

Anyone tackling the endeavour of thinking about love has to face in one form or another the apprehensive twitch or the uncomfortable squint of their interlocutor. Doing it while facing on its path a multitude of sub-related concepts that sings and tempts for its dissection and fragmentation as a notion. Concepts sur as intimacy, desire, care and sexuality pulling from one side and indifference, hate, mortality and fear from the other. Love's umbrella spans wide and spans deep. Its relevance crosses almost every discipline, from psychology to biology, passing by philosophy, sociology and theology while its true reign shines in the arts. Whereas the academic field has been recognised for its shyness at avoiding the subject and beating around the bush for centuries, (Alberoni, 1979) (Bauman, 2003) (Hooks, 2016) all artistic disciplines have been coated edge to edge with conceptualisations of love in the plurality of its forms. Love's translation into art not only pursued the portrayal of our instinct as observed but re-enacted and inspired social relations, contributing to the emancipation, liberation and comprehension of our innermost nature.

Strangely, while all arts have stood on the front line, architecture and urban studies stood apart preferring the reassuring peripheral fragmented notions over the holistic and challenging ambiguities of Love. On the written form, the few who've stepped in the taboo done it with care. They slipped a line in the middle of paragraphs like Mumford's comment on cities built "for lovers and friends" (Mumford, 1961) or Pallasmaa' phrase on "the real measure of the quality of a city being whether or not one can imagine oneself falling in love in it". (Pallasmaa, 2014) And while some have been succinct, others had it mentioned on levels of abstraction that deepen nothing more than the gap in between the concepts. Tschumi's words on eros, (Tschumi, 1976) Hedjuk's *Architecture In Love* (Hedjuk, 1995) or Pérez-Gomez's work (Pérez-Gomez, 2008) on poetics and ethics can be taken as samples of this *marivaudage*, symptomatic of the ventures at the formulation of thoughts on an inclusion of love within spatial practices.

However, the current field of work studying forms of sexual and gender inequity and their spatial dimension stands as the most salient manifesto of the relevance and urgency of an embrace of the subject of love in the field of architecture and urban studies. While the claims should and must continue to exist as long as these groups would consider them valuable, we propose here, without removing any cruciality, importance or uniqueness to the demands of these groups, to open the field to a complementary and comprehensive look on the subject.

After presenting love's validity as an academic concept, we'll bridge its theoreticality by using film, more specifically Eric Rohmer's movies, as a link to expose a taxonomy of a spatial dimension of love. We are attempting here to expand on Pallasmaa's quote, go beyond the predicaments of romanticism, and investigate how the real counter-projecting measure of the fragmenting, isolating and alienating nature of modernity are whether or not the city fosters, generates and provides grounds for the fortuitous development of situations of interplay — in short, whether or not a city is built upon love.

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"It is not a utopia but a repressed pulse of life by a system of which the inhumanity and the absurdity have now reached their implosion level. What's fundamentally subversive in Love, emancipated in an economical mechanism that denies it, is the giving, the freeness, the sensitive intelligence. Love is the refinement of our animality, not its suppression, as implied in the work of the mind on both the body and nature, that it ruins in the name of profit." — Vaineigem, De L'amour (2010)

Following the view of a contemporary renewed interest in the field of love, the notion presents itself here as a conceptual force to

**1B** reclaim in the face of oppressive systems. A perspective that has been exemplified on the political sphere through the work of Hardt & Negri and on the sociological aspect in the work of Eva Illouz.

On the political side, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's views stand as a clear and thorough articulation of a contemporary re-appropriation of the theme. Developed in their trilogy of *Empire* (2000), *Multitude* (2005), and *Commonwealth* (2009), they display love as an empowering creative force that bears in itself the strength to cut through differences and otherness releasing the potential for the formulation of common political projects. They place love as a notion to reconquer from its corrupted state in order to reclaim its political potency in the face of struggling democracies and capitalist hegemony. Hardt, in a subsequent individual publication, develops on the topic of love and states three conditions on which a political concept of love should be standing on. First, he defends that love should "extend across social scales and creates bonds that are at once intimate and social, destroying conventional divisions between public and private." (Hardt, 2011) Secondly, he expresses that love "would have to operate in a field of multiplicity and function through not unification, but the encounter and interaction of differences" (Hardt, 2011) And finally, he voices that "[...] a political love must transform us [...] it must designate a becoming such that in love, in our encounter with others we constantly become different." (Hardt, 2011) Such vision not only carries a spatiality referring to ideas of liminality, gradience or intersectability but referentially expands our understanding of love on its human-human aspect but also its human-environment dimension.

