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L'amour par terre (Love on the ground), Rivette, Jacques, 1984

Vertigo, Hitchcock, Alfred, 1958

Haut, bas, fragile (Up, down, fragile), Rivette, Jacques, 1995

Cet obscur objet du désir (That obscure object of desire), Buñuel, Luis, 1977

Merry-go-round, Rivette, Jacques, 1983

Rio bravo, Hawks, Howard, 1959

Prince of darkness, Carpenter, John, 1987

The Fog, Carpenter, John, 1980

Duelle (Duel), Rivette, Jacques, 1975

Escape from new york, Carpenter, John, 1981

His girl Friday, Hawks, Howard, 1940

Out 1: noli me tangere, Rivette, Jacques, 1970

Jacques Rivette/John Carpenter: Insularities Compared

Emmanuel Siety

'We Are All Islanders'

'What are the five films you'd take with you to a desert island?' It is not a journalist asking John Carpenter this question, but Carpenter asking the journalist. And he answers his own question: 'Well, I know: *Vertigo* [1958], *That Obscure Object of Desire* [1977], *Rio Bravo* [1959], *Red River* [1948], and *His Girl Friday* [1940]'. (1) There is something touching about this game of questions and answers: this desire to once again express his admiration for Howard Hawks ('the only true American filmmaker'), a desire mixed with a somewhat childish fear (as if to say: 'maybe you're going to forget to talk to me about Him, so I'll take the lead'), followed by the jubilation of an already prepared response ('Well, I know'). Equally touching is the apparently innocent character of this question, when we realise that it has always constituted a powerful and alarming possibility for Carpenter – to find himself alone on a desert island – and that it must be understood as a modest expression of the very heart of his oeuvre: the major, obsessive concern over *insularity*.

The two figures (the island and Hawks) come together, moreover, when Carpenter is asked in what way the latter has influenced him. His response: 'By [Hawks'] sense of imprisonment. In his films, even if the canvas was very big, he always arranged things in order to lead the scene into a delineated zone; that's especially what struck me, because I, too, have in mind the idea that we're always imprisoned and cornered in closed spaces'. (2) Instances of islands in his work: Manhattan, the main island of New York turned into a prison in *Escape from New York* (1981); Los Angeles, detached from the continent after an earthquake and turned into an internment camp in *Escape from L.A.* (1996); in *The Fog* (1980), the island that a leper colony wanted to leave in order to move to the coast – but their boat is sunk, so their treasure can be taken. Then there are metaphorical islands: the besieged police station in *Assault on Precinct 13* (1976); the besieged church in *Prince of Darkness* (1987); the research centre in the middle of Antarctica in *The Thing* (1982); the 'village of the damned'; the nests of vampires scattered all over the world in *Vampires* (1998) ... In all cases, they are islands of misfortune, islands of hopelessness. 'In no world but a fallen one could such lands exist'. (3) Always and everywhere, we are islanders.

Among us, however, there are some watchmen, some guardians of the lighthouse: Adrienne Barbeau in *The Fog*, Christopher Reeve in *Village of the Damned* (1995), Roddy Piper in *They Live* (1988) ... Nicolas Saada in *Cahiers du cinéma* can thus use the title 'John Carpenter, the Sentry'. (4) This title echoes (beyond Arnaud Desplechin's 1992 debut feature) that of a film directed eight years earlier by Claire Denis, dedicated to a filmmaker who, from the time he was a critic, celebrated the 'The Genius of Howard Hawks': *Jacques Rivette, the Night Watchman* (1990). (5)

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The meeting is unusual – but not really. The auteur of *Céline and Julie Go Boating* (1974) and *Duelle* (1976) consorts well, after all, with adventures of the fantastic. Phantoms (*La Bande des quatre,* 1989) and zombies (*Céline and Julie*), magicians (*L'Amour par terre*, 1984) and fairies (*Duelle*), plus saints who speak to virgins (*Jeanne la Pucelle* , 1994), populate his films. Yet it is clear that the imaginary field claimed by Rivette is in no way the fantastic as found in Carpenter. A distinction (drawn from Tzvetan Todorov) between the categories of the *marvellous*, the *supernatural* and the *fantastic* would no doubt allow us to specify this difference – but would not enlighten us as to the unexpected meeting of the Watchman and the Sentry. To understand, we must bypass the question of the fantastic in order to question two praxes of the island.

