FILM AND IDENTITY – IDEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION IN LARS VON TRIER'S '*ILLUSTRATIONS*'

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Abstract

Lars von Trier's trilogy *The USA: Land of Opportunities*, actually consisting of two films, *Dogville* and *Manderlay*, provide interesting representations of *identity* in relation to *'individualism'*, *'communitarianism'* and *power*. The two 'cultural (and) filmic discourses' provide two similar stories/histories about early twentieth-century America, in a unique and challenging form, i.e. a play put on stage and made into film, and yet not similar to TV dramas but rather in the style of *Dogme 95* so as to construct meaning and image by means of narration, themes, symbols and sheer acting and less by means of some 'consumer' filming techniques. Despite the evident contextualization of the two films, i.e. two places in the USA in the early decades of the 2oth century, the references are not so much to 'an American'/the Americans but they are rather universal and addressed to humanity in general. Moreover, the films surpass not only space boundaries but also go beyond temporal references providing an image of the crisis of the sense of the individual/community/nation so much valid in the cultural politics of today, generating a *universal picture* of the individual's trials to integrate in a community/nation while de/re-constructing his/her identity 'accordingly'.

Keywords: identity, ideological representation, individualism, communitarianism, cultural politics

In *After Theory* (2004), Terry Eagleton discusses about *today's art and literature* stating that the two "raise questions of the *quality of life* in a world where experience itself seems brittle and degraded". Consequently, the cultural critic wonders: "How in such conditions can you produce worthwhile art in the first place? Would you not need to change society in order to flourish as an artist? […] [Artists] deal with works whose depth and intensity show up the meagerness of everyday life in a market-obsessed society. They are also trained to imagine alternatives to the actual. Art encourages you to fantasize and desire" (Eagleton 2004: 39-40).

Could Lars Von Trier's 'art' be such an attempt, to fantasize and desire in order to imagine *better* alternatives to the actual? Is there anything 'ideological' in his message – as if a warning against the perils of some *wrongly understood* freedom and/or democracy that results in individual/communitarian/human degradation in a globalized world whose values keep changing and sometimes even disappearing under the force of non-values and inconsistency, a generalized and universal phenomenon…?

The present paper formulates a set of rhetorical questions related to the issue of identity in the age of globalization, as represented by two European filmic discourses, Lars von Trier's *Dogville* and *Manderly*. Made in the first decade of the 21st century, the films talk about events and people placed in early twentieth-century America. The 'reading' of Trier's texts constructs a set of images that are so vivid that one may wonder

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if this vividness could be caused by the fact that 'this' world in which we live has not changed at all since 'then' and the problems are the same, or because of the fact that 'their' problems have become 'ours', or because the 'author' has not been able to escape his cultural context and/or personal believes and placed his cultural idiom in characters, events, situations, stories of the past etc…numerous alternatives. However, a dominant question remains: could *this* postmodern world be a re-making/thinking of modernity? Could it have resulted because of some excessive, abusive and disillusioning modernization and technologization, and if so, where did it all start? According to the same cultural theoretician, Terry Eagleton: "Much of the world as we know it, despite its solid, well-upholstered appearance, is of recent vintage" (2004: 7). "'Act locally, think globally' has become right acts globally and the postmodern left thinks locally. As the grand narrative of capitalist globalization, and the destructive reaction which it brings in its wake, unfurls across the planet, it catches these intellectuals at a time when many of them have almost ceased to think in political terms at all. Confronted with an implacable political enemy, and a fundamentalist one at that, the West will no doubt be forced more and more to reflect on the foundations of its own civilization" (2004: 72-73).

Could Lars von Trier's two 'filmic discourses', *Dogville* and *Manderlay*, formulate a response against what goes wrong in today's Western world, inviting 'readers' to reflect upon the foundation of their civilization, in the form of an allegory about some Messianic character who initiates herself into life by wanting to initiate the communities (that she compulsorily needs to be a part of) into what is good and what is wrong in human relations? What is obvious is that Von Trier's films do encompass, meta-fictionally, meta & self-referentially, a form of revolt against the hollywoodization of film-making[1], seen as one of the instruments of cultural globalization (also understood by some as Americanization) and which is said to result in a transfer of customs and values to the detriment of cultural heritage, gradually diminished – can it be called excessive 'acculturation'…? This 'attempt' could be interpreted in cultural political terms, i.e. as a kind of cultural 'intervention' of the author in his 'text' while constructing a type of discourse that selectively addresses a particular category of 'readers', equipped with the aesthetic and hermeneutical instruments necessary for understanding the allegory.

