

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Tlemcen**



**Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of English
Section of English**

**Deconstruction Through a Psychedelic Experience
in The Film *Enter the Void* (2009)**

*Dissertation submitted to the department of English as a partial fulfilment of
the requirements for Master's degree in Literature and Civilisation*

Presented by

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Second Examiner

2021 – 2022

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Dedications

To the essence of my being, my Mother, who fought day and night for my happiness. I would gather all the stars, and it would still be little before the love I have received from you...

To my friend Merwan MESSAOUDI, the brother who has been there for me in my tedious times...

To my friend Imed DALI AHMED, whom I turn to the most in passion and sorrow...

To my friend Abdeljalil BELHADJI, the most impeccable and understanding of all...

To my friends Imene and Wafaa, who have sweetened my last year at university by their cheerful presence...

To my uncles and my loved ones...

To Lucy, without you, this work would not have seen light...

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Abstract

This paper endeavors to explore the experimental film *Enter the Void* (2009) by Gaspar Noé. The research is conducted first by associating Deconstruction theory and the Grofian Model of the Psychedelic experience. For this purpose, an analysis of Deconstruction theory is conducted in relation to the mind bending phenomenology of the Psychedelic experience in order to assess its Deconstructive phenomena. The latter will serve as framework to analyze the character Oscar in the film *Enter the Void* and explore how his psychedelic experience can act as a deconstructive tool in terms of the literary aspects of narrative, setting, and characterization. It is shown that it achieves that by infusing the narrator with the unreliability of an altered consciousness, trapping the narrative in a metafictional relationship. The latter is confined between material reality and psychedelic simulation. The potentiality of the psychedelic experiences pouring its phenomenology in the film deconstructs the setting and characters as well, by making them undecidable, between reality and hallucination.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

DMT: Dimethyltryptamine

LSD: Lysergic Acid Diethylamide

MAPS: Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies

OCD: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

The Psychedelic experience has been a central catalyst for the hippie movement in the 1960's. It is reported that individuals had odd experiences of mystical significance with the digestion of unique serotonergic substances. It broke them free from the constraints of the cultural norms via a shift of normal consciousness, in a mass euphoric sensation. For instance, young people of 18 years of age, collectively developed a resistance toward the American call for soldiers to fight in Vietnam. It was a unique break from a historically imposed obedience for the American call for Warfare. The slogan "peace and love" installed itself, channeling a shift of the collective consciousness, potentially induced by Psychedelics.

Terence McKenna, the ethnobotanist, who travelled the world experimenting with various sorts of Psychedelic substances, preached for their efficacy in breaking the norms and the impositions of culture, as well as the limitations of language. He states that there is a transcendental dimension beyond language in the psychedelic experience that is so challenging and difficult to talk about. It is accompanied with the ability to decondition the individual from the cultural values. It makes one question the rules of the game. He called it a political hot potato.

McKenna's description parallels the American government reaction, represented by the president Richard Nixon. He signed the constitution, banning such substances and suspending any related research for two primary reasons: harm potential and addictiveness. That shut down a growing Psychedelic subculture that inspired an entire strata of cultural productions; from Aldous Huxley's *Doors of Perception*, to the beginning of the Rock band Pink Floyd, to famous painters like Rick Griffin.

Yet, thirty years later, a Psychedelic Renaissance occurred and is still ongoing. Scientists regained authority over the research on Psychedelics. Between the legalization of Marijuana and the decriminalization of Psychedelics in the West, the world is gradually opening up to their potential. As indicated by the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, the unique subjective

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experience as induced by the Psychedelic chemical has given rise to positive results in terms of treating illnesses like PTSD, OCD, Addiction, and Depression, as well as Death anxiety that haunts terminal stage cancer patients.

Besides, the Psychedelic phenomenology appears to be relevant for the study of human consciousness, perception, and cognition in general. As a matter of fact, there is an outgrowing integration of the Psychedelic experience in various fields, ranging from Biology, to Cognitive science, psychiatry, anthropology and neuroscience. Given their foundational inspiration for various cultural productions, and their apparant interdisciplinary value, one cannot help but wonder about the possibility of integration in the fields of human sciences as well, notably literary fields.

Interestingly enough, it is at the same Hippie era that the French linguist and philosopher Jacques Derrida rised in popularity with Deconstruction theory. A theory that equally perpetuated a resistance toward imposed structures that channeled meaning and the definitions of truth, and their implications in deciding the value of man in society. It viewed structures as boundaries imposed by ideology and power, to be deconstructed with extreme skepticism. It started with an acute reprimendation on the academic Structuralism that was perpetuating a certain understanding of language.

The correlation between the rise in popularity of both Psychedelics and Deconstruction at the same time period, might not have been the result of pure coincidence. They both seemingly share the same attribute and pour into the same mode of thought; a counter-culture attitude, disruption of normality and revalation of linguistic limitations.

Regardless of the stigma and the political baggage, this disseration attempts to take up McKenna's challenge and "talk about it!". It aims at objectively studying that coincidence between the nature of the Psychedelic experience and Derrida's Deconstruction theory. The point is to examine whether there is a link between both events on a technical level. The purpose is to study the phenomenology of the

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Psychedelic experience and analyze it. For the purpose of this research, a multidisciplinary analysis will be conducted to track points of overlap between the working principles of Deconstruction theory and Psychedelic phenomena then how it acts as a deconstructive tool in the film *Enter the void* (2009).

Hence, the research questions to be explored in this paper are as follows:

1. How can the Psychedelic experience be deconstructive?
2. How can the Psychedelic experience act as a deconstructive tool in a text?

Accordingly, the following hypotheses will be stress tested during this research:

1. The Psychedelic experience's deconstructive ability resides in shifting the normal categories or consciousness.
2. The Psychedelic experience acts a Deconstructive tool in a text by mimicking its effects of an altered consciousness on a fictional character, shifting the normal, establishing a metafiction between normal consciousness and Psychedelic mode of consciousness, reinforcing undecidability and unreliability, and thus deconstructing the narrative of a text.

To provide answer to these research questions, it is imperative to conduct a theoretical analysis and a literary analysis. The approach selected for this study is a Multidisciplinary analysis. It combines both of Deconstruction theory and the Grofian Model of the Psychedelic experience as established by Dr. Stanislav Grof.

For this purpose, this paper falls into two chapters. The first chapter will focus on bringing forward the basic notions and definitions necessary for the research, as well as, a theoretical analysis of Deconstruction theory in relation to the Grofian Model. The point is to retrieve points of similarities between both, and assess the deconstructive aspect of the Psychedelic experience.

The second chapter will focus on using prior knowledge as a framework to analyze how the psychedelic experience acts as a deconstructive tool in a text. It will explore the film *Enter the Void*, produced by Gaspar Noé. It is an experimental

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movie that features a character named Oscar, who takes Psychedelics and experiences its phenomena. The movie is famous for its closest depiction of the Psychedelic experience. As a consequence, it is a fit case study to answer the research questions.

Chapter One: Deconstruction and The Psychedelic Experience

1.1 Introduction

The present section begins with the setting theoretical background of the research. The first part of the latter is concerned with the basic notions and definitions regarding Deconstruction theory and the Psychedelic experience. It highlights the concepts that are necessary for this research, emphasizing the core principles of binarism, undecidability and logocentrism that make up Deconstruction, and the presentation of the Grofian model of the Psychedelic experience as established by Dr. Stanislav Grof.

The second section unravels the prior links made between Psychedelic experience and Deconstruction theory. Then, a demonstration on how the Psychedelic experience offers a deconstructive phenomenology by decentralizing the standardized brain chemistry that allows a normal state of consciousness in an interplay with the decentralization of its subjective normal experiences of perception, self, time, space, categories of reason and binary thinking.

1.2 Postmodernism

A movement is defined by its basic philosophical principles. Principles, which dictate the nature of reality, the meaning of being human, value and morality, and the mechanisms of acquisitions of knowledge (Hicks 5). Thus, every movement has some sort of epistemological, metaphysical, ethical principles that play together, giving rise to its unique definitional property.