Among the many characters of Rivette's *Out 1* (1970-1) are several solitary figures, singular as much for their status as 'actors' (two critics and a filmmaker-critic) as for the nature and degree of their implication in the fiction. Jacques Doniol-Valcroze is a chess player; Eric Rohmer is a distinguished Balzac specialist; Michel Delahaye is an ethnologist. We could define their function this way: they are *consultants*. Each of them, at a particular moment in the film, is visited by a character (Frédérique, Colin, Béatrice) who asks them, in their own way, to enlighten them on the future of their personal path in the fiction – and, more broadly, to make a fictional proposition to the film.

Doniol-Valcroze proposes to Frédérique (Juliet Berto) that he teach her how to play chess; Frédérique refuses but hides the letters from which she hopes to profit. In the grand game of the film, Frédérique is the fragile and tragic piece, the one who plays without knowing the rules of the game or the value of the pieces (she gets nothing out of the letters) or the camp of players. She is the sacrificed piece. Colin (Jean-Pierre Léaud) tries to penetrate the mystery of the Thirteen by dissecting Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark*. Meanwhile, the viewer is invited to re-read (besides Balzac and Carroll) Aeschylus. Three directions then, are proposed: ludic direction (Doniol-Valcroze), exegetic direction (Rohmer) and ethnological direction (Delahaye).

Exposed to the wind, lightly shielded, the ethnologist is perched on a promontory (the roof of Chaillot palace). He is, surely, not always there; but he is only ever seen there, and we can hardly imagine him anywhere else. The ethnologist tries to convince his questioner (Béatrice/Edwine Moatti) to leave her theatre group (which she will do) in order to accompany him. In this conversation – where it is only a question of enclosure, and where the slightly hostile incomprehension between the man and woman dominates – an essential principle of Rivettian poetics emerges. The ethnologist notes his own imprisonment: 'The ethnologist finds that he monologues *on* the others instead of dialoguing *with* the others, instead of teaching the others to reflect on themselves or, eventually, to reflect on ethnology'. But, he notes, 'the ethnologist's advantage is that he understands that even he is in a closed world. And that is the case for a lot of people, a lot of groups, and a lot of professions'. The woman objects that she has no desire to leave her group. The ethnologist pretends not to hear her, and continues by recounting the misadventures of an ethnologist who wanted to study Madagascar:

> Madagascar is an island and a doubly and triply closed world where, materially, questions pose themselves: how to manage to do such a study on such a subject – let's say, initiation rites – without considering religion, since Catholic and

6. CNRS is
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> Protestant missionaries dominate the whole island, and pagan rites, moreover, are mixed in with them? If we consider them, there are repercussions because the government isn't happy, and repercussions in France where the guy in question finds himself losing his CNRS (6) funding. A clear spiral.

Of course, he himself is the unfortunate ethnologist (we imagine him on his promontory, abandoned by the CNRS, like a mutineer on a flagship). Rather than studying the indigenous population, he chose to study the Europeans in Madagascar. But, once opposed by them, the ethnologist, stripped of his credentials, was forced to give up. So a new idea came to him: rather than studying Europeans in Madagascar, study them in Europe and study the French in France: 'A study in France, that's where I was going to return to and that's what I was going to do'. He brings up 'an ethnologist who is, in fact, in the process of achieving an experience of rupture with the closed world: he had studied fishing societies in Niger, now he's gone to study fishermen in Brittany, in the company of a Nigerien who had done the same study himself in Niger. And both of them, the Frenchman and the Nigerien, are going to do this in Brittany'.

In 1970, Jean Rouch was making *Petit à petit*, whose second episode, in the style of Charles de Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721), shows a Nigerian going to Paris and engaging in a conscientious and amused study of indigenous mores. In an interview in *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1968, Rivette writes of Rouch that he is 'the motor of all French movies of the past ten years'. (7) It is certain, in any case, that his films took Rouch's ethnological practice very seriously, not only in order to think about the structure at the heart of fictional and documentary, improvised and premeditated films (as has often been highlighted), but also in order to establish, in terms of direction, editing and narrative construction, an ensemble of principles founded on insularity: the ethnological study of closed worlds (for *Out 1*, the study of two theatrical 'tribes' in Paris in 1970); introspection via the detour of the Other; permutation (of the observer and the native); the confrontation of closed worlds and attempts at breaking and entering (sometimes gentle – the viewers who squeeze into the apartment at the beginning of *L'Amour par terre*; sometimes perilous – Benoît Régent in *La Bande des quatre*).