Grace is the main character, the embodiment of such a process of 'enculturation' and the distorted effects that this process has on the identity of both Grace and the communities, which seemed to have lost or not to have ever known the true values of liberty and democracy and who, in the process of learning it, are destroyed either as individuals or as a community (obviously Trier's choice of such a denouement). The final picture of both films is simple: it is similar to the Dantean 'Abandon all hope, ye who enter here', as suggested and addressed to both characters and 'readers' (again, a hopeless and fatalistic worldview of the same director and script writer, a recognizable signature…). Only that 'readers' are invited to go beyond these "illustrations" (Von Trier's metaphor for both story-telling and film-making) epiphanically. The residents of Dogville need a "moral lesson" as Tom, another main character, states because "this

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country has forgotten many things" and it was time Tom refreshed their memory through "illustrations" because "people have a problem with acceptance; what they need is something for them to accept, something tangible, a gift", which would be Grace's work; people "don't want to admit that there's a problem" and as a matter of fact, "the whole country would be better served with *a greater attitude of openness and acceptance*"[2].

What people, what nation, whose country? Eventually, what would be the purpose of film-making, of art, if not that of offering such "illustrations" (presumably, seeing art as having nothing to do with product selling)? Meta-fictionally again, such 'stories' are to be seen as allegories of up-to-date problems regarding today's understanding of individual and collective (national) *identity*. Who is the USA in Trier's view? What was/ is this nation like? Could this discussion about identity be a "sign of the times"[3] (Jenkins, 1996: 7), a necessity generating from what Anthony Giddens calls: the deep feeling of "ontological insecurity" (in *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, 1991)? To quote Richard Jenkins: "'Identity' has become one of the unifying frameworks of intellectual debate in the 1990s. Everybody, it seems, has something to say about it: sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, psychologists, geographers, historians, philosophers. The prospectus is crowded: from Anthony Giddens' discussions of modernity and self-identity, to postmodernism's emphasis upon 'difference'; from feminism's various attempts to deconstruct gendered social conventions, to perplexity about the resurrection of nationalism and ethnicity as significant political forces. At every turn we encounter discourses about identity. And not only identity. The talk is also about change: the emergence of new identities, the resurgence of old ones, the transformation of existing ones. About a new politics of identity" (Jenkins, 1996: 7)[4]. We are further on explained that the concern for identity is also a result of the *uncertainty* produced by *rapid change and cultural contact*, when "our social maps no longer fit our social landscapes", when such changes like "the confrontation of languages, traditions and ways of life, the transformation of divisions of labour, demographic flux, catastrophe and calamity" are not something new but rather overwhelming (9). These all invite debate on *reflexive self-identity*, which is "diagnostically modern" (9).

Trier's "illustrations" are such *reflexive discourses* that make the creator (with his intentio auctoris), the act of creation (intentio operis) and the receiver (intentio lectoris)[5] involve into and co-contribute to the *game of reflection* while trying to encode and decode message and meaning about existence and values in times of crisis. The fusion of these, their (self)*reflexive discursiveness,* implies *ideology* understood in New Historicist terms as both the product of and the means of propagating that culture and the power relations it involves (Murfin, 1997: 338). Moreover, ideological representation in the present study is understood in Althusserian terms[6] as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 295). This is the case of Grace (the individual) and of Dogville and Manderlay (the communities) in both films because they (the *individual*, 'I', and the *community*, 'the Other') need to *imaginary transpose* their conditions of existence in order to 'represent to themselves' their *real* condition of existence. The

