware that these expressions are not to be feared, but cherished. But to accept this inherently grayish nature of reality, wherein black and white are always mixed to some extent in each and every human spirit, making it impossible to delineate where the goodness in one begins and vileness ends, is to go beyond the stark good/evil dichotomies drawn casually to appeal to the taste of the masses, teaching viewers to erroneously divide people to irreparable jerks and gods for good instead of trying to discover the seeds of heavenliness in each and every one of them. Compared to the naivety of Prince Valiant or the princess savers from the Slavic folklore, the complexity of the heroic characters, along with the ceaseless wonder as to where to go and what path to take, is more veritably reflected by the twisted, ambiguous, "close but conflicted relationships with the gods" (Anon. 2016) that traditional heroes, from the ancient Greek epics to this very day, have maintained, perhaps hiding the

key to their superpowers and superpowers in art alike, as it could be inferred from this minute celebration of crucifixions and crossroads of any kind.

In light of all this, there is a chance that the most thrilling pieces of art and perceptions that we will come across in life will turn out to embody dialectical pulls in opposite directions that produce enlightening paradoxes in the observer's mind. Arthur Koestler (1964) coined the term "bisociation" to describe the quality shared by the finest exhibitions of creativity in the domains of arts, science and regular behavior alike: the ability to bring together elements whose conjunction has initially seemed quite counterintuitive. And here, I am free to observe that all the awesome things in life are always *both*: infants in our arms grow both fast and slow; Beethoven's symphonies sound both tender and thunderous; Dostoyevsky's novels, as Mikhail Bakhtin (1984, pp. 176) noted, are such that "everything in his world lives on the very border of its opposite"; Radiohead tunes are both soft and sore, loving and hateful, illumed and irate; characters on the connoisseurs' most beloved religious paintings usually look both despondent and sanguine, while without this ambivalence they are often labeled as kitschy; life is both bitter and sweet, filling our souls with infinite joy and infinite sadness alike; a wholesome being is both introspective and expressive at the same time; the most captivating personalities owe their enchantment to seemingly incompatible traits majestically brought to unison in their expressions; a sustainable biological whole is both integrative and dissipative; a whole heart is both low enough to lean its ears onto the surrounding heartbeats so as to cordially empathize therewith and high enough to swim in the swarms of stars and the sea of ethereal cosmic joy so as to be able to channel these healing harmonies of the heavens down to Earth, and so forth.

A genuine artistic expression could be thought of as the one that spontaneously embodies this multidimensional nature of the wondrous things in life and ends up resembling a crossroad whereon a pair or a plethora of theses and antitheses meet and create dazzling syntheses. Naturally, with apples not falling far from the trees, such expressions that reflect a whole universe in their breadth may arise only from minds and hearts akin to Mahler's symphonies, harboring every single sentiment, emotion and mental state under the Sun. Such cognitive fountains wherefrom these geysers of enlightening expressions arise are, for this reason, as infantile as they are wise, resembling the emotional versatility of toddlers, always full of surprises, never leaving the viewer certain as to what emotion will burst out of them next.

And if we ever become doubtful whether such protean mindsets are divine at all and start to think that they might be just immature, all we need to do is reread the eleventh chapter of Bhagavad Gita and consider the moment in it when Arjuna asks Krishna to kindly show him "that universal self" that Krishna beholds (Gita 11:4); before Krishna strikes Arjuna with the mercurial and inherently contradictory versatility of the manifestations of his being, now resembling the Holy Mother, a bearer of life, and seconds later turning into raged lightning that instills fear and awe even into the stoniest of souls, alternating from a creator to an obliterator in the blink of an eye, he utters the following words: "My dear Arjuna, O son of Pṛthā, behold now My opulences, hundreds of thousands of varied divine forms, multicolored like the sea.

O best of the Bhāratas, see here the different manifestations of Ādityas, Rudras, and all the demigods. Behold the many things which no one has ever seen or heard before. Whatever you wish to see can be seen all at once in this body. This universal form can show you all that you now desire, as well as whatever you may desire in the future. Everything is here completely" (Gita 11:5-7). Thus, when we see children embodying every single emotion known to man in a single afternoon, we should know that they are the road not to be curbed, constrained and directed to foggy, scorched ridges that we, the adults, occupy in this world, but a road to be followed on our quest to rediscover that paradise lost long ago and reawaken our divinity once again. The same goes for the artistic expressions as communications that overwhelm us with their multifaceted nature and enable us to find literally every sentiment and state of mind concealed beneath their semantic layers: they are to be embraced and allowed to expand our minds, not disparaged for their nonlinearity, contradictory content and the occasionally insatiable breadth of their form.

Fig.5. Degas' *A Woman Seated beside a Vase of Flowers* exemplifies a case where the inventive juxtaposition of opposites brings about death, not life, to a form or a trend in art, reiterating the principle according to which there is no recipe as to what constitutes the best art, meaning that art, ideally, is to be created with a belief in the veracity of Pascal's norm: "Heart. Instinct. Principles" (1669).