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Between Rivette and Carpenter, then, this common axiom: 'we are all islanders'. Their interpretations of the formula, however, differ. In Carpenter, insularity is the fate of the entire human race, which is, in sum, the only island (we never leave it). The end of a state of siege is never the end of captivity in his films. What future is there for the protagonists of *Assault on Precinct 13*? The black police officer only leaves the destroyed police station for another police station (someone points out to him that his superior made him an odd present by leaving him in the care of the decommissioned police station for his first assignment): who knows what kind of harassment awaits him there? The prisoner will return to a cell while awaiting his execution, and the woman can now add to her solitude the sadness of a meeting that did not happen, or barely happened. Barbeau will not leave her lighthouse (*The Fog*); while Snake Plissken, leaving Manhattan alive, will have just barely won the right to live in a cynical world (*Escape from New York*) while awaiting worse (*Escape from L.A.*).

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The island that we lived on well before the state of siege tells us what the future will be like. It is history: the Berlin Wall (*Escape from New York*), internment camps (*Escape from L.A.*), savage liberalism (*They Live*), the Inquisition (*Vampires*), the fundamental

crimes of America (*The Fog*). (8) Jean Louis Schefer points out, in the first lines of *Du monde et du mouvement des images*, the insularity of the human race stripped bare by fantasy literature:

> Edgar Allan Poe and H.G. Wells, at their end of their lives and of their oeuvres especially, both report a revelation, optimistic and wild for one, melancholic for the other (this revelation is a sudden illumination of historical reality as expressed later by Paul Valéry: 'Our civilization now knows that we are mortal'). [...] The protagonists of strange worlds were already tested on what was going to become a resource for science fiction: each lives a catastrophic episode of the destiny of the human race like his own historical curse. (9)

9. Jean Lo
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If, for Rivette, we are all islanders, it is not that we are all enclosed in the human race; it is because we one day discovered an island at our side (Madagascar) and, in making this discovery, we woke up to being islanders ourselves (the French of France). Also, Rivette is less interested in the *species* than in *societies* (secret societies, by preference, since we must discover them). And since a second island is necessary for finding out that each of us is an islander, it is the case that islands, in his films, come in (at least) pairs: a house and an apartment (*Céline and Julie*), a house and a theatre (*La Bande des quatre*), an apartment and a theatre (*L'Amour fou*), a theatre troupe and another theatre troupe (*Out 1*), a house and another house (*Hurlevent,* 1985).

Very significantly, *The Other House* (1896) is the title of a novel by Henry James that held an important place in the development of the script for *Céline and Julie*. In this novel, two houses, separated by a river, face each other. A horrible drama takes place in the 'other house' (two women clash over the love of a widower who, linked by his vows to his deceased wife, cannot remarry while his daughter Effie is living. Effie is finally killed by one of the two women). Yet the majority of James' novel (which was originally a play) takes place in the first house. This house, we are told, is 'the side for the view – the view as to which [Mrs Beever the proprietor] entertained the merely qualified respect excited in us, after the first creative flush, by mysteries of our own making'. (10) But – the ultimate paradox – this house that is graciously offered for contemplation by the other bank offers nothing to see other than the echo of the drama that plays out entirely in the opposite house. Thus, Mrs Beever's house is destined to be viewed, but as in a mirror: in looking at it, it is the opposite house, *the other house*, whose reflection we see.

10. Henry
(New York:
1999), p. 1

From two islands, the Rivettian fiction unlocks two non-exclusive channels. The first is *symmetry*: the often commented-on theatre/reality, improvisation/premeditation *crystal* (Deleuze's term) in which the above principle of permutation risks turning into a game of mortified mirrors. The second is the *archipelago*.

The Archipelago and Its Nightmare

When he directed *Jeanne la Pucelle*, Rivette did not only film Joan or Arc as warrior and prisoner. He made a portrait of Joan as navigator of a France separated into a chain of islands. Charles VII's kingdom is in pieces. To cross it involves navigating from one enclave to another: to reach the dauphin in Chinon, to enable her coronation in Reims, to save Orléans, Joan sails from island to island, crossing them like a sea of great, potentially hostile, calm and empty passages.