The postmodern movement views itself as an anti-philosophical cannon. It rejects any traditional means of conducting philosophy. For instance, it rejects all values of the Enlightenment project, as it sees them nested on a set of a presuppositions that are taken for granted, not reflective of the reality it claims to represent. The modern ideals of reason, universal truth, freedom and science are put under a suspicious analysis by postmodernists (Hicks 14).

It follows naturally, that Postmodern literary criticism, rejects the notion that a text can have an objective meaning: “literary criticism becomes a form of subjective play in which the reader pours subjective associations into the text”

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(Hicks 16). In a denial of objectivity, subjectivism places itself as the center of any literary interpretation. The ideal of an ultimate meaning that raises above all possible alternative is destroyed. Deconstruction theory, being part of the postmodern movement, demonstrates exactly that. It is an anti-definition mode of reading that stands for the principle that any apparent grasp of meaning is illusory (Bertens 115).

1.3 Deconstruction

Deconstruction, as established by The French Linguist and philosopher Jacques Derrida cannot be put into a normative definition. In his own words, addressing the Japanese professor Izutsu in a letter, he writes:

All sentences of the type ‘deconstruction is X’ or ‘deconstruction is not X’ a priori miss the point, which is to say that they are at least false. As you know, one of the principal things at stake in what is called in my texts ‘deconstruction’ is precisely the delimiting of ontology above all of the third person present indicative: S is P (Derrida Qtd Wood and Bernasconi 4).

This indicates the escapist nature of deconstruction from definition as it is in itself an attitude of skepticism toward definitions. Specifically, normative definitions centered around certainty and truth. It criticizes the very principles that attempt to define it. Principles criticized via concepts instrumentalized by Derrida against themselves such as Logocentrism, binary opposites, undecidability.

1.3.1 Binary Opposites

Deconstruction focuses on tracking down the tensions behind binary oppositions. Thus, its essential mechanism of action is to examine the tensions and contradictions between oppositions, to demonstrate how they undermine themselves. It does so by revealing, that the marginalized side of the binary is not absent from its opposite, that traces of the marginalized side are present within the privileged one. It aims to disintegrate the centrality of the logos and allow the free play of centers. It reveals that the separation between binaries such as nature and culture, mind and body, speech and writing, presence and absence are arbitrary and

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presupposed in essence, to show that between a 0 and 1, there is an infinite number of decimals threatening the clear separation of the binary (Bertens 112).

1.3.2 Logocentrism and Metaphysics of Presence

The deconstructive work of Derrida challenges the tradition that underlies all of western metaphysics since the Greek (Wheat 4). He argues that all of it is based on a logocentric foundation, privileging presence over absence:

All metaphysicians, from Plato to Rousseau, Descartes to Husserl, have proceeded in this way, conceiving good to be before evil, the positive before the negative, the pure before the impure, the simple before the complex, the essential before the accidental, the imitated before the imitation, etc (Derrida, Limited Inc 93).

Deconstruction problematizes the metaphysical task of fixing an arbitrary origin, a center ascribed by transcendental truth. The logos, according to Derrida is that which is fixed as a center, an origin taken for granted as reality. For instance, the logocentrism in the western tradition has taken logic and speech as foundational axiomatic principles, arbitrarily put in a privileged position.

The centralization of the logos automatically pushes to the margin what is not the logos. For instance, the privileging of ‘speech’ immediately disfavors that which is not speech; writing. This logocentric attitude goes back as far as the Aristotelean time: “spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words” (Aristotle), and continues till Ferdinand DeSaussure wrote: “language and writing are two distinct systems of signs: the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first” (DeSaussure 24). They both perpetuate the same logocentric tradition. For, a subject is *present*¹ at the moment of his speech, but he’s absent in his writings. He can be present during speech to rectify his mistakes, defend his point, engage a dialectic and define the meaning of the words in his speech. However, none of that would be possible in writing.

¹ Italics for emphasis

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At this point, Derrida, coined the term Différance to disturb the binary of speech/writing. The term Différance is “neither a word, nor a concept” (Wood and Bernasconi 31). It is a word that is misspelled deliberately, to showcase that the difference between the French words “difference” and “différance” cannot be phonologically assessed. It is the written form, in this context that is closer to truth. Only when the word is written that an individual can read which word is used. The inferiority of writing is contested in a dislodgement of the binary.

The term Différance also reveals the nature of meaning in language and how it is defined by a relational property with other words. The meaning of a word, according to Derrida, always depends on the meaning of another one, and the next one depends on another one, leading to an infinite regress of words defining each other. Thus, the meaning is always differed, postponed and never centralized and fixed. The stability of meaning installs itself only when a transcendental signified is taken as an origin (Bertens 109). To destabilize definitions, Derrida relied on the concept of Undecidability

1.3.3 Undecidability

An undecidable is an object that challenges the binary. It cannot conform to any side of the binary. It remains suspended, unable to be defined. It is the exception that breaks the separation between the two sides of the binary, disrupts oppositional logic and the conceptual order that follows. Derrida appeals to the nature of the ghost as an example of an undecidable; the ghost seems to be neither present nor absent, or potentially both present and absent. It disturbs the hierarchy of the binaries by existing in the middle and adopting the property of both sides, or neither (Dick and Wolfreys 101). Undecidability and prior concepts serve the deconstruction of texts in a Literary context.

1.3.4 Literary Deconstruction

Deconstruction of literary text focuses on proving that the meaning in a text is not as stable as it seems to be, to showcase that the text dismantles itself by its own structure: “Deconstruction is not the dismantling of the structure of a text, but

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a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. Its apparently solid ground is no rock but think air” (J. H. Miller). The deconstructionist, in this case, instrumentalizes the aforementioned concepts by Derrida and more, to achieve such a task. It starts from the principle that language is unstable. As a consequence, the text inevitably falls into an underlying undecidability (Bertens 115). The text never obtains closure, with a finite meaning.

1.4 The Psychedelic Experience

The Merriam-Webster dictionary tracks the etymology of the word Psychedelic. It is the combination of the irregular *psych-* and the Greek *dēlos* evident, which translates literally into evident mind, manifestation of the mind. A statement that resonates the nature of the experience. The Psychedelic experience is the culmination of all the subjective effects that are induced by the ingestion of a Psychedelic substance, notably, LSD, Mescaline, DMT and Psilocybin, to name a few. The experience consists of visual and auditory hallucinations, altered state of consciousness, loss of the ego, transcendence of verbal concepts and spacetime (Leary 11). However, although the definition of Psychedelic experience has been strictly linked to the substances that trigger it, elements of the experience can occur via various forms that do not depend on drug use. Deprivation tanks, yoga exercises, meditation, flow are contexts where psychedelic elements can manifest themselves (Leary 11).

The Psychedelic substances and their phenomenological experiences have been a topic of interest for many, as a great framework for understanding human nature. The American ethnobotanist Terence Kemp McKenna pushed forward the Stoned Ape theory. That indicates that human consciousness has evolved via the experimentation of proto-humans with Psychedelics found in nature:

How many Neolithic hunters, one might wonder, eking out an existence in the wild, were likely to sit before the fire at night contemplating the nature of man and the meaning of life? By contrast, if the same group had discovered and ingested some hallucinogenic mushrooms, they would be compelled to confront and would surely

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have discussed and attempted to understand the nature of their otherworldly mushroom-induced encounters (Nichols 133).

The latter were a catalyst that sprung language, imagination, arts, religion, science, philosophy, and culture. He indicated that the substances precede human civilization as it is known; one of the earliest historical pieces of evidence of the ritualistic use of Psychedelics goes back to the late neolithic era, 2000 years ago, in the Tassili-n-Ajjer, Sahara Desert of southern Algeria. Rock paintings clearly depict Shamans dancing, mushrooms in their hands and sprouting from their bodies (McKenna).

Rick Strassman, the American clinical associate professor of psychiatry at the University of New Mexico, hypothesized that DMT, a potent Psychedelic molecule, is endogenously secreted by the pineal gland during sleep, and potentially at death. That is what would make humans dream and have near-death experiences (Strassman XV).

