

The symbolic and the look in Eraserhead, by David Lynch

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an analysis of the correlation between the dramaturgic content and the visual content of the feature film Eraserhead, by David

Lynch, based on the theories of the imaginary, establishing identification and study of the symbolic material contained in the film's plot, reflecting on the relationship of this material with the choices made by the art direction team of the work.

Keywords: Eraserhead, Surrealism, Art direction, Aesthetics, Symbolism.

1 INTRODUCTION

As a student of Art Direction and a future professional in the field, I have a great interest in investigating in more depth the aesthetic and dramatic issues present in films and plays of surrealist aesthetics or with characteristics of surrealists in their structure. In this context, the research developed in the scope of LABORATORI - Multidisciplinary Center for Research in the Arts of the Scene, and the Magnet - Image, Myth and Imaginary in the Arts of the Scene, a research group coordinated by Prof. Alexandre Silva Nunes, are shown to be an appropriate place to develop these studies, considering their openness to reflections based on symbolic language, dreamlike and archetypal of dreams, myths, and images that permeate the human imaginary.

David Lynch's Eraserhead (1977) was the film production selected to channel these research efforts, allowing them to begin these studies from a clipping that will collaborate with the deepening of the ideas to be matured.

The dreamlike elements present in the work characterize the characters, scenarios, costumes, script, and everything else that comprises the film. Its meanings, therefore, require a symbolic perspective of analysis, especially considering visual communication. It is possible to see psychological implications in the development of the plot, revealing the ability to communicate directly with what we can call an unconscious collective, according to the school of archetypal psychology.

2 DISCUSSIONS

To carry out an analysis of the function and effectiveness of the Art Direction in the film Eraserhead, by David Lynch, it was necessary to perform rather a dive into the poetics itself, both of the filmmaker and the film in question. Roughly speaking, we could identify a closeness between Lynch's poetics, in this and other films, and the surrealist poetics. It is for this reason that the method of reading the symbolic elements

of the film proves useful. To deepen this poetic correlation mentioned, it is necessary to discuss rather what characterizes surrealist works, for this reason, we will discuss these characteristics using Octavio Paz's studies as a basis, contained in the book *La Busqueda del comienzo* (PAZ, 1983).

2.1 SURREALISM AND THE SEARCH FOR ORIGIN

According to Paz (1983), given the warlike and prisoner construction that Western society has developed over time, it is not strange that we question reality and try to get out of it. Thus, surrealism is shown to be an efficient means of seeking freedom, but it would not be a provider of salvation, but of true life. Following his call would be a return to the potentialities of childhood, a return to the origins, and consequently, a concession of great strength to imagination and desire, powers always present in man, although sometimes dormant or weakened. The author sees the relationship of the human being with the imagination and the image as follows:

At its core, to imagine is to go beyond yourself, to protect oneself, and to continue to transcend oneself. Being who imagines why he desires; man is the being able to transform the entire universe into an image of his desire. And for this, he is a loving being, thirsty for a presence that is the living image, the incarnation of a dream. Driven by desire, it aspires to merge with this image and, in turn, become an image. (PAZ, 1983, p. 30 - free translation)

Surrealism then shows itself as a powerful result of man's conversion into the image, through his imagination. It is useless to try to define its meanings, considering that it is not an institution that seeks rationality and its communications, but the core of the human spirit, so abstract and complex. Paz characterizes surrealism as a "concrete exercise of freedom", and points out that for this form of expression, the world is not divided by good and bad elements, useful and years ago, as Christianity and capitalism preach. Objects are subjective.