The archipelago in Rivette's films is not only a geographic fact: it is also an act of direction, and of editing (the dissemination of insert shots in *Céline and Julie* intensifies the heroines' mania to sow objects around them: let us call this the *politique* of little stones – little stones that germinate and grow while interlacing themselves like magic beans). In *Jacques Rivette, the Night Watchman*, the director told Serge Daney of his repugnance for cutting up bodies:

> There are a lot of filmmakers who, in a conscious or unconscious manner, work with this idea of a cut-up body: not only the face, it can be any part of the body, but it is obvious that the face is the privileged part. And, when I look in the viewfinder, I always have a tendency, after sometimes wanting to, of moving back, because the face is all alone ... I want to see the hands and, if I see the hands, I want to see the body.

What Rivette describes here is a choice that precedes the film and whose main goal seems to be to preserve the body's unity inside the frame. But this choice is described as a camera movement (thus, already a participant in the film) whose extension makes another intention appear: 'Yes, I've always wanted to see the body in its entirety and so, equally, that of the person in the set, facing the people in relationship to whom the body acts, reacts, moves, submits ... '

Beyond the body's unity, what therefore counts is the movement by which a body finds itself inscribed in a space occupied by other bodies: the linking of distinct unities, the creation of an archipelago. If Rivette is the filmmaker of the sequence-shot and of the ensemble-shot, it is because he needs to satisfy his desire to see the intervals between bodies. And this is why an island is only valuable for him through the distance that separates it from *other* islands. The lesson in ethnology becomes a lesson in direction. Two scenes are exemplary: Joan confronted for the first time in Charles VII's court (the anonymous King among his subjects, identified in that mass by the Virgin: an island in an archipelago, approached without a hint of hesitation); and the dancing scene (or *variation dansée*) in *Haut bas fragile* (1995) where, while Enzo Enzo sings 'Naufragés volontaires' ('Voluntary Castaways', with its lyrics 'Wanting to be lost at sea/to find the secret of the mysterious islands'), the camera explores the small planetary system formed by the dancing couples: docking with one, then another, pretending to ignore the couple of Nathalie Richard and André Marcon, moving away and finding them again, staying with them for the second verse, isolating them from the other dancers … then isolating Richard who moves away from her partner, recording (through a cut in the sequence-shot) the amorous wound that Marcon has just inflicted on her by picking up Marianne Denicourt on the other end of the dance floor; accompanying her across the dance floor as she approaches the new couple and walks around them … then the departure of the two young women, Richard's unexpected return to the dance floor, her collision with Bruno Todeschini who was following Denicourt, her final revolution around Marcon … and, finally, her definitive departure, leaving Marcon completely alone at the moment that the ballad of the voluntary castaways ends.

Joan of Arc belongs to the large family of navigator-traveller-walkers who already populated Rivette's films: Céline and Julie in their boats; Frédérique and Colin navigating through the archipelago of the Thirteen (*Out 1*); Maria Schneider and Joe Dallesandro

landing at Roissy and quickly embarking on a treasure hunt (*Merry-go-round,* released 1981, shot 1978); and especially Baptiste (Pascale Ogier) in *Le Pont du Nord* (1981) – a quixotic young girl wearing men's clothing, mounted on a proud battle steed, transformed by dreams of chivalry – and the woman whose successive prisons determine her battles, namely Suzanne Simonin (*The Nun*, 1966).

Like Gulliver, Suzanne mainly visits two islands (the convent of repression and the convent of debauchery) that she studies, and whose local mores she submits to, but to which she refuses to conform. These two islands, apparently opposed to one another (as Lilliput and Brobdingnag were), are in reality two elements of the same constraint. After her escape, Suzanne makes some quick journeys to some second-rate islands, without ever finding any rest (Gulliver then went to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg ...), until this house of masks: the place of debauchery where she decides to kill herself by jumping out of a window. 'And like the madness of a man who, not knowing what navigation is, would go to sea without a navigator, such is the madness of a creature who embraces religious life without having God's will as her guide'. (11)