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explanation is given by Althusser himself in trying to explain the relation between ideology and ideological state apparatuses: ideology is understood here as the wish of some categories to dominate by means of a falsified representation of the world "which they have imagined in order to enslave other minds by dominating their imagination" (295). The struggle is Grace's because she is the possessor of an idealistic worldview in which she believes as 'real' and that she naively wants to give to the communities she meets (not deliberately to enslave their minds but rather to transfer purity and virtue to them): the first community, Dogville, lacks the sense of love, solidarity and brotherhood and the other one, Manderlay, lacks freedom and democracy because of not having abolished slavery. Her projection is reversed and double-directed because eventually it is Grace who is taught a lesson because of not being able to see the 'real' conditions of existence of those communities, their 'real' world, but only *her relation to* those conditions of existence, as if it was the community who held possession of 'real' reality and Grace who made the mistake of distorting it. Obviously, being relational[7], identity construction here is seen in political terms because between Grace (I) and the communities (the Other) there is a problem of power, of domination: this relation is at the center of every ideological, i.e. imaginary, representation of the world […] it is the *imaginary nature of this relation* which underlines all the imaginary distortion that we can observe (if we do not live in its truth) in all ideology" (Althusser 295).

Grace runs away from her father and her past and finds refuge in Dogville first. It is a search for identity as she seems to have tried to escape a world that she did not fit in. Unconsciously idealistic and thus selfish, she tries to make up of Dogville a town that she would integrate into and while trying to deconstruct the identity of the village, she deconstructs hers actually. They both, individual and community, start sharing values, sameness and distinctiveness, constructing meaning about a new possible worldview that would make them happy, unite and solid. Moreover, this process of identity de- & re-construction is a matter of negotiation because since identity is all about meaning, meanings are the "outcome of agreement and disagreement", "always to some extent negotiable", submitted to convention and innovation, and always connected to social interests (Jenkins 1996: 4). Both individual and collective/community identity are self-determined, coming from the relation 'Self-Other'; they are interdependent because: "Not only do we identify ourselves, of course, but we also identify others and are identified by them in turn, in the internal-external dialectic between self-image and public image" because although an individual has some control over the signals about themselves which they send to others, there is the disadvantage that s/he cannot "ensure their 'correct' reception or interpretation, or know with certainty how they are received and interpreted" – this being the cause of the disruption between individuals-collectives (Jenkins, 22). If apparently the process of identity construction is generated by randomness in *Dogville* and it is unconscious (Grace only wanting to escape from her past and accidentally reaching this place and meeting its people), in Manderlay her involvement is intentional; in her endeavor to find and then become *herself*, i.e. the embodiment of pure

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virtue, Grace actually *wishes to and decides to get involved* in the matters of Manderlay because, as Jenkins explains by quoting Erving Goffman, "individuals consciously pursue goals" and they "seek to 'be' – and to be 'seen to be' – 'something' or 'somebody', to assume successfully particular social identities", the interaction between internal self-definition and definition by others externally, as a process of internalisation (Jenkins, 22).

Dogville and *Manderlay* beautifully construct *illustrations* or "secondary representations of 'reality'", in Foucault's understanding of the terms, as reflexive discourses that "systematically form the objects of which they speak"[8], an image/film that speaks about a 'reality' while properly constructing it (there is no image and identity making outside the process of its own proper construction and narration). This equation is valid both in the case of Grace and her imaginary representation of herself and the communities she meets and in the case of Trier's films - the imaginary representations that he projects while constructing two stories about *The USA: Land of Opportunities*: meta-representation.

Dogville is the village of dogs, where the Dog is only a drawing and yet it is heard; actually, the entire setting, with houses, bushes, doors, dog(s) is minimal, merely existent actually, and instead drawn on the floor (Boudrillard's image replacing, altering and then even masking the absence of some fundamental reality[9], in this case only for the sake of story-telling, substance, consistency and artistry). Why Dogville? A dog basically receives a bone from Grace and is the only being that eventually remains alive, probably because of not hurting her, and turning from *picture* into *real dog* in the end; as a matter of fact, the entire community receives Grace as a gift to satisfy its desires and 'to stop barking'. Parabolically, there was something wrong in this community consisting of people (actually of dogs/'animals' or of people reduced to their instincts, as we are revealed later within the story), and it needed some redemption. Grace is a Christic embodiment, apparently (only apparently because at the end of the film, she herself is proved to have committed the sin of vanity, arrogance, of being too proud when accepting herself as perfect and thus superior to the rest/ community and consequently daring to teach them a lesson - guilty of projecting an idealistic portrayal of humanity, unreal and impossible to accomplish). Initially a well-negotiated and then a re-re-negotiated commodity, as an outsider, coming from the margins, and as an individual, Grace is forced not to accept but to give 'true' communitarian values/believes/customs etc. till she is morally mutilated and denied as human in the very process of integration – a grotesque parable. The same happens to the community, which degrades and changes dramatically in the very process of extracting energy and virtue from a human willing to sacrifice herself for their betterment. Thus, the image is reversed because, actually, who the center and the margin is here we do not know for sure. Self-revelation comes at the end of the narration/film where the community is not forgiven and redeemed (in the Christian meaning) but killed so as to be taught a lesson because, as Grace's father states: the villagers proved that they are dogs "lapping up their own vomit", in their own inhumanity, and that "the only way to stop them is with the lash" because "dogs only obey their own nature", so why should we forgive them?