In the search for the liberation of reality, the author points out that the images of the dream, and even the madness and daydreams are potential sources of the conception of an imaginary world that frees the human being from the limiting reality constructed by society, making changes in our views about the world and causing the true "I" in. of each is discovered and exploited. Paz explains that because there are no mental imprisonments in the surrealist perspective, concepts such as time and space are not enclosed in traditional concepts about reality, such as those that dominate realistic/naturalistic aesthetics. In the case of time, it does not take place in succession; yesterday, today and tomorrow no longer matter: there is only one where it is also here and one now. (ibid, p. 42)

Coincidences are also objects of Paz's attention. In the real world, sometimes there are unusual encounters that we generally define as a destination, but the author prefers to use the term used by Hegel: objective chance. For Paz, it is a place where they cross freedom and necessity, but it remains a rather mysterious concept, devoid of an absolute conclusion about it. (ibid, p. 39-40) Fascinated by the mysterious circumstances of life, surrealist artists liked to represent these peculiar situations in the most diverse ways. They also provoked encounters of contradictory elements frequently, establishing intriguing

relationships, and did not hesitate to explore the potentialities of these encounters poetically, defying the limitations placed by society on the impossibility of these connections.

From other reflections on the characteristics of surrealism, the author concludes his reasoning as follows:

(...) Surrealism - in what is best and most valuable - will continue to be an invitation and a sign: an invitation to inner adventure, to rediscover ourselves; and a sign of intelligence, the same as through the centuries make us the great myths and the great poets. This sign is lightning: beneath its convulsed light we see something of the mystery of our condition. (ibid, p. 45 - free translation)

2.2 DAVID LYNCH AND SURREALISM

David Lynch is a filmmaker whose films we can find elements of various film genres, which could categorize him, in the words of Rogério Ferraraz, as a postmodern artist. The same author (FERRARAZ, 2001, p. 4), discussing "David Lynch's border cinema", talks about the fusion of different references that Lynch presents to us and that causes an effect of strangeness in the viewer. He cites expressionism, surrealism, noir, and horror as genres used as artifice used to around the effects at the same time illusionists and anti-illusionists, in much of his work. These are genera that, although they have their particularity, have some characteristics in common. Often we can find elements of horror in surrealism, of noir in horror, of expressionism in surrealism, among other correlations. They are artistic segments that share similarities, and Lynch explores them, performing a great poetic mix. However, a genre that stands out a lot in the works of the director, in a particular way is surrealism, approached by him in a renewed way. In the article *The surrealist marks in the cinema of David Lynch*, by the same author (FERRARAZ, 2001), some connections are presented between the work of the filmmaker in a general context and some surrealist characteristics, which we can relate to the Octavio Paz's reflections on the essence and intentions of this artistic avant-garde. About space-time in *Eraserhead*, for example, Ferraraz says:

Eraserhead is full of passages that go against the logic of things, with leaps in time and space, which, do not even present themselves as jumps, because the logic of time and space itself is modified by actions and characters. They do not belong to any time and space demarcated, resuming some characteristics present in *An Andalusian dog* by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, a landmark film of surrealism in cinema, made in 1928. (FERRARAZ, 2001, p. 1)

Concerning other elements used by the artist to provoke the fruits sought, the author cites mirrors, as well as corridors and doors, which bring within them a great possibility of diving and deepening in human subjectivities, often not accessible to the conscious, through mysterious ways unexplored by the figures of the paintings or by the characters of the films.

It is important to remember that a great goal intended by surrealism in the 1920s and 1930s was to transform society. At its core, it is an art that fights against the ideals of the usefulness of capitalism and the goodness of Christianity, "imposed" on the human being, in a similar way to what Octavio Paz observes. Thus, it is possible that the artists sought means to criticize these social structures in their works. According

to Ferraraz, some important features of surrealist art that were used for this purpose, and that we can find in Lynch's cinema are:

- The convulsive beauty, which resulted from unusual connections between contrasting subjects, gave rise to new realities.
- Black humor, in this context, ironically and provocatively, was intended to confront social morality.
- Love only mattered to artists if it was experienced madly, and this was the path taken by them to portray the female figure in their works, placed in general as an object of desire.
- The objective chance, which, as previously said, occurs through the meetings is the tweets of life.
- The frequent prominence of the mystery, through which the human being is instigated and driven to try to unravel the unknowns that present themselves to him.
- The great approach to the dream world, broke the existing limitations of the concrete world, transforming the whole experience into a wide mixture of perspectives of different realities.
- The lack of rational coherence regarding the positioning of space and time in narratives, as already stated before.
- The presence of elements that run away from what is considered "normal" or "healthy" by society, characterized as grotesque, as characters with a strange appearance (dwarves, giants, or even the baby and the cheeky girl in *Eraserhead*) and the dismemberment of bodies and/or cuts in them. Usually, these elements are there as a confrontation with the social values already mentioned.