In such a way, I have arrived at the final dialectical confrontation in this musing on its merits in the kingdom of art and beyond, readily derivable from the balance between balance and imbalance, which could be considered the ultimate systemic balance in all aspects of life. In other words, literally taking to heart the principle that impels us to base our divine expressions on concoctions of opposites (Uskoković 2023a), while ignoring the natural call to couple expressions with their likes, would predispose our pyramids of artistic pieces to end up being rather unstable and shaky, as if we have strived to reach the tops without

adding bricks of similarities one over another and patiently setting up its bases first. As a matter of fact, a recipe that defines when to choose to fortify the already existing emotional streams of our artistic creations and when to ingenuously contradict them will not be given to us, not even in millions of years of continued evolution of our collective artistic creativity, and it will always be up to the artist to pick one or the other when the time comes. And whatever the composition one conceives, be it musical, architectural, oratorical or gestural, there will always be apices to strengthen and nadirs to deepen with agonistic pairings of expressions as well as crests to curtail and troughs to uphold with antagonistic pairings thereof should we wish to come up with something grandiose in the end. Therefore, creating extravagant crossovers for their own sake and expecting ghosts of dazzlingly aesthetic impressions to be released from them like genii from a bottle is by no means the road I encourage artists in any domain of life to follow.

Crossovers can often bring new life to each of the sentiments, genres or disciplines crossed, but there are cases when they can mark their death and one notable example comes from Degas' *A Woman Seated beside a Vase of Flowers* (Fig.5), a painting that attempted to combine a still life and a portrait in one and do so in an innovative fashion, portraying a lady that falls out of the frame, a bouquet on a tilted table and the obliqueness of the water level in the pitcher misaligned with that of the table, creating a subtly surreal impression thereby, along with possibly paying homage to an older and even more salient misalignment between the level of the ground and the wine in a titled chalice held up by a party reveler in the center of Tizian's *Bacchanal of the Andrians*. The painting depicted a dialogue between the two, the still life and the portrait, and provided a whole new way of representing both, challenging conventions along the way, but effectively, in the timeline of the history of the art of painting, killing both instead of breathing new life thereto, in spite of the brilliancy of the idea and the excellency of its execution. At the end of the day, no recipe will ever be here to guide our creative efforts along predetermined expressional channels; rather, incessant questing, wondering and renewing both the surface and the essence of it all will be the only path that would lead to sustained brilliance in our artistic output.

After all, if we were to succeed in verbally explaining the reasons why we like what we like in music or any other art, it would be a defeat like no other. It would be an epitaph to the gift from gods that art is because transcribed into words, it ceases to have the reason to exist. In that sense, the most important doctrine, the one that we should keep closer to our hearts than any other one, is the doctrine that teaches us that there are ultimately no doctrines to pursue when it comes to conceiving creative action. Thus, for instance, although the Way is a principle that I invested my heart and soul to elaborate and transmit (Uskoković 2023b), I always emphasize that "when the road begins, the journey ends" (Pasolini 1966), and that one should not take this or any other Way for granted nor embrace it as a universal dogma, or else one's fall from grace would surely ensue; rather, one should always doubt it and be prepared for an occasion on which it will be all but applicable. Consequently, whenever we come across a recipe that unilaterally highlights a fruitful thing to do, we should be sure that there is always a place for its antipodal action to be creatively performed. For, in this world, triumphant are not spirits that selectively embrace one and

discard other features of reality, but those who manage to find beauty and meaning in them all, from the most adored to the most disparaged ones, and bring them all into the home of their heart. Though it may happen to be a little tent soaked up in rain and unnoticed by anyone, to its holder it will open an enticing view of Cosmos in its eternal glory.

7. Conclusion

All throughout the history, the most powerful works of art have captivated the critics neither through the mellifluousness or genuineness of expression nor through sheer technical mastery, but through their ability to reconcile opposites – light and shadow, harmony and discord, movement and stillness. This dialectical interplay, inherent in the structure of reality itself, is what grants art its transformative potential.

In considering the implications of this line of argument for the aesthetics of art, it is essential to note that reconciliation of opposites is not merely an idiosyncratic mode of expression, but rather a timelessly relevant and indispensable aesthetic principle. The interplays of contrasts in art bring the tension/resolution dichotomy to the forefront of the viewer's attention, thus drawing him into a state of active and spiritual engagement with the artwork. Acknowledging the stylistic mergers of light and darkness, sound and silence, or order and chaos encourages the critical appraisal of art as a similarly dynamic process mirroring the contradictions of existence itself.

The findings presented in this study throw light on the idea that the power of art lies in its capacity to communicate universal truths through the willful juxtaposition of contrasting elements. This dialectical nature of art, as revealed here through the analysis of diverse artistic media, highlights its ability to evoke and celebrate the multidimensional complexity of human emotions and intellectual engagements in lieu of their linearized caricatures. These oppositions, be they classified as internal or external, personal or cultural, rely on their mutual synchronicity and coordinateness to elevate the significance of the artworks in question. The artistic success in this juxtapositional effort defines how focused and polished these artworks' lens for expanding the viewer's knowledge and sensibilities pertaining to the vast multiverse of human experience will be.

In summation, through an exploration of examples from a variety of artistic media, including music, painting, film, architecture and theater, this study has illustrated how great works achieve their resonance through the dynamic balance of opposing forces. By analyzing these diverse forms of expression, it becomes evident that the fusion of contrasts is not only a recurring feature in remarkable art, but also a fundamental principle that underlies its emotional and intellectual impact.

By embracing contradiction rather than avoiding it, art mirrors the complexities of existence and invites

us into a deeper, more nuanced way of seeing the world. In doing so, it not only reflects the nature of reality but also offers a philosophical lesson: that meaning and beauty emerge most profoundly when opposites are held together in creative tension.

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