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"Dogs can be taught many useful things but not if we forgive them every time they obey their own nature", when what they do is only to give voice to their own nature. And, in her arrogance, this virtuous daughter is told by her father: "You have this preconceived notion that nobody, listen, listen that nobody can't possibly attain the same high ethical standards as you so you exonerate them; I cannot think of anything more arrogant than that; You, my child...my dear child, you forgive others with excuses that you would never in the world permit for yourself'[10]. The revelation and the solution for her redemption as an individual as well as for the entire community are symbolized in: "The light now penetrated every unevenness and flaw in the buildings...and in... the people! If she had acted like them she could not have defended a single one of her actions and could not have condemned them harshly enough. And if one had the power to put it to rights, it was one's duty to do so for the sake of the other towns, for the sake of humanity and not least for the sake of the human being that was Grace herself."

Consequently, how American is this? Why would it be American? Further on, the universalization of this crisis of both individual and collective identity comes from the very fact that Von Trier imagined (as if for himself) an alter-ego in Tom: the image of the story-teller/narrator entitled to teach "moral lessons". This Tom is the *writer*, who "did not blast his way through rock, he blasted through what was even harder…namely the human soul…right into where it glistered", and who is trying to refresh the memory of the country through *illustrations*, "novels, articles, texts of Tom that got to people's heart". "Let me illustrate" and then he uses Grace as a gift/pre-text for illustration. Through Tom and with the acceptance of the community, its members get to thank Grace for *showing them who they really were*, we are told at the end of Chapter 5, "Fourth of July after all". This is the turning point when despite the fact that both the individual and the community seem to accept each other, thus the process of integration and acceptance is complete, something more happens, i.e. the police car comes into the village to mention the missing person (Grace) again which strengthens their civic sense of responsibility as a community; nevertheless, instead of 'betraying' her, they decide to go on with the qui pro quo issue, asking for some counterbalance for their greater effort and thus making Grace work for them for longer hours. This is understandably the starting point of her making of mistakes caused by overwork and exhaustion and paradoxically, this human limit of hers turns against her humane nature and virtue. There is another turning point in the story, when Grace tells the entire community *the truth* about what they did to her, all the injustice, misunderstanding and exploitation, which again, is against her because the community decides to get rid of her. However, it is Tom who is proved to have made the greatest mistake of all in Dogville (or anywhere in the world): "Only Tom could keep track of *ideals* and *reality*", it was his job because "moral issues were his home ground" and he "was angry not because he was wrongly accused (by Grace who proved able to see his true nature) but because his charges were true" and consequently, he had "a most unpleasant feeling of being found out", when "doubt could grow and turn detrimental to his moral mission". Therefore, who is this illustrator actually, able to keep track of ideals

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and reality, able to open eyes and create stories, multiplied realities? He could be some form of the postmodern understanding of representation, i.e. the creator of representation (Tom and Von Triers) who first questions what reality can mean and how we come to know it and then his representation does not dominate or efface the referent, but rather, as Linda Hutcheon puts it in *The Politics of Postmodernism:* it "now self-consciously acknowledges its existence as representation – that is, as interpreting (indeed as creating) its referent, not as offering direct and immediate access to it" (Hutcheon, 2005: 32).