On the other hand, Illouz, in works such as *Consuming the Romantic Utopia* (2008), *Why Love Hurts* (2013) or *Cold Intimacies* (2017) brings to light the complex socio-economical apparatus of

romantic love and highlights the strings by which it is controlled and shaped. She echoes Marx and his observations on human's circumstantial making of history (Marx, 1852) in the manner she shows how "[...] love is shaped by social relations; [that] it does not circulate in a free and unconstrained way; [that] its magic is social; and [that] it contains and condense the institutions of modernity." (Illouz, 2013) Such an angle gives the ground for an examination of love not on the pure basis of emotionality but on its embedded and intertwined nature in the gears of our modernity.

Even enlightened by the dimensions from authors of other disciplines, the gap to bridge from a political and sociological standpoint towards a spatial understanding of love still misses a stepping stone for consequential corroboration. As mentioned above, the broadness of the topic, its connection with practically any form of social but also natural sciences, its inherent subjectivity and its dichotomy between an essentially personal experience and an abstracted notion of philosophy, is making love hardly graspable and fundamentally complex. I propose here, in the line of the work of philosopher Reidar Due, to use film as a tool to cut across and ground the research for a spatiality of love.

As observed by Due in his book *Love In Motion* (2013), it is the unique capacity of film to locate relationships both in time and in space, "in spatial coexistence and temporal distance" (Due, 2013), that makes it notably appropriate for the study of relationships. Due points as well to the format of cinema itself as an argument for the usefulness and validity of using it in the analysis of love stating that "[...] cinema is able to highlight the difference between a conception of love as a free reciprocal relation and love as a socially and culturally defined relation." (Due, 2013) Film not only asserts itself here as an effective support for the study of the interaction between love and place but also as a metonymical embodiment of love itself, giving echo to the definition of cinema as post-occupancy evaluation as advanced by François Penz. (Penz, 2016) A specific thread of films, one that has been qualified as *reflective* in the categorization of Reidar

# WITH LOVE Place Begins

Louis Lupien

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Due, shines specific qualities in the process of an identification of a spatiality of love. As noted by Due, because of their creative, substantial and expressive use of place, directors such as Pialat, Antonioni, Lynch, Kar-Wai or Rohmer, grants to the locations themselves a “[...] powerful generative force in the shaping of the mental universe and the conditions of erotic relationships”<sup>(Due, 2013)</sup>. In correlation with their uses of speech, the way that they portray place allows space to become a character, distancing love from its inherent subjectivity and reveal “[...] the very question of the perspective from which the characters and their feelings could become intelligible.”<sup>(Due, 2013)</sup>.

While other directors of this above-mentioned *reflective* category could have been similarly relevant, Eric Rohmer's movies find a way to suit themselves gracefully within the context of the current analysis. The French director sits at the intersection of all themes addressed here on four fronts. Firstly, Rohmer's movies are all located in Paris or in relation to Paris,<sup>(Misek, 2012)</sup> the theatre of major urban transformations, a city characterised as the capital of modernity<sup>(Harvey, 2008)</sup>. A modernity that has been extensively commented on from Baudelaire to Harvey, passing by Sennett and Benjamin. A city that also carried — and still does — the worldwide flagship banner of the city of love constructed through cultural depictions through visual and written media — such as film — over time. Secondly, the very important majority — if not all — of Rohmer's movies are about love, the conditions of love of his modernity. From his early work until its death, Rohmer has explored the fundamental experience of difference<sup>(Badiou, 2013)</sup> in a multiplicity of ways by highlighting not only love itself but most importantly what moves love, its affects.<sup>(Bonitzer, 1999)(Handyside, 2019)(Serceau, 2000)</sup> Thirdly, Rohmer's straddling temporality, between two crucial eras in the definition of our modernity, amplifies the relevance of the analysis of his work. The young Rohmer, 25 years old in 1945, moves to Paris on that same year and witnesses the immediate post-war era (1945-1958) characterised by its public effusions of love, flamboyant exterior demonstrations of joy and free manifestations of political opinions in the recaptured public realm of the street<sup>(Wakeman, 2009)</sup>. A few years later, Rohmer turns himself to the cinema and starts documenting through fiction and documentaries the transformations marked by the decentralisation efforts carried by the MRU (Ministère de la Reconstruction et de l'Urbanisme). A transformation that led to the current urban, social and architectural conditions of the Parisian *banlieue*.<sup>(Wakeman, 2009)</sup> By looking at the transitional depictions of this past modernity, we gain the perspective allowing us to peek at our present realities with an enlivening vantage point — an approach reminiscent of Walter Benjamin or Marshall Berman.<sup>(Berman, 2010)</sup> Finally, Rohmer's relevance is expressed, as previously underlined, in his careful, explicit and meaningful use of space — especially the street — as a setting for his movies.<sup>(Anderst [Handyside], 2014)</sup> A method that follows his marked interest in urbanism and architecture.<sup>(Robic [Clerc], 2014)(Rohmer, 1963-1964-1975)</sup> However, Rohmer also contains its load of biases by the fact that his stories mainly depict a very narrow demographics by only staging characters that respond to the young, white, middle-class, intellectual, French, heterosexual profile. A bias that would have to be addressed by corroborating the analysis of Rohmer's love's spatiality through cultural depictions of a plurality of views and more contemporary practices of love.