The Psychedelic experience has gained popularity to the mainstream culture during the 1960's when it was appropriated by the hippie movement. The rise of the counter-culture led to a governmental resistance, and the American president Richard Nixon signed the constitution banning Psychedelic substances for two primary reasons: harm reduction and addictiveness (Strassman 27).

As a consequence, scientific research on psychedelics, which were promising at the time, were hindered as well. A long break of almost 30 years installed itself before scientists could regain authority and continue their research. In 2006, the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, initiated many projects to study the phenomena of the Psychedelic experience, demonstrating its therapeutic value and promising results. In parallel, Johns Hopkins University undertook research about psilocybin, the active component of psychedelic mushrooms, and their effect on death anxiety of terminal stage cancer patients.

1.4.1 The Grofian Model of the Psychedelic Experience

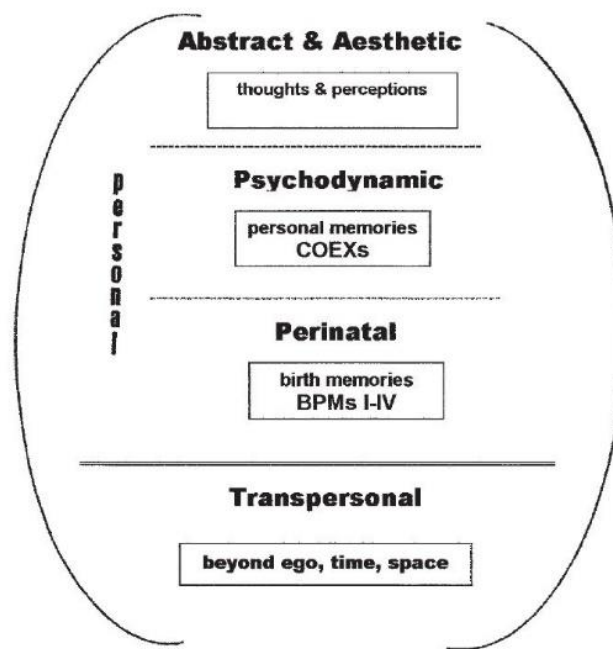
The Psychiatrist and Psychedelic researcher Dr. Stanislav Grof divides the Psychedelic experience induced by LSD into a four-dimensional model: abstract and

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aesthetic experiences, psychodynamic experiences, perinatal experiences, and transpersonal experiences:

Figure 1

Grof's Cartography of the human mind



(Roberts 2)

It is crucial to denote that the model is a structural dissection of the complex effects of the Psychedelic for a purely didactic purpose. The Psychedelic experience is versatile, as it is holistically manifested in an overlap of all the four dimensions of the model, at the same time. Sometimes not, depending on the subject's personality, life situation and psychological variables (Grof 218).

1.4.2 The Aesthetic and Abstract Experiences

This is the initial stage of the Psychedelic experience, where the subject goes through a shift from the usual perceptual ability (Grof 34). At this point, hallucinations begin. They take the form of vivid dynamic afterimages, rich contrast in the visual field, brighter and enhanced colors, unique fleeting pictures of fantastic and exotic scenery, as well as kaleidoscopic patterns, geometrical abstractions and optical illusions (Grof 35).

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1.4.3 The Psychodynamic Experiences

At this level of experiences, the subject starts to manifest his unconscious. “Important memories, emotional problems, unresolved conflicts, repressed material from various life periods” are manifested within the symbolic language of the Psychedelic experience. Such elements are prescribed onto the field of hallucinations in a form of fantasies, daydreams and metaphorical allusions, which can be psychoanalyzed (Grof 44).

1.4.4 The Perinatal Experiences

The basic feature of this level of experiences is the inclination for the subject toward a deep meditation about the problems of the human condition; biological birth, aging, sickness, death. An existential crisis is installed in the archetypal representation of birth and death. “—The startling realization that the beginning of life bears a deep resemblance to its end—is the major philosophical issue that accompanies the perinatal experiences. Such a condition sets the ground for a spiritual opening and religious experiences that are intrinsic in the human psyche, independent from the individual’s cultural background (Grof 97). The perinatal phenomena terminate with the ego death experience (Grof 141); the subject feels like he’s dying and his world, with all its reference points, collapses. That leads to the next dimension of the Psychedelic experience; the transpersonal phenomena.

1.4.5 The Transpersonal Experiences

In a usual state of consciousness, an individual experiences himself as a subject inside a material reality, he identifies himself as an ego, inside a physical body, separate from the rest of the world. He is conscious of the space he occupies, and the time he is bound to. He can be in the present moment, in his present location, recalling memories of other places and other times, and fantasize or anticipate situations that would potentially happen in the future (Grof 157).

The common feature of the transpersonal experience is that one or all of those elements are phenomenologically transcended during the Psychedelic experience. That is manifested as an expansion of consciousness beyond the boundaries of the

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ego, an awareness that is propelled to envelop other individuals and objects that were deemed separate from oneself. However, many phenomena account for the transpersonal nature of the Psychedelic experience. In some cases, subjects they keep their sense identity but experience it in a different form, in a different space, at a different time. In other cases, they completely identify with the consciousness of another entity. On this basis of the elements aforementioned, the transpersonal layer of the Psychedelic experience can be defined as “experiencing involving an expansion or extension of consciousness beyond the usual ego boundaries and beyond the limitations of time and/or space” (Grof 158).

1.5 The Psychedelic Experience and Theory

The link between Psychedelics and theory is not a novelty. The French philosopher Michel Foucault had already appealed to a Psychedelic in his commentary on Deleuze’s work *Logic of sense*. He described Deleuze’s writing as a manifestation of ‘LSD logic’. In his assessment, he posits that the Psychedelic experience has the power to break the mind from the machinery of reason. He regarded the latter as the originator of the ‘catatonic rigidity’ of thought (Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* 191). He casually compares Deleuze style and LSD by putting them on the same merit of providing the necessary ‘difference’ to achieve that disruption in rigidity (Boothroyd 159).

Besides, one major Foucault’s deconstructive work revolved around studying the history of insanity. He tracked how its meaning shifted across different time periods; from the renaissance, to the classical age, to the modern era. He viewed the evolution of the meaning of madness as a direct consequence of the cultural institutions and power structures of the time. He claims, in the preface of his book *History of Madness*, that the definition of Madness in the modern era is established by the rigid echo chamber of reason channeled via the language of psychiatry with no interior communication with the experience of the mad:

The constitution of madness as mental illness, at the end of the eighteenth century, bears witness to a rupture in a dialogue, gives the separation as already enacted, and expels from the memory all those

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imperfect words, of no fixed syntax, spoken falteringly, in which the exchange, between madness and reason, was carried out. The language of psychiatry, which is a monologue by reason about madness, could only have come into existence in such a silence (Foucault XXVIII).

That implies that veil of reason as it is championed by authority imposes its definition on psychiatric cases. Diagnostics of madness are made accordingly. They made conducted in a condition where the mad never partakes the dialectic. He is shunned down by the authority of power, cloaked in reason.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association* explicitly defines personality disorders in direct *opposition*² to one's own cultural centers:

A personality disorder is an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the *individual's culture*, is pervasive and inflexible, has an onset in adolescence or early adulthood, is stable over time, and leads to distress or impairment (645).

That implies that the way diagnoses are made by psychiatrists is by analyzing the patient's identity and personality against the expectation of his being as dictated by the norms of his society. At this point, Foucault introduced the Psychedelic experience as a fit-tool to deconstruct the binary of the normal/pathological involved in his analysis of the mad and society. To Foucault, the Psychedelic experience offers "a state of nonreason in which the experience of madness is outside the distinction between the normal and the pathological" (Miller 248). A binary that he deems to be arbitrary as it implies a process of 'othering' the mad on the basis of fixed centers and ideological presuppositions.