Manderlay is a plantation somewhere in Alabama, where Grace arrives together with her father and decides to involve in what her father calls "a local matter"[11]: some African-Americans still treated like slaves in 1933 America. After the death of the master of the plantation, Grace decides to make the people there enjoy "as much freedom as any citizen of this country". To her astonishment, the former slaves are "afraid of what will happen" after because "it's a completely new way of life". With the help of her father who decides to give her some of his gangsters and his accountant for support, Grace gradually discovers a new community, devastated by the power of oppression, helps them make new contracts with the whites so that they equally share and work the land. Characters are only introduced to the 'reader' in Chapter 2, first through Grace's eyes – namely, through the voice of the narrator, and then through a book called *Mam's Law*, which actually places the 'negroes' in seven categories that represented "the psychological division of Manderlay's slaves" (clownin' niggers, hittin' niggers, losin' niggers, talkin' niggers, weepin' niggers, 'pleasin' niggers and crazy niggers). Grace's plans of making a new Manderlay seems to come true in Chapters 3 and 4, where the former slaves cut Old Lady's Garden to fix their homes and then she begins to teach them lessons of democracy (ballot, voting, equality of chances, majority – all in all, the "democratic principles")…only that there is a lot of irony and sarcasm in Trier's mocking at people who come to "vote on man's laughter". Even public time is to be decided by vote. Only that what seemed to have domestically helped the people there brought environmental destruction because Old Lady's Garden, the forest, used to shield the plantation against storms, which was no longer possible. Consequently, they are all punished for *Grace's arrogant pretence that she could change the course of nature*. The dust storm was "Nature's extravagant demonstration of power". Once again they arise from the ashes when, after the storm (what else could it be if not the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, but also the environmental problems of today) they decide to get fewer but better crops, which turns true and they earn a lot of money. For Clair's survival, they decide to ration their food, to sacrifice the donkey, only that Rose, an old African-American woman, eats the child's food, which seems to put Clair to death. Once more, it is through democratic voting that a decision is reached and Rose is sentenced to death (or punished for having a much too strong instinct of survival whilst Grace herself remains unpunished for responding instinctually to Timothy's carnal temptation, which casts doubt upon such 'democratic decisions' as best instruments for doing justice). The denouement is monumental, just like that of Dogville. In her abominable power, Grace was yet unable to read the true

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nature of Timothy as "she read with the wrong spectacles", states Wilhelm, the old and wise man of Manderlay. Timothy is revealed as powerful and villain and as the diabolically clever Number 7, the chameleon, the 'pleasin' nigger', "a person of a kind who could transform himself into exactly the type the beholder wanted to see"). He gambled all the money the community earned through hard labor and lost it all – thus, Grace's *new* Manderlay turns out being a disaster. She decides to leave Manderlay, as her father instructed, but there are two votes that the community gather for: one is to keep Mam's Law relevant and the other one is meant to replace Mam with Grace, against her will. What is monumental is in the surprise that the reader has when discovering that it was not a white to have written the book about negroes' character and the manipulation needed for their own oppression but Wilhelm himself "for the good of everyone" because "America is not ready to welcome us negroes as equals 70 years ago and it still ain't, and as things're goin', it won't be in 100 years from now". Moreover, when expressing her disgust for "the kind of cheats of the lowest kind", the answer Grace receives from the devilish Timothy is "Aren't you forgetting something? You made us".

The falsified representation of the world "which they have imagined in order to enslave other minds by dominating their imagination", to quote Althusser again, turned against its own creator. How contemporary is this? It is the narrator who, at the end of the film, tries to illuminate the allegory, referring only to America (and yet, the reference is larger for it encompasses all nations that have followed the same principles): "Mandelay has fossilized in a picture of this country that was far, far too negative. America was a many faceted place, no doubt about it, but not ready to accept black people? You really could not say that. America had profited its head, discretely perhaps. But if anybody refused to see a helping hand, he really only had himself to blame".

Who is Grace? What is she a symbol of? Why is she willing to "make it a better place"? Why is she such a superior entity, able to see through people/communities/nations/'creators of realities'? Despite her superiority and just like her father, she is guilty of the arrogance to have taken *somebody's divine right*, to life, to liberty, to happiness etc. Could she be the embodiment of some ruling authority, an Althusserian-like ideology, cleverly and openly infiltrating into communities to transfer values to the people and to illuminate them, at the same time making domination possible and turning it into a necessity? She is Power, obviously. And despite being symbolic for democratic power, being there for herself and for the people, for every individual and for the entire community, she turns into something else in the end because she is eventually proved to have been wrong when in her endeavor to make it better she actually *destroyed the order of things*. It is not that the initial order of things was perfect or that it needed no change but rather that those people *were not ready* for such a change and this unreadiness leads to their destruction.