Another artifice used by Lynch in his cinema that often proves essential for the construction of narratives and dreamlike environments is sound features. Noises and music are employed in contrasting ways that sometimes pass between the diegetic and extradiegetic universe, reinforcing the mysterious climate of the created worlds.

For Ferraraz, Lynch's film work can be considered borderline, or borderline, as it presents many contrasts and transitions between the so-called "real" and the so-called "dreamlike". Sometimes we are not fully sure of which of the two characters are, or whether they are in a fusion of both because the filmmaker builds on them a kind of hybridism, which reinforces the surreal aspect presently. It merges illusionist and anti-illusionist mechanisms that provoke the viewer, resulting in a possible strangeness that, it is important to point out, differs from the methods used by Brecht in his epic theater, for example, but which, like this one, also aims to discuss social ideologies.

2.3 SYMBOLS AND SIGNS IN ERASERHEAD

Before we go on to an analysis of the film, an explanation must be made as to how this investigation will be carried out. It is necessary to say that we will not start from a rational and logical perspective for

this work, because we believe that this is not the ideal approach. To justify this methodological choice, we resorted to the book "The Myth of Analysis", by James Hillman, in which the author approaches the historical context in which hysteria was studied, at the birth of psychoanalysis, and how, from it, it was discovered/created the concept of unconscious. For Hillman, the birth of the psychoanalysis method reveals several elements of misogyny, especially in the direct association between women and hysteria. Using an analysis associated with Greek old myths, the author uses the figure of Dionysus, an androgynous god, to suppose the validity of components of repression to femininity in the diagnoses and measures of treatment of hysteria investigated. The author argues, finally, that the error of the psychoanalytic method was to try to approach the dionysian elements of the (obscure) psyche using an Apolonia (rational) technique, proposing an approach that, instead of seeking to translate dionysian elements into Apolinean concepts, would experience a dip in the symbolic obscurity of those Elements. There would therefore be a certain conflict when these translations are intended for something that does not belong to a field of research that demands such results. In our view, the film *Eraserhead*, being a work of strong surrealist content, has in itself a strong Dionysian power that must then be not analyzed within an objective perspective, but felt, abstracted, and absorbed, through direct study of its symbols and the possible associations between them, so that it may rise a deepening of its meanings.

Being a very abstract study material, a study method that proved pertinent to the purpose of film analysis is phenomenology. In the book *The Poetics of Reverie*, Gaston Bachelard explains that we can try to bring to lucidity the poetic visualities conceived through human reverie through this investigative method, which is limited to the so of the events presented, without deducing results based on possibilities not by the researcher without experimental basis. It seeks to establish a dialogue with the poet's creative mind by highlighting the genesis of his conceptions, absorbing the essence of his peculiarity, and feeding on the brilliant imaginative richness of the human psyche. Bachelard also says that it is the norm that the researcher has a pure dazzle in the creative conceptions of poets, but inert participation does not bring great intensity to the imaginative experience. There needs to be dynamic work between the parties.

In the book *The Symbolic Imagination*, Gilbert Durand gives examples of what he calls symbolic myths, such as Fedon and some biblical parables depicting the Divine Kingdom. They are stories that have the quality of symbolism because they approach worlds that are sealed to man in the realm of reality. To access them in some way, we use imagination, which conceives their scenarios and their events. Concerning the symbol, Carl Jung (apud DURAND, 1993, p. 10) defines it as the most appropriate image likely to be considered incognito, whose designation did not reach, at first, a greater clarification and a greater peculiarity. It can be considered as an imagery representation originating from the unconscious. For P. Godet (apud DURAND, 1993, p. 10), he is the opposite of allegory, because it comes from a subjective concept, which becomes an act, while the symbol is originally the image, which can generate thoughts and perceptions, which may become concepts.