Foucault also dissected the philosophical enterprise by addressing the interplay of intelligence, thought and stupidity and how the established relationship between them dominates the thinking mind of the philosopher. Thought is

² Italics for emphasis

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considered to be the medium of expression for both intelligence and stupidity. However, as soon as intelligence sees in stupidity its own 'death mask', thought finds itself restricted to the workings of reason as the identification of what it presupposed to be intelligent, confusing the intelligent with truth (Boothroyd 161). Unreason, therefore, becomes the alternative philosophical approach of criticism, via the formulation of transcendental judgements regarding truth and falsity:

The philosopher must be sufficiently perverse to play the game of truth and falsity badly: this perversity, which operates in paradoxes, allows him to escape the grasp of categories. But aside from this he must be sufficiently 'ill-humored' to persist in his confrontation with stupidity, to remain motionless to the point of stupefaction in order to approach it and mime it, to let it grow within himself (Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* 190).

Here Foucault suggests that the Psychedelic experience induced by LSD, does exactly that by decentralizing the categories of reason and liberating thought from the oppression of intelligence over stupidity:

We can easily see how LSD inverts the relationships of ill humour, stupidity, and thought: it no sooner eliminates the supremacy of categories than it tears away the ground of its indifference and disintegrates the dumbshow of stupidity; and it presents this univocal and acategorical mass not only as variegated, mobile, asymmetrical, decentred, spiraloid, and reverberating, but causes it to rise, at each instant, as a swarming of phantasm events (190).

Foucault saw that there is a deconstructive asset to the Psychedelic experience as it displaced the relative positions of thought and stupidity. The univocal and acategorical properties that he described are the qualitative nature of the LSD experience which pushes consciousness beyond binary thinking. Thought becomes free, paradoxical, ever moving, free from the pressure of external forces.

The Psychedelic Experience, besides the Foucauldian appeal to its deconstructive capacity, offers a phenomenology that is able to deconstruct the

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‘normal’ experience of being human and to destabilize its flow from the centrality of the self as an identifiable ego, as well as the categories of the mind that derive from a normal state of consciousness.

1.6 The Psychedelic Experience and its Deconstructive Phenomena

The deconstructive phenomena of the Psychedelic experience are embedded within the dimensions of Abstract and Aesthetic layer and the Transpersonal experiences. That results in a shift of perception and consciousness. It happens via the decentralization of the presupposed categories of the mind.

1.6.1 Deconstruction in the Abstract and Aesthetic layer

The Abstract and Aesthetic layer of the Psychedelic experience manifests itself in terms of opened and closed eyes visuals, auditory hallucinations and Synaesthesia. When the subject keeps his eyes closed, an intraocular enhancement is experienced. It is characterized by the internal visualizations of vivid colors and afterimages of percepts. It is also common to be absorbed in a fantastic and exotic scenery and immersive kaleidoscopic and mosaic patterns. When the eyes are opened, colors are ‘very bright, penetrative, and explosive; the lights and color contrasts are enhanced and deepened’. Perceived objects have blurry contours, and inanimate objects are typically described ‘as coming to life’. The subject’s perception projects geometrical patterns and all sort of distortions into the environment. In short, the usual perception is disrupted (Grof 34-35).

This initial stage of the Psychedelic experience induced by LSD already exhibits deconstructive patterns. It holistically manifests a shift from *normal*³ perception of the world by throwing the subject inside an alternative mode of perception; a Psychedelic perception. While the normal perception of the world is deemed to be all there is intuitively, an alternative is often dismissed, unconceivable, or even held inexistent. Once the experimentation of the Psychedelic perception is brought into awareness, an opposition between the default perception and LSD

³ Italics for emphasis

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perception is revealed. The meaning of perception is therefore no longer confined to centrality of the default brain chemistry.

The proposition that human perceptual ability itself is centralized on a fixed brain chemistry is challenged. LSD hijacks the brain circuitry by connecting to serotonin neuroreceptors⁴, specifically the 5-HT_{2a}⁵ receptors (Nichols 132). If the standardized brain chemistry permits the functioning of senses in a certain way, the alteration of that brain chemistry by LSD or by any other means can be considered as the decentralization of that biological center. That sets the sensory organs in a different motion, allowing them to disintegrate the normal perceptual structures:

The perceived area loses its fixed spatial and logical relations with the surrounding world and becomes an autonomic experiential microcosm...Various objects in the surroundings can lose their usual forms; they seem to pulsate and be in a state of strange instability and flux (Grof 37).

A perceptual shift from normality occurs and the subject perceives optical illusions and distortions that are not normally experienced.

Synaesthesia as a common phenomenon of the Psychedelic experience presents itself as a decentralization of the senses themselves. A displacement of the function of the senses occurs: “a person under the influence of LSD can, for example, ‘see music’ or ‘taste colors’” (Grof 40). The sensory input is no longer fixed on a unidimensional functioning.

All of the above, the decentralization of the standard brain chemistry and the sensory inputs, challenges the normative meanings of perception, truth, and dethrones the non-psychedelic mode of being from its uniqueness as a medium between the subject and reality, what is real and unreal is destabilized. As Foucault

⁴ It is a membrane in the brain that is specific for receiving the neurotransmitter Serotonin, the hormone responsible of regulating mood, sleep, patterns, sexuality, anxiety, appetite and pain. (Berger, Gray et Roth 356)

⁵ A subtype of receptors in the serotonin receptor family. It has a specific affinity for Psychedelic molecules (Nichols 266)

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pointed in his suggestion of LSD as an alternative philosophical thought, the basic structures of truth and falsity are challenged.

Deconstruction is about revealing that which is not expressed, to demonstrate that the object that is often hidden or neglected has as much value in the definition of what is expressed than the presence of expression itself. The perceptual changes of the psychedelic experience reveal that layer of reality which is normally inaccessible to the mind. It touches upon an experiential value that challenges the known by absorbing what was a priori unknown from a non-psychedelic experience.

The novel experience of art is one area that partakes that. It is reported by subjects undergoing LSD sessions that the shift in perception helped them better empathize with artists like Von Gogh or Seurat and better understand their artworks (Grof 35).

It is also common to experience music in a totally different manner, as the default centralization of the senses is shifted: “LSD subjects discover dimensions in music that they were unable to perceive before” (Grof 40). The psychedelic phenomena bring forward a reconsideration of the relationship between the human and text. It breaks apart the normal categories that dominate the human experience in terms of perception.

1.6.2 Deconstruction in the Transpersonal Experiences

The deconstructive property of the transpersonal state of consciousness starts at the ego death experience; the subject feels like he’s dying in the process of losing his sense of self. Eventually, his entire world collapses. He loses “all previously meaningful reference points” that were fixed in his usual three-dimensional reality (Grof 141). He exists in a condition beyond the references of the ego, space, time, and his materialism.

Deconstruction problematizes the self as it is considered presupposed in essence, loaded by a metaphysics of presence in any linguistic assertion. The Cartesian self for instance, in cogito ergo sum, “I think therefore I am”, is loaded in the pronoun ‘I’ as a subject doing the thinking before the assertion of its own

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existence. 'Presence' is privileged over absence to prove the self into existence (Wheat 13). The psychedelic experience complies with the deconstruction of the subject by offering a phenomenological experience that decentralizes the self from the logocentric position. It allows the thinker to think with no 'I' to think, and to be with no 'I' to be. It is also experientially deconstructive in the activity of perceiving with no identifiable perceiver to perceive and to read with no reader to read.

A common phenomenon that strikes subjects on a transpersonal experience is the participation in a state of universal mind. The universal mind is the feeling that one belongs to all of existence: "the illusions of matter, space, time, as well as infinite number of subjective realities are transcended" (Grof 206). The subject exists in a mode of consciousness that exists in itself as a common source for all that is experienced. Verbal communication and structured language of our everyday life seems to be inefficient in conveying a qualitative description of it. "It is clearly beyond rationality" (Grof 207). Any finite recollection of the usual state of consciousness with its categories of reason appears nothing but a constructed fragment that partakes an underlying condition of the universal mind.

To experience such contra reason and translinguistic properties is to already be in the playground of deconstruction. For, deconstruction is a consistent attack on language as a means for transcendental truth. Derrida opposed the idea of transcendental signified. He argues that the meaning of a word is defined by the structurality of structures, a center, a point of origin taken for granted within the system of language (Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" 1). The transpersonal experience offers a transcendence from the linguistic system that acts as a category of the mind in the usual state of consciousness. It offers an alternative experience of the world beyond the linguistic. The dissolution of the self, post an ego death experience, also dissolves all previous reference points, including language. It reveals that apparent reality exists not as an object of a correspondent outside reality but in the relationship that consciousness has with its own constructs and fixed centers.