Do the convents form an archipelago? The archdiocese that takes pity on Suzanne but wants, above all, to preserve order, would have us believe it: 'The Church, through the providential diversity of its convents, allows each person to realise her particular vocation. There is a place for everyone in this great body'. This false archipelago is the Rivettian hell: the appearance of 'providential diversity' where, for Suzanne, there is only one, great, doctrinal body. This is also, essentially, Carpenter's nightmare. Evil, in his films, is both discontinuous in its incarnation and indivisible in its essence, both organic and ideological. The almost systematic presence of churches in Carpenter's films is significant. In *Prince of Darkness* (as in *Vampires*) the contamination of bodies is also a process of conversion. The jet of liquid in *Prince of Darkness* is a sermon; it penetrates the body through the mouth (people literally drink its words) and its 'message' is transmitted mouth to mouth. In *Vampires*, a priest gives birth to vampirism. Freed from their master, the vampires find themselves cut off from their origin. They no longer incarnate evil, but an unfortunate people. The couple that survives at the end of the film present a new version of Adam and Eve chased out of Paradise. In *They Live*, the colonisation process is only another mode of ideological contamination: the colonies are built on a foreign land in order to exploit its riches and spread the new culture; the colonised people are converted to the cult of savage liberalism.

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Ideological organicity is represented by a double link in Carpenter: *blood* and *broadcasting*. In order to unmask the creature who is hiding in one of them, the hero of *The Thing* takes a few drops of blood from each of his companions and plunges a heated needle into each little cup of blood – knowing that, indirectly, he is putting iron in the creature's body. The scattered members of the discontinuous body are thus irrigated by the same blood, and joined by the sole instinct of conservation. In *Assault on Precinct 13*, we are struck by not only the lack of differentiation between the attackers, but by their indifference toward themselves: they do not try to protect themselves individually; they expose themselves to their adversaries' bullets with a frightening willingness. This indifference makes the same statement as the creature's anguish for overall preservation in *The Thing*. It also characterises the behaviour of Alfred Hitchcock's birds and George Romero's zombies, whose collective consciousness – species consciousness – is also an *un*consciousness of the self. This kind of unity is consecrated by a gesture that is very

similar to that of MacReady (Kurt Russell) in *The Thing*: the three different leaders (black, white, Puerto Rican) mixing their blood at the beginning of the film. Another variant of this solidarity of blood is found in *The Fog*: this fog is the unifying substance of the Elizabeth Dane's crew, but the crew's solidarity with the boat is something else – when a piece of the boat found on the beach suddenly starts to ooze, we realise that the organic unity goes beyond the crew's bodies and includes the boat itself. When the crew 'comes back to life' to seek its revenge, the wood starts bleeding again, simultaneously.

In Carpenter's films, a mental link forms a network of separated organs: it links the children, and conditions pregnant mothers by dissuading them from aborting, in *Village of the Damned*; associates the vampire and its victim during its 'metamorphosis' in *Vampires*; and breaks the switchboards at the moment in *The Fog* when the sailors' vengeance is set in motion. When the creature, such as in *They Live*, is the social body, it is television that assures the conditioning of individuals by instituting a *pensée unique* (the 'single thought' targeted by critics of neoliberalism). At the beginning of *They Live*, Carpenter arranges, in his character's path, a man stopped in front of TVs in a window display, broadcasting what looks like an advertised version of the American myth: we see Mount Rushmore (the monumentalising of history); an eagle (symbol of imperialism); an Indian dance (folklore masking the reality of a massacre); a man on a horse in a rodeo and a child riding a pony (other images of white folklore, terrifying in this case because their juxtaposition suggests contamination: this child is frightening like the children in *Village of the Damned* are frightening); young basketball players who high-five each other in slow motion (popular sport and its propagandist hijacking: 'the fighters').

Blood ties and telepathy are no less important in Rivette's films. 'The ties of blood must be renewed' – this is the leitmotif of one of the 'zombies' in *Céline and Julie*, whose agonising promise of eternity (the ghosts' and the film's, by reversal and permutation) is solidified by the 'blood ties' established between the 'island of the dead' and the land of the living. (12) The shared fate of Rivette's characters is transmission of thought, clairvoyance, premonitions and feelings of *déjà vu*. For Carpenter and Rivette alike, blood ties and mental ties are associated with the danger of the loss of individuality. But while Carpenter films the danger at the moment of its realisation – implying a gaining of consciousness on the part of individuals threatened as representatives of the human race – Rivette, in *Céline and Julie*, remains at the stage of suspicion. Céline and Julie's universe looks like a transitional object. 'Of the transitional object it can be said that it is a matter of agreement between us and the baby that we will never ask the question: "Did you conceive of this or was it presented to you from without?" The important point is that no decision on this point is expected. The question is not to be formulated'. (13) In the film, the question arises, but the answer is always differed. Thus, the dual danger of the loss of individuality continues to weigh on the characters: the collapse of the Ego or its omnipotence.