Eraserhead is the first feature film directed by David Lynch, released in 1977. It tells the story of a man named Henry who receives the news that his girlfriend, Mary, had a son. The couple then moves into Henry's room together and tries to deal as far as possible with the baby, which has a very peculiar configuration and more closely resembles an animal than a human being. They find it very difficult to take care of this strange being who cries a lot. Mary is annoyed by the situation and remains more absent. The narrative is more focused on Henry's relationship with his son, as well as the extremely dreamlike situations experienced by the boy involving both the baby and fatherhood and his relationship with himself and with other figures who are present in his life, such as Mary's family, her sensual neighbor and a cheeky girl dressed in white who lives in her radiator and sings a song about how "everything in heaven is perfect". At an extremely surreal moment, Henry's head is pushed out of his body and that of his deformed son takes its place. Found in the street and taken to a pencil factory by a boy, Henry's head becomes raw material for making the erasers that accompany the pencils, a fact that, we can assume, justifies the name of the film. Later, Henry is again in his room, seemingly fed up with the weight that the creature represents in his life, and intrigued to learn what bandages that involve her hide, cuts them off, and discovers that they were part of the baby's body. His organs are on display and Henry, frightened, pierces the creature, which agonizes incessantly and has come out of his body a kind of foam of strange texture. The baby has an extremely dreamlike death and, after this scene, Henry is in an all-white place and finds the cheeky girl hugging him, comforting him.

The film discussed is not very verbal, having its cinematic potential sewed mainly from the structure of its visualities. The set of images presented to the viewer brings in itself very peculiar characteristics, which we could hardly classify as allegorical, given the magnitude of its complexities and subjectivities. Given the symbolic nature of these images, we can talk about possible associations about what is shown only, without impositions of subjective meanings. We have ascertained some elements that we consider to be incognito and relevant to establish a phenomenological reflection on the cinematographic communication placed by Lynch. Soon, let's go to them.

In the first scene of the film, we see a transparent image of Henry floating horizontally through what appears to be a planet. At one point, he opens his mouth, and from inside it comes something that resembles a giant sperm. Elsewhere, inside a house whose ceiling has a circular hole, is a man with several skin wounds, who observes something through the window. In front of you are some levers. After the sperm comes out of Henry's mouth, the injured man pulls one of the levers, and the scourge falls into a puddle of water on the ground. It is possible to suggest an association between this scene and the main version of the birth myth of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. According to the mythological narrative, Cronus, the son of Uranus and Gaia, castrate his father at his mother's request. From the blood gushed with castration, the Erineas, the Giants and the Ash Nymphs are born. As for the penis, it falls into the sea, and the sperm that was inside it mixes with water, originating the goddess of love. In fact,

the theme of love and affection are present in Eraserhead's basic plot. There is a couple in the structure in the story and their relationship is fundamental to the unfolding of events, such as the birth of the deformed baby. It is possible to realize that love may not be being addressed only from the external perspective of the couple's relationship, but also from an internal perspective of Henry himself, who has affection within one's life and seekways to express it and deal with it.

As for the wounded man who pulls the lever, we can propose an association with the figure of the demigod, which according to Plato's cosmogonic definition, is the divine craftsman, the engine of life in the world, not being the generator of the universe, but of a being that shapes disordered substances by copying the eternal structurings. The lower classes, originating from it, have the task of the generation of mortal entities. From the Gnostic perspective, the figure of the demiurism is seen as malignant (DUROZOI, G.; ROUSSEL, A., 1993). In the context of the film, we cannot state whether or not such a character is evil, but according to the contexts in which it is included and its characterization (which we will discuss further on), we believe that such a comparison is pertinent.