Chapter One: Deconstruction and The Psychedelic Experience

The anti-thesis of the universal mind is the experience of the Void. Individuals experiencing the state of universal mind, feeling essentially part of the infinite of existence, paradoxically, at the same time, experience the opposite. A sense of “primordial emptiness, nothingness, and silence, which is the ultimate source and cradle of all existence” installs itself. It is a condition of a mind “beyond polarities such as good and evil, light and darkness, stability and motion, and agony and ecstasy” (Grof 208). The deconstructive nature of this state of being resides in its *experiential*⁶ transcendence of the binarism that accompanies our usual mode of consciousness. A mind in such a transpersonal experience thinks the world into a conceptualization that breaks free from the usual duality that is rigidly centered as a category of the usual consciousness.

Within that transpersonal state of consciousness, all that exists is pure awareness stripped from any content. That state of being; the sense of oneness with all there is, while being nothing simultaneously resonates with Derrida’s definition of Deconstruction. Deconstruction is, according to Derrida, “nothing by itself”. Therefore, he adds, “the only thing it can do is apply, to be applied, to something else... Deconstruction cannot be applied and cannot not be applied. So, we have to deal with this aporia, and this is what deconstruction is about” (Wolfreys 135). A state of aporia that is the propriety of the mind post Ego death, in a psychedelic experience. A transcendental consciousness that views the self itself as a construct of a default consciousness. A transcendent awareness that plays a medium between what is perceived and what is not perceived, what is thought and what is not thought, what is known and what is not known, existing independently from any ego reductionism, in a virtual space of undecidability and indifference toward reality. Because the subject exists outside the ego boundaries, in a transcendent condition of awareness in itself, he neither identifies with the ‘normality’ of the real, nor the abnormality of the psychedelic experience, nor with any binarism.

⁶ Italics for emphasis

Chapter One: Deconstruction and The Psychedelic Experience

As the French poet, painter and writer Henri Michaux pointed out, the psychedelic experience is a deconstructive tool that causes the breakdown of normality: “In quite different ways, in many ways, the drug catches out, discovers, un.masks mental operations, injecting consciousness where it had never been, and at the same time dislodging it from places where it had always been” (Michaux 5). A mind on psychedelics, undergoing a transpersonal experience with all its phenomena, experimentally manifests itself in a deconstructive mode. It does so via the decentralization of the self, the phenomenological constructs of time and space, the categories of reason and binarism, and the structurality of language.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter featured a theoretical analysis related to this research. It accounted for the background definitions related to Deconstruction theory and presented the Grofian model for the psychedelic experience. It unraveled the link between them, and established the manner a psychedelic experience can be experimentally deconstructive.

The psychedelic experience disrupts the flux of normality in regards to conscious experience and its categories; a dissolution the ego, disruption of the usual perception, transcendence of space and time, breaking from binarism. The latter constitutes a framework to conduct the analysis of the case study, and track how it can act as a deconstructive tool in a text.

Chapter Two: The Psychedelic
Experience as a Deconstructive Tool in
Enter the Void film

2.1 Introduction

Enter the Void is an experimental movie that features a character who undergoes psychedelic experience. It manifests the necessary elements required for this research, and to highlight the workings of the psychedelic phenomena in texts.

This section looks into the movie, relying on the framework provided before to conduct the analysis; deconstruction theory and the Grofian modal of the psychedelic experience. The central aim is to analyze the nature of the psychedelic experience to retrieve how it acts as deconstructive tool by disrupting the aspect narrative, breaking from the decidability of the Setting, and decentralizing the characterization from ‘otherness’.

2.2 Plot and narrative structure

The producer of the movie, Gaspar Noé, said during an interview by Jed Films, when asked about the narrative in *Enter the void*: “the more puzzling the movies sometimes, the more it sticks to your mind” (G. Noé 00:04:42). This reveals the intentionality behind the rendition of such a narrative. Its complexity was intentional, relying on reverse storytelling. As it will be demonstrated, that complexity is manifested in a deconstructive manner.

2.2.1 Plot Summary

The movie begins with the appearance of Oscar, a drug dealer living in Tokyo, standing on the balcony, in the company of his sister. He is wondering about what it feels like to witness Tokyo from the sky:

Oscar: “Hey, Linda! Come here! Come outside! I wonder how Tokyo looks like from up there”

Linda: “I don’t. I would be scared”

Oscar: “Of what?”

Linda: “Of dying, I guess. Falling into the void”

Oscar: “They say you fly when you die” (*Enter the Void* 00:02:22-00:03:04)

Chapter Two: The Psychedelic Experience as a Deconstructive Tool in the Film *Enter the Void*

This whole scene is a foreshadow of what will happen after the next 30 minutes; he will die, then transition to a weird state of being between death and life, suspended consciousness flying above Tokyo (*Enter the Void* 00:24:45).

After his interaction with his sister, he enters his room to take a hit of what is shown to be DMT, a potent psychedelic substance that induces an altered state of consciousness. That is the first time Oscar experiences an out-of-body experience, where he appears to leave his body and exist as a pure consciousness above, due to the substance's effect. He finds himself immersed in hallucinations that manifest weird moving entities (*Enter the Void* 00:07:43). Suddenly, as his phone rings, he gets hooked back into his body, in his room. The call is from a customer looking to buy drugs. So, Oscar forces himself to get back to reality, sobers up, and heads to the bar named *Enter the Void*, to make his deal alongside his friend Alex (*Enter the Void* 00:11:24).

Upon his arrival, as he sits with Viktor, he notices an intense distress possessing him. As Viktor mutters "I am sorry", Oscar discovers that he has been snitched on; the police comes in, running toward him. He flees to the bathroom and seals himself there, to flush all the illegal possessions he had. In that moment of panic, he ends up getting shot by the police as they were not able to break inside and suspected him to be armed. Oscar falls in the floor, his spirit then leaves his body to cycle between what seems to be the present, past and future in a non chronological order; to seemingly relive his memories and fantasize his future (*Enter the Void* 00:23:47).

As he wanders in his own mind, many crucial events in Oscar's past are brought up. For instance, he recollects his traumatic experiences; the flashback of his parents' accident occurs several times. That indicates the strong impact it had on his life. As a consequence of that, he also remembers his separation with his sister Linda; they were sent to different foster homes after their parents' death (*Enter the Void* 00:48:20).

Oscar's mind cycles back into the present, reliving his moment of death one more time, before projecting himself into the future. He witnesses Linda living a troublesome life after his death. She wishes for him to come back. The next second, Oscar's consciousness wakes up back in Oscar's body and physically wakes up at the morgue. However, he is no longer the same, as he is shown to exist like a mummy, still in that post-death mode of consciousness (*Enter the Void* 2:00:34).

2.2.1 The Deconstruction of Narrative

The producer of the movie, Gaspar Noé, during an open discussion, said:

The movie starts, and you see reality through the eyes of the main character... You can't tell what happens, you know at a point he gets shot and he starts hallucinating. But you don't know what's really happening. If you're a buddhist, you might believe that he really floats above the living and then he reincarnates... That is not the story of the movie (*Sarajevo Film Festival* 10:18-11:15).

His words describe a dominant uncertainty that possesses the narrative of the movie. As it will be demonstrated in this section, the prior summary is a naïve, superficial presentation of the movie's plot. The formulation of any plot inevitably fails to do justice to the movie's diverging narratives.

The plot is not fixed, as multiple narratives clash in the tension between the real and unreal. The events are narrated in a non-linear fashion from Oscar's subjective point of view. Every event is reported from his own unreliable, drug-induced, altered consciousness. That is displayed by the camera work, as the whole movie is centralized on a single camera angle that channels Oscar's direct experience with phenomena. Subtle cinematographic devices indicate that subjectivism too; Oscar's blinks are shown on screen to signify that the camera is his own eyes. The audience is, therefore, immersed in experiencing the movie as a virtual reality experience, riding Oscar's mind. The distinction of 'real' as an existing object in Oscar's world, separate from his own projections, is rendered impossible in opposition to the consistent present potentiality of hallucinations that are supposed to be flowing through his psychedelic journey.