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In Carpenter's films, in order to struggle against the extension of the 'great body', humans can, in turn, attempt to create their own network. They try hard to 'emit', to broadcast (pirated shows broadcast by the Resistance in *They Live*, video-dreams sent from the future to the scientists in *Prince of Darkness*). This is what the lighthouse guardian understood in *The Fog*. Even when her son is in danger, she stays at her microphone to maintain a vocal connection at all costs, to oppose the blanket of fog with the warmth of a 'human voice'. The rebels in *They Live* broadcast from a ghetto on the

border of Los Angeles; the guardian in *The Fog* from a lighthouse on the edge of the sea. The question of the island is thus posed in new terms: the 'great body' against the 'peripheral station', the island in relation to the continent.

On The Edge and Beyond

> ... and what is the importance of the name of the future city to others? They are also looking for their little house, not that one in the middle of the others, but this one, among the trees, at a distance ...
>
> – Rivette, review of Boris Barnet's *Щедрое лето* (*Bountiful Summer*, 1951) (14)

14. Jacque visage de l *cinéma*, no 49-50.

> Take five-and-twenty heaps of cinders dumped here and there in an outside city lot, imagine some of them magnified into mountains, and the vacant lot the sea, and you will have a fit idea of the general aspect of the Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles. A group rather of extinct volcanoes than of isles, looking much as the world at large might after a penal conflagration'.
>
> – Herman Melville, *Encantadas*

The straightforward metaphor of the island only accounts for the land/sea configuration: land at the centre, the sea around it. Bringing into play the relationship between a centre and its periphery is, then, appropriate for an insular reading. The police station in *Assault on Precinct 13*, which becomes the centre of a hostile circumference, corresponds to this vision of the island; just like the church in *Prince of Darkness* which, during the state of siege (the Resistance inside opposed to centripetal forces), associates the image of a seed in the process of germinating (the pressure of the centrifugal forces exerted from the 'belly' of the church by the green liquid's gyrating movement) and a magnet (the schizophrenic hobos are attracted to the outside of the church like moths to light – the container constitutes itself as the centre as it reorganises the world around it).

If, on the other hand, we consider the island in relation to the continent, what stands out is that it is off-centred. The island's self-containment counts less than its geographic situation, which is 'on the side'. This is precisely the status of Los Angeles in *Escape from L.A.*, the prologue of which explains to us that an earthquake separated it from the rest of the United States. Compared by a fisherman-President to Sodom and Gomorrah, Los Angeles has become the island of the condemned, on the margin of a totalitarian continent: not a centre, but a disowned territory, abandoned (as the island of lepers in *The Fog* must have been).

As a closed space, the island is constituted by lines of force that trace its contours (difficulty of entering: *Céline and Julie*; difficulty of leaving: *The Nun*), by its particular 'vocation' (theatrical, religious ...), by its heterogeneity inside the film (which also brings into play the light as well as the acting and editing), and by the constitution of an 'isolating' environment. This space in the films of Rivette and Carpenter is never constructed around the island. Instead, it is what carries the island in its own off-centring. The residential suburb (*La Bande des quatre*, *Céline and Julie*), the omnipresent cliché of the American urban area (*Assault on Precinct 13*, *Prince of Darkness*), the 'vacant' lot (*Le Pont du Nord*), the ghetto (*They Live*), the Antarctic ('at the end of the world'), a seafront

(*Out 1*), the desert (*Vampires*) all place the island on the edge – on the margin of a centre whose existence is not always certain.