One element that is very present in the film and that is interesting to be brought for analysis is the circular format. It is frequent in the works of the director, and one can make a correlation with its use in the expressionist movement. According to Kracauer, the existence of circuses and parks in expressionist works took place because they were environments that defied the norms of behavior of the bourgeoisie, being structured by the circular design, therefore chaotic, playing a role of irreverence (apud FERRARAZ, sept. 2001). By the way, we can take Eraserhead for an irreverent and challenging work, given its nonlinear narrative, its grotesque elements (of which we will speak better later), among its other components that make it considered by many as disturbing. Having made this first association, we can also cover the discussion about the circle as a symbolic potential. According to Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant (2012), the circle is an expanded point, so it shares symbolic characteristics similar to those of the point, such as perfection, unity and integração. In addition, its movement is constant, with no starting and arrival point, which can refer to temporality. The circular format can also symbolize the sky, its performance, its active integration into the universe. Therefore, it is pertinent its conjunction with the symbologies of the divinity lying over the creation in which life is born. In view of its relationship with the celestial sphere, it is a symbol that is closely linked to religion, a belief system that, in general, associates heaven with what is divine. It can be considered the expression of a central point, it relates to the spherical figure, outlining it. With regard to the sphere, also very present in the film through the baby's head, which stands out in certain more dreamlike scenes, and through the globe planigraphy shown in the first scene of the film, this figure has a similar to that of the circular format, but with regard to the scope of the volumes. Provides corpulence to circular sygnic expressions. It's the cosmos, the completeness, the perfection. Because it is a symmetrical image, it can also symbolize ambiguity and androgyny.

The presence of the earth and the earthy texture itself is also very frequent in the film, either as a fundamental visuality in the most surreal scenes, or "just" as a decoration next to Henry's bed. We believe it is relevant to explain its symbology to expand the discussion about the visual communications of this film. Generally speaking, we can consider the land as a haven for stocks as a whole. It is dark and shady, always remaining on a lower physical level. It represents the maternal figure that guards its offspring. In alchemy, although observed as an impure substance, it is important in the search for expanded purity in the atmospheric sphere (ENCARNACIÓN, A.; FERREIRA, A., 2013). It is an element that, although it represents the maternal figure and its acceptance, it does not cease to present a certain hostility, as Bachelard says:

The earth, in fact, unlike the other three elements, has as its first characteristic a resistance. The other elements may be hostile, but they are not always hostile. To know them fully, one must dream of them in an ambivalence of sweetness and wickedness. The resistance of earth ly, on the contrary, is immediate and constant [...]
(apud ENCARNACIÓN, A.; FERREIRA, A., 2013)

In the scene where the baby is pierced, there is a great deal of excitement in the electricity of Henry's room. There are also other scenes in which electricity seemed to destabilize on the film's set in general, such as when the protagonist gets in the elevator to go to his floor and when Mary's mother is about to break the news of the baby's birth to Henry. Interestingly, in the lobby of the building, there is a carpet with drawings in the shape of black and white rays interposed with each other, as if they were stripes, similar to the carpet later used in the scenography of the Black Lodge, the TV series *Twin Peaks* (1990), co-created by David Lynch. Therefore, we will discuss a little about some symbologies of these visual elements. For astrological studies, very based on myths and symbols, the planet Uranus, regent of the sign of Aquarius and which in Greco-Roman mythology is heaven whose testicles cut and thrown into the sea gave rise to love (Aphrodite), governs divers other correlated subjects. Marion d. March and Joan McEvers explain a little about it:

It governs inventions, originality, science, electricity, magic, the occult, light, astrology, psychology, X-rays, airplanes and understanding of the laws of nature. It is futuristic, humanitarian, intellectual, eccentric, bohemian, selfish and utopian. It also governs the will to create, sudden change, revolution and dictators, individualism, ingenuity, rebellions and autonomy. His action is sudden, unexpected and often violent. Uranus is a destroyer of traditions. It is neutral and asexual and considered by many to be the upper octave of Mercury and the first of the transcendental planets. Recent research also associates Uranus with natural disasters, especially earthquakes.
(1981, p. 37)

In the case of lightning, Chevalier and Gheerbrant (2012) say that in lightning, he expresses the desires and omnipotence of the ultimate deity. The set of some of them in beam format characterizes the possession of the ability to start and end life, attributed to divinity. Lightning is the celestial ferrament and armament, especially when they are in the possession of Zeus or Indra. It's the power to make live and make die, metamorphosing existences.