The psychedelic experience has the power to create immersive “subjective realities that appear to be entirely independent of material reality” (Grof 189). That is referred to in the movie. When Oscar leaves his apartment, heading to *Enter the Void* (the bar), he is accompanied by his friend Alex. In their way, Alex recounts his experience with Datura, a psychoactive plant that causes one’s consciousness to be altered:

Alex: “It’s a plant that...That takes you somewhere, you know?... Quite freaky” Oscar: “What’s it? What’s it like I mean? What’s the trip like on Datura?”

Alex: “Like you don’t even know you’re fucking tripping, you know? You’d be on the floor, you’d be talking to every fucking body, but you realize two weeks later that you were not talking to anybody, you know? I mean, I took it, I saw that chick. Man, she was gorgeous!... I tried to kiss her, I’d been talking for thirty minutes, she fucking disappeared, she had never existed” (*Enter the Void* 00:22:09-00:22:54).

Given the nature of the psychedelic experience as described by Alex, Oscar could be going through the same experience in the entire movie. This suggests that anything experienced by Oscar might be a drug-induced illusion. His consciousness is therefore unreliable, channeling a flux of possibilities.

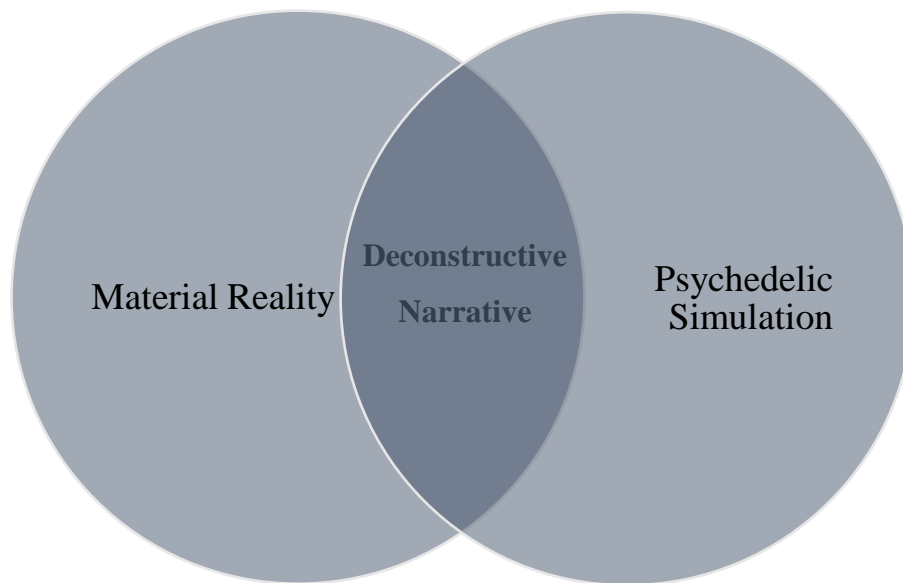
The meaning of the text is entrapped in a flux between the real and unreal, between Oscar’s material reality and his psychedelic hallucination. It can only be conceived in terms of *potentiality*⁷ and not actuality. The reader, therefore, unable to discern the reality of the text, exists in a state of what Derrida calls *Aporia*. It is the inability to resolve a conflict of undecidability between contradictions emerging from inconsistent premises (Beoye 288), in this case, the undecidability between emerging inconsistent narratives.

⁷ Italics for emphasis

The construction of the narrative is dominated by three possible paradigms: The first is that Oscar's perception reflects material reality. The second is that Oscar's perception reflects his own psychedelic simulation. The third is that Oscar's perception reflects both of material reality and psychedelic simulation.

Figure 2

Condition of the Narrative



If the beginning of the movie is presupposed on materialism, then everything narrated at that point is physically real. That would act as a centre to fix the narrative of material reality; anything Oscar is experiencing is real. Oscar is physically present in Tokyo, involved with his own affairs, part of a social circle; his friends and his sister. Then he truly dies in his incident with the police. However, as the movie starts, Oscar is already on a psychedelic experience. As he leaves the house with Alex, going down the stairs, Alex asks him: “Are you tripping man?”. “Yeah”, Oscar replies, “You can tell?”. “Yeah, you look really fucked up”. “I popped some tabs this morning and just took a hit of DMT before you came actually” (*Enter the Void* 00:17:17-00:17:32). This interaction with Alex indicates that Oscar has been on a psychedelic trip, even before he was shown to smoke in his room. This information challenges any presupposition about the reality of the beginning. Paradoxically, even

his interaction with Alex at this point could be a psychedelic simulation of the present, and is therefore rendered unreliable as a fixator of the reality of the beginning on hallucination.

Because of that, if the beginning of the movie is centralized on hallucination, then everything that follows is also a simulation; a total projection of his own mind during a psychedelic experience. But such centralization is hasty and arbitrary, as the psychedelic experience might or might not have induced that hallucination. There is a present potentiality of hallucination that dominates the narrative. The audience has no way to tell, as even Oscar himself questions his reality: “Is it the neighbours. Did they hear me? Did I scream? Maybe I did” (*Enter the Void* 00:14:10-00:14:22). His paranoia, indicating his loss of grip on reality, is unraveled in his internal monologue as Alex rings the doorbell.

Furthermore, the centralization on the premise of hallucination renders his interaction with Alex, on the stairs, a potential psychedelic simulation of the present. Therefore, the revelation that he was already on a psychedelic trip after taking three tabs in the morning is rendered unreliable as a fixator of the beginning on hallucination as well. Such a paradox, makes the narrative inevitably deconstruct itself, appealing to aporia.

The beginning of the movie remains an Undecidable; there is no way to tell whether the whole part from the beginning till Oscar’s death is a hallucination or reality. Any definition of the beginning remains arbitrary. The reality of the beginning exists in between the polarity of materialism and hallucination and cannot be defined.

2.2.1 Deconstructive Narrator

Since every event is narrated by Oscar’s altered consciousness, the translinguistic, transpersonal, and psychodynamic properties that entail the psychedelic experience constitute a sense of detachment from what is narrated. Assuming the premise of hallucination; that the events are projections of Oscar’s own subconscious mind, the narrator is as much a reader as he is a narrator. The

narrative narrates itself as events are exposed by the subconscious, which clashes with Oscar's consciousness. Subjects undergoing a psychedelic experience manifest their subconscious as vivid holograms on top of material reality "in sharp exquisite clarity or in the form of hallucinations" (Leary 13), and become spectators of their own mind. Thus, Oscar's consciousness, being inseparable from the camera, is both experiencing the events projected for the first time, and reporting them. The text is read and narrated at the same time through the medium of Oscar's transpersonal state of being.

The void is a common notion describing the transpersonal experience of subjects on LSD. It is described as a

primordial emptiness, nothingness, and silence, which is the ultimate source, and cradle of all existence... It is also beyond time and space, beyond form, or any experiential differentiation, and beyond polarities such as good and evil, light and darkness, stability and motion, and agony and ecstasy (Grof 208).

Oscar's condition, as depicted in the movie, as a transcendent consciousness floating above, mimics the void. It mimics the silence of a pure awareness denuded of certainty. It mimics the transcendence of space and time, and its deconstructive property that dissolves binarism.

The existence of Oscar in the experiential void makes him unable to linguistically centralize his perception, ground it on truth or dismiss it on falsity. The reader is left indecisive about what is true and what is false. The death of Oscar as a linguistic agent, entails that any sort of epistemological grounding of his experiences on the basis of the narrator's intentionality is also lost. That reinforces the undecidability and unreliability that dominate the narration in the movie. It dethrones him as a narrator from the power to define the course of the narrative. He lacks the presence to lead and contextualize the narrative. Therefore, the text is only experienced beyond the linguistic. The audience watches a narrator who is watching events from a state of pure presence; paralyzed, detached, and lacking agency, he is an invisible observer.