Abrupt movements of displacement characterise Carpenter's and Rivette's films: the most striking example is the night-time sequence in *Halloween* (1978) where Donald Pleasence goes to the mental hospital where Michael Myers is situated. The car resolutely breaks off from the world of reason. The mental hospital is not a place for confining vacillating consciousnesses; it is the border where humans become dull, obscure and quiet – a place of drifting reserved for phantoms, beyond which Myers is held, detached from affection like Los Angeles was from the American continent. For his part, Rivette describes *Le Pont du Nord* as a film that leaves behind conventional neighbourhoods (the Arc de Triomphe) to go, little by little, towards neighbourhoods that are more peripheral, or on the way to disappearing. (15)

The same movement drives *Out 1* to the doors of Paris and beyond, 'outside the walls', to a seafront house that, little by little, establishes itself as the denominator of the Thirteen: a convergence point that is also a border and even an *out*side. Thinking they have landed in an underground passage, the two rebels in *They Live* find that they are in a ship in the middle of outer space; then, in leaving it, find themselves on the roof of a building. The church that the writer Sutter Cane (Jürgen Prochnow) makes his dwelling in *In the Mouth of Madness* (1994) – following the Prince of Darkness' example – is on the margins of a city that is itself in the middle of nowhere. Consistently (and well before *Scream,* 1996), Rivette uses telephones to produce troubling effects of aural dislocation (in *Céline and Julie*, *Out 1* and *Secret défense* [1998], the voice on the phone is, in reality, a voice outside the frame).

Many times, navigation in Rivette's films risks becoming drifting. In Carpenter's films, we meet only exiles (the alien in *Starman* [1984], the mother and child at the end of *Village of the Damned*, the deported in *Escape from L.A.*, the unemployed guy who is an economic exile in *They Live*) and ex-patriots (the fallen couple in *Vampires*, or Jamie Lee Curtis in *The Fog*, a hitchhiker without attachments, convinced that she is cursed as well). (16) The world is in a state of fatigue. Its edifices and institutions are worn out: the police station in *Assault on Precinct 13* is going to close; the church in *Prince of Darkness* is hardly frequented by the faithful anymore; the church in *Village of the Damned* empties out as the children grow older; the Vampires evolve in an out-of-time setting in a ghost town right out of a Western. In Carpenter's films, there is a certain melancholia about vacant lots – a reverie of low tide. The world is worn out, but it gets its force from this wear and tear. The prisoner and the police station employee in *Assault on Precinct 13* seem to draw strength from their state of fatigue. In *Village of the Damned*, fatigue and sadness are also what arouse in Reeve's mind the powerful image of a wave that serves as a wall for him.

We sometimes find a similar reverie in Rivette's films. First, because low tide is the moment when pebbles and strangely shaped shells, polished by the outgoing tide, become beached; the moment, as well, when the water finds itself trapped in rocky cavities, creating a micro-space, a closed vessel (the bedroom in *L'Amour par terre* where a crab walks or the house in C*éline and Julie* are, in this sense, low tide objects). Second, because low tide is in retreat. Utopians go to sleep (*Out 1*); the militarism of the 1960s and political struggles have turned out poorly, leaving a bitter taste (*Le Pont du Nord*, *La*

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Bande des quatre). Rivette describes *Out 1*'s characters as 'fringe elements of the centre' (17), a formula that can be compared to that of 'Thomas the Imposter' in *La Bande des quatre* ('I'm not for, I'm not against, I'm on the side'). Among the major dramatic mechanisms in Rivette's films is brutal desertion by one of the characters. Bulle Ogier leaves Jean-Pierre Kalfon's troupe in *L'Amour fou*, Lili (Michèle Moretti) abandons her own in *Out 1*, Constance Dumas leaves her students alone and in distress in *La Bande des quatre*. Ideologically opaque and unpredictable, the Rivettian character resembles the space reconstructed by the double, insular perspective (centre/drifting): turned upside down, the centre outside and the outside inside (the sound of the sea can be heard inside the houses – *Out 1*, *L'Amour par terre* – while, elsewhere, characters find themselves 'locked outside'). (18)

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What is this world? In the fifteenth century, Nicholas of Cusa defined God as a 'circle whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere'. There could be, in Rivette's films, a hidden God who would thus be a 'circle whose centre is nowhere and whose circumference is everywhere'. We are all islanders, but our island is the periphery of a missing centre. In the case of Carpenter, it is not God who has disappeared – it is us who have fallen, condemned to wander the painful periphery of the Lost Paradise.

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