The pictures at the end of both films as well as the song "Young America" are often called anti-American for enumerating a set of images and a song in the background that come into contrast with the 'true realities' about democracy in the USA and the

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world. Such contrasts, real or imaginary, refer to a world that has always been made up of a so-called majority and a so-labeled minority, with a sometimes sharp and sometimes blurred demarcation line. Migration from margins to center and vice-versa, either properly or virtually, in terms of acculturation, are among the causes of uncertainty and anxiety regarding the problem of individual, of communitarian and even of national identity. These are the signs of the present time, when freedom, mobility and diversity direct or facilitate economies and change 'geographies', only that they are coupled by a deep sense of the *stringent need for tradition, belonging and solidarity*. The question, it seems, is "who gets to decide who gets included?" and "what if there is no clear division between margins and majority?" (Eagleton 19). Moreover, states Terry Eagleton in the chapter called "The Politics of Amnesia" of his book *After Theory*, "the true scandal of the present world is that almost everyone in it is banished to the margins", when "great masses of men and women are really neither here nor there", when "whole nations are thrust to the periphery" and "entire classes of people are deemed to be dysfunctional", when "communities are uprooted and forced into migration". Actually, we are told: "In this world, what is central can alter overnight: nothing and nobody is permanently indispensable […]" (19-20). In today's terms of collective identity, major and marginal seem rather to mean global and local because: "The problem at the moment is that the rich have mobility while the poor have locality. Or rather, the poor have locality until the rich get their hands on it. The rich are global and the poor are local – though just as poverty is a global fact, so the rich are coming to appreciate the benefits of locality". This is the crisis that Von Trier's characters encounter in their endeavor to define themselves as individuals and as community and nation, exchanging values and believes to the benefits/detriment of both, and this has come to be today not only an American but also a global phenomenon. Trier's *illustrations* make 'readers' transpose the past into the present and vice-versa, not misleadingly reconstructing the past but rather as conditioned by their own present social and cultural context to believe that it was or it is.

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Notes:

[1] Here is Stephen Morgan's concise definition of the movement Dogme 95: "a 'rescue action' with the aim of countering 'certain tendencies' in cinema", meant to "overturn the cosmeticism of modern cinema, the predictability of plot and the superficiality of action" by means of prohibiting "sound and music from being produced apart from the images (and vice versa), insisting that the film takes place 'here and now' with temporal and geographical realism. Having clarified that 'genre films are not acceptable' and 'the director must not be credited', *The Vow of Chastity* also called upon directors to 'refrain from personal taste' and cease being 'artists', in order to 'force the truth out of characters and settings...at the cost of any good taste and any aesthetic considerations'" (*A Short History of Dogme* 95, http://www.suite101.com/content/a-short-history-of-dogme-95-a102049)

[2] Quotations from the film *Dogville*

[3] On the one hand, referring to Trier's trilogy as a work of art and as a manifesto/ sign of his times and, on the other hand, referring to some current theories and studies about identity

[4] And yet, as Richard Jenkins reassures, discourses about identity are not new: "An established sociological and psychological literature about identity goes back to the turn of the century [the 20th century] and before. In the present (post)modern hubbub it has been somewhat neglected […]" (p. 9)

[5] Umberto Eco's understanding of the terms in *Limitele interpretarii*, Constanța: Editura Pontica, 1996, p. 25-27

[6] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"

[7] Mark Currie: Identity is "relational, meaning that it is not to be found inside a person but that it inheres in the relations between a person and others. According to this argument, the explanation of a person's identity must designate the difference between that person and others: it must refer not to the inner life of a person but to the system of differences through which individuality is constructed. In other words, personal identity is not really contained in the body at all; it is structured by, or constituted by, difference. The second type of argument is that identity is not within us because it exists only as narrative. By this I mean two things: that the only way to explain who we are is to tell our own story, to select key events which characterise us and organise them according to the formal principles of narrative – to externalise ourselves as if talking of someone else, and for the purposes of self-representation; but also that we learn how to self-narate from the outside, from other stories, and particularly through the process of identitication with other characters. This gives narration at large the potential to teach us how to conceive of ourselves, what to make of our life and how to organise it." (*Postmodern Narrative Theory*, p. 17)

[8] Michael Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

[9] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacre și Simulare*

[10] Quotations from the film *Dogville*

[11] Quotations from the film *Manderlay*

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