2.2.2 Oscar's Death

As Oscar is walking down Tokyo's streets with his friend Alex, heading to the bar *Enter the void*, he is also heading toward his death. His death, similarly to any scene in the movie, refuses to be defined as real or unreal. It seems that Oscar really died, then raised above his body, as a spirit floating in the present, recalling his past and projecting himself as a ghost into the actual future. However, such narrative is challenged by the nature of the psychedelic experience.

Subjects undergoing a psychedelic experience typically go through an Ego Death, symbolizing a transition toward the transpersonal state of consciousness, beyond the limitations of the Ego. The symbolic death is represented by some form of hallucination, simulating one's death. For instance, an individual can hallucinate himself being "sacrificed to Goddess Kali while suffering the terminal agony". He faces "her horrible image, listens to the chilling rattle of the skulls on her necklace" (Grof 144).

In this case, Oscar could have been psychodynamically projecting his fears rotating around the danger of being a drug dealer in Japan, in the death scenario of him getting caught and shot by the police. As a consequence, the meaning of death is displaced from cessation of existence to existing in a different state of consciousness that is not defined by an ego reductionism. Oscar's consciousness is elevated from his body to signify the transition from an identifiable structured ego into an expanded boundless undefined awareness. This happens in a similar fashion to individuals undergoing an ego death experience; "struck by visions of blinding white or golden light" (Grof 141). Those flashes, just like any aesthetic hallucination in the movie, are instrumentalized to create camera transitions from one perspective to another. In this case, the typical flashes that are confronted with in an ego death experience are mimicked by the camera work to symbolize the transition of Oscar from death to the transpersonal state of being (*Enter the Void* 00:28:12-00:29:44).

Oscar's death constitutes another point of divergence for the narrative. His death, either implies that he truly dies and rises as a spirit in the material reality or

he has always been inside a simulation and his death is nothing but an ego death experience. The death of Oscar is in itself an Undecidable, trapped between reality and simulation. Oscar's internal monologue at the moment of death implicitly directs us toward that Aporia:

What? They shot me! I can't die now. They shot me? Did they kill me? Did they shoot me?...No, I don't want to die like this. Not right now! My sister... There's blood on my hands. They're gonna test my blood. They'll find me positive. They'll put me in prison. They caught me. It's the police, isn't it? They'll rape me. No, I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't hurt anyone. Life sucks. I can't feel my arms. This isn't happening. I am just tripping. That's what it is. It's the DMT. No, I am still alive. I am dying. Am I dead? I hope this isn't real. What will happen to her? Linda, please help me. I need your help. Take me home. I don't wanna die. I don't wanna die like this. I don't wanna die (*Enter the Void* 00:24:47-00:26:47).

He remains paranoid, in a state of denial, unable to formulate a proper understanding of what is happening to him. Anxiety possesses him as he worries about his sister. That anxiety consistently propulses the following modalization of the future as he rises from his body and wanders around his sister.

2.2.3 The Relationship of the Narratives

The two narratives exist in a metafictional relationship; one fiction on top of the other. Assuming the center of hallucination as a presupposition for the narrative, there must be someone physically existing to hallucinate Oscar and his experiences. The physical existence, although it consistently escapes definition, remains a necessary condition for the psychedelic experience to happen. The psychedelic reality, therefore, is a metafiction inside the physical fictional reality. Since, it is impossible to discern what is a psychedelic simulation and what is physically real, it is also impossible to discern where the metafiction starts and when it stops. Therefore, the narrative deconstructs itself.

2.3 Deconstruction of the Setting

The film's setting of the movie is also deconstructive, as the entire plot is suspended on the binary of reality and simulation, due to the introduction of the consistent potentiality of psychedelic experience in the narrative. Individuals transcend "the illusions of matter, space, and time" in a psychedelic experience, as their being is completely reduced to that one "mode of consciousness which is their common source and denominator" (Grof 206). This indicates that the mind on that transpersonal state of being reveals itself to be the generator of time and space as constructs. The latter are not objectively experienced but rather *prescribed*⁸ by the mind onto the perception of reality. That is depicted with Oscar's experience. As his consciousness is detached from his body, it also detaches from the constructs of space and time.

2.3.1 Space

Subjects undergoing a psychedelic trip, like Oscar, can "lose awareness of the physical setting" and have their consciousness move into "various experiential realms and subjective realities that appear entirely independent of material reality" transcending "the usual limitations of space" (Grof 189). The deconstructive aspect of such a condition in the narrative of the movie resides in the inability to establish what can be defined as 'subjective reality' projected by Oscar's mind and what is not. What is the materially 'fixed' space, and what is the simulated space within the psychedelic realm.

At first, Oscar appears to be in his room, in Tokyo, then goes to the *Enter the Void* place, where he faces his demise. *Enter the Void* symbolises his transition from life to death, as he is shown to enter a state of pure consciousness, dissociating from his body. So the initial setting of space is set in Tokyo, from his room, to the streets, to *Enter the void*, where he passes away into the void by transcending the physicality of space. He wanders as a transcendent awareness, cycling from present, past and future. It seems that he transitioned from a physical and material setting to an

⁸ Italics for emphasis

immaterial one, where he nests in his own mind, manifesting flashbacks of the past, projections of the future, and depictions of the present. However, such a transition is not as clear as it is shown to be.

The seemingly *transition* implies an absolutist separation from the materialism of a prior setting to an immaterial setting. Such a separation can only occur if we presuppose that before his death, Oscar physically existed. Such a presupposition is challenged by the potential psychedelic experience manifesting itself as Oscar's subjective reality. Oscar living in Tokyo, as well as the place *Enter the Void* could be materialized by his own mind on drugs. The property of materialism attributed to the beginning of the movie till his death could be illusory. Therefore, death, as the transition from a material setting to an immaterial one, falls apart. Instead, it could be a transition from one simulation to another, from an ego experience to what is known as transpersonal experience, to a state of being between death and life, between the real and unreal; the void.

Oscar's awareness of the void as a condition that escapes the binary categorization of life and death, time and space, is depicted in his dreamy interaction with Alex as he wanders as a floating consciousness. He sees Alex crafting on the wall the expression "I want 2 die", which turns in a blink into "I want 2 live" (*Enter the Void* 02:06:07-02:07:13). The latter is a symbolism that demonstrates Oscar's inability to assess any definition for his condition, as well as his desire to free himself from undecidability, by tilting toward one side of the binary over the other; either death or life, instead of remaining in the discomfort of an undefined, mysterious condition. This reflects the human nature that finds refuge in the centralization of constructed definitions, as it provides order, a stability that is compelled by certainty.

The deconstruction of the setting is tied to the displacement of the meaning of life and death here. For evidently, life implies existence, an existence reduced to a material physical existence, and death implies the opposite; cessation of existence. However, since the movie depicts the character of Oscar and his possibility of existing in a state that appears to be non-physical, the transcendence of the

physicality of space directly challenges the meaning of life that is centred on physicality.

As it is impossible to discern whether Oscar's experiences before death are physical or not, it is also impossible to discern the setting of the latter. The setting of space is not deconstructed because space appears to be transcended, but because the potentiality of transcendence creates an alternative version for the narrative, and builds a binary tension. The setting of space is deconstructed because it remains undecidable, trapped between the indecisiveness of materialism and immaterialism. It is not possible to tell whether Oscar's experiences have a physical setting, or are simply manifested inside his psychedelic simulation. The place is only defined within its probabilistic state between Tokyo and Oscar's simulation. It is not possible to tell with certainty whether Oscar exists in a void, in the material reality of the spaces depicted, or in subjective simulated spaces.

2.3.2 Time

Similarly, time does not escape undecidability. Oscar is shown to be in a modern time for the whole beginning of the movie, from its start to Oscar's encounter with death. Afterward, when Oscar is defined post-death as a pure consciousness floating, he cycles from the present to what seems to be the past, then what seems to be the future ; The Flashbacks of his memories, then visions of his future. However, notions like the past and future are defined in relation to the centrality of the present. A centrality called into question by the psychedelic experience. The present that centralizes the definitions of the past and future, is a present nested on the premise that Oscar's earlier time, before his death, is physically real. Therefore, any event prior to that is the past, and any event after that is the future. Although that makes sense inside the simulation, as the events have a logical coherence, there is no means to tell what really is the present, and thus what really is the past and future, separating the real from the *hallucinations*⁹ of the present, past

⁹ Italics for emphasis

and, future. Hallucination and reality are merged into one single entity. They exist in an indiscernible metafictional relationship.