Water is also an interesting element to be discussed here, as it is present in some more abstract scenes, such as when the large sperm falls into a puddle at the beginning of the film, plus another rather revered moment in which Henry and his neighbor relate to the boy's bed, which seems to have turned into a kind of bathtub with white water in which the two get kiss immersed up to the waist. Gradually they enter more in the water, until they are completely submerged. The symbolic nature of this substance is quite varied. In general, it can be related to birth, fertility, metamorphosis and purge. For the Egyptians, for example, it is related to the God Num, whose characteristics are associated with death, disorder, and disasters. Water is then, as well as lightning and electricity in general, an elements sociated with life and death. The eroticity, quality present in the scene of Henry's relationship with his neighbor, is also linked to these concepts.

Regarding human deformity, a visual resource widely used by the director, it is a macabre considered feature and, commonly, its possessors are attributed to magical abilities. The Fomoiros, for example, evil creatures of Irish mythology, were endorsed with such particularities. It is a characteristic that is also considered as enigmatic, although repugnant, because in it one can find very valuable secrets. It is necessary to have a broader perception and devoid of prejudices so that there is absorption of the significant teachings that it can provide about life. The being that has the deformity is as a mediator, and can be bad or good, transit between the hidden and the revealed, day and night, the physical and the metaphysical. Several cultures place the hump in this dubious position, for example (ibid, p. 328). Claudio Vescia Zanini refleto about this aesthetic choice of Lynch in *Eraserhead* saying that, in fact, it is in the corporeal eccentricity of the characters that it is possible to notice the contradiction of Lynchian art, because the singular appearance of these figures it disturbs, provoking feelings of revulsion and horror, but at the same time, these same characteristics cause fascination (2017).

As for the elements that give the film its name, head and eraser, it is more useful to analyze what each one refers separately to then propose a relationship of meaning between the two. In mind we can associate memory, identity, control over the body, intellectuality and also sovereignty and power. Rubber, within the context of the film, in which it is removed from the protagonist's head to be used in the manufacture of pencils, we can associate it mainly with its primary function as a school object: to erase, correct errors, eliminate from somewhere a content that is not you want more to be there. Thus, the fusion of these two materials can cause the following reflection: being the rubber head, the content to be "eliminated" by it would be internal or external? It cannot be affirmed, but if it is internal, we can think of a possible emotional overload that Henry would like to get rid of by eliminating memories, or who knows, of his own identity. If the presumed elimination is external to it, we can reflect on the head as a tool that conceives within itself the literal destruction of what afflicts him, and not just of his memories. In the scene where the boy's head is thrown out of his body and the baby's head takes its place, it is permissible to propose a relationship with the concepts of identity-taking and control over the corpo, or even taking authority and power.

Having been made some reflections about some important symbologies in the film, we will then go to the analysis of the Art Direction.

2. 4 ART DIRECTION OPERATION MODES IN ERASERHEAD

As previously stated, Eraserhead's filmic ability to engage the viewer is un verbal, being much more visual. Consequently, the importance of Art Direction here is very great. David Lynch plays in the film not only the role of director and screenwriter, but, among others, that of art director. It creates an extremely rich visual universe, building a very well-structured dialogue with purposely almost nonexistent demarcations between the real world and the dream world of the protagonist.

Also that is important to be discussed early in the approach to the visualities of the film is the fact that it was intentionally made in black and white. According to Alziro Barbosa, this aesthetic choice retains the soul of the meaning present in things, because with the absence of the dispersion of attention caused by colors, the soul of what is being shown is preserved, and the dive into the complexity of the characters and what is claiming to be transmitted in the work is deeper. Along with Mauro Pinheiro Jr., this aesthetic is likely to be seen as a limiter at a certain angle, due to the absence of coloration. However, it strengthens the viewer's imaginative ability. With regard to the work process of art direction, Monica Palazzo says that it is necessary to understand the uniqueness of each black and white in the different works, and also pay attention to the alternatives offered by available cameras. Is a black and white more aesthetically altered or more natural looking? In addition, in this aesthetic choice texturing and prints become more evident, so it is important to carefully study the desired feelings and, consequently, the connection between the shades saturations in order to achieve the most coherent result.