Oscar's memories and flashbacks that are supposed to refer to the past, might be hallucinations. Thus, their authenticity as a true reflection of the past fails to be recaptured. At a certain point, in the middle of rapid transitions and flashbacks of the past, Oscar is spontaneously shown, for a slight second, in his bathroom, in Tokyo, staring at the mirror (*Enter the Void* 00:55:12-00:55:14). On another occasion, as he is wandering in future visions, the same thing happens again. He is suddenly shown in a similar fashion, in the same bathroom, washing his face in front of the mirror (*Enter the Void* 02:05:24-02:05:30). This hints us toward the possibility that Oscar is still in his bathroom after smoking DMT, and receiving his call from Viktor. He could be just hallucinating different settings; different simulated timelines and spaces.

This is backed up by the nature of the psychedelic substance and the relativity of spacetime it engenders. Alex indicates that DMT as a substance causes time to be experienced differently on the subjective level: "It's funny, you know? DMT only lasts for six minutes, but it really seems like an eternity!" (*Enter the Void* 01:01:50-01:02:00). He also describes the relativity of space in another scene: "...the good thing about LSD, if you can manage to overcome your fears, you can take your hallucinations wherever you want" (*Enter the Void* 00:54:27-00:54:42). This indicates that Oscar is possibly still in his bathroom for the entire DMT trip duration of 6 minutes, hallucinating hours of subjective realities. However, such separation cannot be made with certainty as the premises relied on to arrive at that conclusion are unreliable. The revelation of Oscar in his bathroom and the revelation of Alex describing the nature of DMT and LSD are nested inside the flux of simulation. This paradox suppresses any hope for certainty, therefore spacetime remains undecidable. It deconstructs itself.

2.4 Deconstructive Characterization

Many characters are depicted from Oscar's point of view. The reality of the characters, being centralized on 'otherness', is also challenged by the conditions that underly the narration in the movie. Since the start of the movie, Oscar has been interacting with many characters, like his sister, and his friend Alex, his drug supplier. However, because the psychedelic experience has the power to create immersive subjective realities that are separated from physical reality, it puts into question any realness attributed to the characters. The characters exist in a probabilistic state between reality and hallucination. They could either be separate objects in Oscar's material reality or be purely materialized into a simulation by Oscar's mind.

Thus, the barrier between the self and the other is blurred. What could be the other might as well be a reflection of Oscar's mind, and therefore as much his own self as what is depicted to be his self. In contrast, Oscar's self is also manifested in what is depicted to be the other. It is common to experience "cosmic unity" in a psychedelic experience. "Its basic characteristics are transcendence of the subject-object dichotomy" (Grof 107). Oscar could be existing in a void and as a universal mind, experientially encompassing the totality of existence. That is very common to experience on psychedelics as well. The Void and the Universal mind "are perceived as identical and freely interchangeable; they are two different aspects of the same phenomenon" (Grof 208). The characters could have been part of a single unity of a universal mind manifested in Oscar's subjective reality, nothing but his own self.

2.5 Conclusion

The Psychedelic experience deconstructs the text by injecting the narrative with the potentiality of its phenomena. It infuses the narrator with unreliability. The narrator Oscar is in an altered state of consciousness, possibly reporting a simulated subjective reality instead of a material reality, a hallucination instead of the real. As a consequence, the narrative of the movie deconstructs itself via the unreliability of the medium that reports the events.

The introduction of the psychedelic experience confines the text in between the tension of real and hallucination, physical materialism and psychedelic simulation. Thus, it conditions the narrative into a metafictional relationship that is so indiscernible that it is impossible to tell what is real, and what is a simulated subjective reality induced by the psychedelic experience.

As a consequence, the aspects of the setting deconstruct themselves as well. The mimicry of the transpersonal state of consciousness of the psychedelic experience in the film displaces the centrality of time and space. It reveals that normal time and space are mere constructs that can be transcended. Oscar transcends spacetime, to exist in a seemingly atemporal condition, channeling two possible timelines; one timeline of a material reality, the other one of a psychedelic simulation. This condition imposes an undecidability on spacetime. It is not possible to have a finite answer for Oscar's location and time.

Characters around Oscar are also deconstructed by the psychedelic experience manifesting itself as a potential originator of an immersive subjective reality. The characters exist in a probabilistic state between reality and hallucination. Either they have a material existence as separate beings from Oscar or they are purely materialized by Oscar's mind on a psychedelic experience. Their condition remains undecidable fueled by the psychedelic experience distressing their realness and centralization on 'otherness'.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

Having concluded with the analysis of Deconstruction theory in relation to the Grofian model of the Psychedelic experience, then the analysis of the movie *Enter the Void* several answers can be articulated to in response to the research questions established in the General Introduction.

The first hypothesis is confirmed. A mind on Psychedelics does indeed manifest itself in Deconstructive mode. It starts at the Aesthetic and Abstract experiences. The latter manifests itself as a decentralization of the normal perceptual ability. It generates an alternative mode of perceiving reality that hinders the uniqueness of the normal perception. The realization that what is referred to as objective reality originates from a centralized brain chemistry. The latter acts a center for a universally shared, agreed upon controlled hallucination, which is taken for granted as reality. The binary tension between the normal perception of reality and the psychedelic perception is brought into consciousness, and disturbs the flow of objective truth and reality.

The deconstructive patterns continue on the Transpersonal experiences. The psychedelic experience on a transpersonal manifestation offers a person the alternative mode of experiencing existence beyond the relationship of subject/object. A deconstruction of the subject occurs as it experientially involves the dissolution of the Ego. The presupposition of the self is transcended. An individual can be with no "I" to be, think with no "I" to think, perceive with no "I" to perceive. Phenomenologically, the experience takes the form of a complete sense of unity with all there is, while simultaneously being nothing at all. This is referred to as the Universal mind vs the Void in the Grofian Model. At that point, binary thinking is transcended, as the subject exists in a contra-reason mode of being, experiencing the world translanguistically.

Other elements of the usual consciousness are decentralized. The constructs of time and space are deconstructed as the subject experiences complete transcendence from them. To experience an alternative mode of existence challenges the normative definitions of meaning, truth, reality and disturbs the relationship between humans and the world, between the reader and the text.

General Conclusion

The second hypothesis is also confirmed. The introduction of the Psychedelic experience confines the text to the binary tension of real vs hallucination, Material reality vs Psychedelic Simulation. It is not possible to know to what extent the events reported are real and to what extent they are a subjective simulation generated by Oscar's mind. As a consequence, the aspects of narrative, setting and characterization deconstruct themselves in the formulation of an indiscernible metafictional relationship between two conflicting narratives.

The Psychedelic experience acts as Deconstructive tool in the film by making Oscar an unreliable narrator, channeling a flux of possibilities from an altered state of consciousness. It does so, not by transcending the normality of a usual consciousness, but via the potential of that; the constant suggestion that anything reported by the narrator could be a subjective psychedelic simulation.

The aspect of Setting, therefore, are not deconstructed because space and time appear to be transcended by the character, but because they cannot be decided. Oscar could be in Tokyo or could be somewhere else hallucinating he is in Tokyo. Similarly, Oscar could be in the time he is depicted in, or he could be hallucinating himself there.

Since the subject/object barrier is blurred on a Psychedelic experience. The characters cannot be decided either. It cannot be defined whether they are real characters, separate from Oscar in a material reality, or completely materialized into a simulation via the psychedelic experience.

Oscar's death is also rendered undecidable, as it cannot be known whether he truly died in the material reality, or manifested a hallucination in an interplay with the psychodynamic layer of the psychedelic experience, portraying his fears into an Ego Death scenario. A displacement of the meaning of death occurs, as Oscar lives, while dead. He is depicted to be both alive or dead, in the transpersonal state of consciousness, floating above Tokyo.

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