Contextualizing these reflections in Eraserhead, in fact we can perceive Lynch's care to get into Henry's complex world in a profound way, and not sum up his: All the characters seem to have their expressiveness highlighted.

Even those that appear little in the film have the potential to be marked in the viewer's memory. As for the effect of strengthening the imagination, in fact we can assume that it is a desired result by the director, in view of the extremely abstract nature of the work, which, in a way, makes the viewer a "co-autor", collaborating with his personal interpretation of what was passed on to him. With regard to Monica's placement, we have deepened a little more in the uniqueness of this aesthetic in the case of this particular film: the black and white worked by Lynch is quite stylized with regard to lighting. We have here a work with a huge contrast between its tones, giving a huge highlight to black and sometimes (not many) to white. In some scenes, we cannot outline the silhouette of certain characters and objects as well, as they are partially emerging in the darkness. In Henry's room, for example, light sources are not placed at very high heights and have almost zero diffusion, causing many shadows to exist. This aesthetic reinforces the ever-present aspect of mystery and unknown of the film, in addition to the appearance of

unreality and dream, but a dark dream and, perhaps for some, nightmare. The textures and prints chosen by the art direction are reinforced by black and white, as said by Monica. In the work in question, this observation is quite evident when we remember the most organic visual aspects placed on the scene, such as the earthy surfaces on the walls. The camera "travels" several times, in addition to the scenery that we see when Henry heads to his house hugging a paper bag: mounds of earth, old and worn walls, industrial environment with the appearance of abandoned. It is a place that seems to have a soul of its own that silently watches the boy walk. The grotesque elements in the film also have their potential increased by the aesthetics of black and white. The giant sperm, the strange liquids, the cheeks of the girl in white, Henry's head when it departs from his body and, obviously, the boy's own son, with his moist appearance and appearance as an animal fetus. The fact that there is no coloring in these elements (except for the girl's cheeks, because white is more evident there) increases her mystery, and consequently the feeling of strangeness caused.

Because they are of great importance in the cause of the most varied reactions of the public, we think it is important to address in more depth the nature of the elements considered bizarre and grotesque of the film that, in general, are more inserted in the characterization of the characters. Therefore, we say a little about the birth of this style and its effects on society. Georges Minois says that, at the time of the renaissance, there was the insertion of the grotesque as an aesthetic taken by eccentricity and the bizarre that constantly relates to the dreamy and the insane (2003). Therefore, it is considered opposite to the classical pattern, which is characterized by the praise of what is graceful, proportional and logical in the arts. The grotesque, on the contrary, seems to welcome the horror and the shapeless in the intention of externalizing the peculiarities hidden in man, which do not exist in his optimistic conception (ARAÚJO, R. G. de Souza.; ROBLE, O. J., 2016). Therefore, the use of this aesthetic does not expose a facet considered pleasant of people, but instead confronts and disturbs the balance established, establishing an oscillating stability of the comical with the disastrous (PAVIS, 2008).

It is interesting to perceive these issues in the film, which is not afraid to approach them in rather shocking ways, confronting the audience and inviting them to perceive these figures and to become familiar with aspects often present in their interiors, ignored by social conventions.

A non-visual aspect, but which has crucial relevance in the entire artistic unity of the film is the sound and soundtrack as a whole. As in the visual sphere, in the sound also we have quite uncomfortable constructions, which collaborate in the structuring of nightmare existing in the work, as in the scene in which Henry visits Mary's family: there is a noise similar to that of rats, but then we perceive it to be only the sound derived from the breastfeeding of the puppies of a bitch. Another scene in which there is a curiously unpleasant sound construction is when Henry and Mary are sleeping and the girl begins to struggle in bed, chew something and rub her eyes, very restless. This set of actions was structured with an aggressively accentuated sound, causing inevitable discomfort in those who watch. In addition to these settings, there are other intriguing peculiarities in the film's sound design: a noise that resembles that of

the wind, although denser and a little reinforced, is present in almost the entire film, especially in the parts without dialogue, in which the camera slowly strolls through more organic and dreamlike environments. This sound potentiates the mystery and the unknown within this universe, and therefore can provoke fear or even fear in the viewer. There are also industrial sounds of smoke and machinery in some scenes, which help create this climate. Despite the somber sound, it's worth noting that Lynch likes to work with paradoxes and contrasts. Diegetic songs are, in general, strangely cheerful and light, destitling much of the exposed visual universe.

Still within the discussions about the art direction of the film, we must not forget to lecture a little more about the visual arrangements of some more dreamlike situations, as in the scenes that take place on stage where the cheeky girl usually stays, inside Henry's radiator. There is a checkered floor, black curtains surrounding the stage, lighting lamps positioned around the proscenium, in which there is a handful of scattered straw.

There is also a kind of grandstand located on the left side of the stage, where Henry will position himself before losing his head. Before that moment, a large organic structure within which there is a leafless tree enters the stage. When the boy's head is pushed out, a dark liquid comes out of a slit of the structure, spreading across the stage. The baby then "is born" from inside the decapitated young man's neck. It is possible to think of this as one of the most visually curious moments of the film, due to the variety of visual elements present. There are several symbolisms of which we discussed earlier, and when watching the scene, one hardly has the impression that one is in a situation of the protagonist's palpable reality. The unlogical structuring of the dream is quite evident and possibly we have there the representation of his subconscious, quite gloomy and disturbing, which is reflected in his facial expressions and body communication.

Observing a little more the characterization of the characters, we perceive, in general, a tone of traditionalism and recato in the costumes of the main couple, which gives the impression that they are repressed figures in some way. However, in Henry's case, it is important to highlight the eccentricity of his hairstyle, revealing the existence of his restless and exotic essence, which clashes of the rest of his image as a "good guy". As for the appearance of Mary's parents, a greater stripping is shown, until a certain slouch is left. The mother did not seem to have much concern about getting ready to meet her daughter's future husband, and at the time was wearing a garment that most resembled a sweater. As for the father, workaholic figure, also had no such concern, and appeared wearing his work uniform. The grandmother owes to everything around her and does not differ much from both, although she looks a little better treated.

One character that is unique in the film is Henry's neighbor. We can define it in this way because, within the palpable reality of the protagonist, it is the only one that demonstrates to have great self-awareness and fullness of itself, resulting and powerful sensuality. And this reflects in his characterization. She wears a dress with a V-neck and make-up that, while light, reinforces her seductive facial expressions. In addition, wears a full hairstyle that highlights these features.

As for the characterizations of the baby and the injured man who pulls the lever at the beginning of the film, both get in the way of the discussions about the grotesque that have already been made, so there is no need to approach them here. However, as far as the cheeky girl is, although we have already spoken of her in these explanations, a larger comment is convenient to respect her appearance: Despite her deformity, there is in this figure a strong aspect of tenderness and grace. His formal attire and his well-patterned hair, both white, combined in their ways, they bring the feeling that, seeing her, we are faced with an angelic figure who, it seems, comforts Henry, especially in the final scene, when in a completely white and extremely enlightened setting, the girl finds him and embraces him with great sweetness, bringing peace.

3 CONCLUSIONS

Having made the position of the studies made here from the film *Eraserhead*, with a main cutout in its symbolisms and its art direction of the strong surrealist character, we can realize that the visualities within a scenic production, in this case, cinematographic, can be completely essential for the artistic and imagery communication of certain concepts and abstract elements present in nature and human life, and can sometimes be represented through seemingly unknown images at first, but which seek contact with our deep and sometimes hidden, internal subjectivity. Thus, we conclude this research and analysis with a comment by Claudio Vescia Zanini about the singular aesthetics of the work of this postmodern director that flirts so much with the surreal:

From all the strangeness that David Lynch's work causes is that the last element proposed here is manifested as crucial in the Lynchian definition: the connection between the spiritual and the artistic, which depends on the deep and personal involvement of the viewer with the film he watches. (2017, p.23)

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