Nevertheless, Rohmer remains highly pertinent for the reasons mentioned above and his takes on love carry with them an

extraordinary complexity, documented through an array of studies<sup>(Bonitzer, 1999)(Handyside, 2019)(Serceau, 2000)</sup> portraying a deep, yet banal, analysis of his modernity through the *mise en scène* of love stories within the uncertainty of its context. A process that couldn't help but recall the work of Baudelaire or Caillebotte<sup>(Marrinan, 2009)</sup> in the post-Haussmanian era or the images of Doisneau, Ronis or Izis for the immediate post-war period (1945-1958)<sup>(Wakeman, 2009)</sup>. Indeed, Rohmer's work could be seen as a form of *détournement*, in the sense developed by his local contemporaries, the situationists, in the way that he hijacks the format of the capitalistic romantic comedy and meticulously repopulates it with the struggles, aspirations and intricacies of modern love.<sup>(Anderst [Harrod], 2014)</sup> An observation that follows Marion Schmid's words of Rohmer on urban change: “Just as architecture fashions reality so the cinema constructs its fictions with the real. Architecture, then, as an art form that is an integral part of the world while at the same time refashioning it, sustains the director's claim for cinema's ontological status as a realist art devoted to apprehending and shaping life in all its inherent beauty.”<sup>(Schmid, 2015)</sup> Most importantly, and this is the interest of the current text, Rohmer, in its manifest use of space in his storytelling, also animates his “romantic comedies” within a specific set of environmental conditions that support and affect the relationships that he orchestrates. Therefore *apprehending and shaping love in all its inherent beauty* in a deliberate setting that could be categorised as Rohmer's view on love's functional dimension of space.

His spatialisation of love, that pulls us from the typical romantic comedy on the point of view of form, could be categorised under three main umbrellas on which we will expand. Firstly, the idea of a *space of possibilities*, defined by the concepts of gradience, connectivity, intersectability and access. Secondly, the aspect of a *space of differences*, characterised by its dimensions of individuality, diversity and liminality. And finally, the suggestion of a *space of delights* represented through the notions of comfort, aesthetics and sensuality. We'll look at Rohmer's movies here in a wide temporal and spatial setting, his film career spanning from 1959 to 2007 and from St-Germain-des-Près to the Mont-Saint-Michel. Understanding the anachronisms and regional idiosyncrasies, we are attempting to temporarily cut across to reveal intersecting threads of a spatiality of love. Further study would have to expand on its representation through time and space, for example through Rohmer's depiction of love's space dimension in the *banlieue* in comparison to inner Paris.

“The paths [in Rohmer's movies] leave the space for a sumptuous part in the organisation of coincidences, of amazing chances and to an experience of a freedom of movement”<sup>(Herpe [Guérin], 2013)</sup> The space of possibilities is by far the most apparent and detailed of the three in the work of the filmmaker. Rohmer's stories are all dependent on this condition and none of his tales would stand without this conscious effort of representing space as is.

Firstly — and the most obvious of his strategies — Rohmer sets his characters in a complex and wide network of intersecting trajectories within space and time. Sometimes fortuitous, sometimes provoked, but never independent of the environment. The serendipitous encounters of the protagonists in Rohmer's movies are supported by a spatial dimension. The examples are numerous but the clearest representation of it stands in the plot itself of his first moral tales, *La Boulangère de Monceaux* (1962). The film is a short story where a man, incessantly crossing the path of a woman in the street develops progressively desire for her. When

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he finally accidentally "bumps" into her on a sidewalk and starts a conversation with her, he learns that she, as well, recognises him from their previous anonymous intersections in the street. After a brief chat, they each go their own way and he ends up spending in vain the following days trying to cross her path again. Wandering the streets endlessly days after days, looking for her in every corner and overlooking windows, he discovers, through his *flânerie*, a boulangerie where his path intersects with the one of another woman, the one behind the till. After a few visits, he decides to abandon the search for the first woman, and falls back on this newcomer, the *boulangère*, by inviting her for dinner. After having to convince her, putting her against the wall — literally — she accepts rather uncomfortably. Later, when exiting the boulangerie, the man, having now forgotten about his initial quest, accidentally bumps on the object of his initial desire. While we discover that she was stuck at home because of an injury, we learn that her house is located right in front of the boulangerie and that she has been looking at him during this whole theatre. He waits for her, hiding in a little recess of the street, protecting himself from the rain, when she quickly goes up to her apartment, while Rohmer highlights with the camera the closeness of the boulangerie and the visibility of the entrance of her building from within the shop.

This story not only exemplifies the idea of intersectability, that permeates the cinema of Rohmer, by presenting the city as a place of interplay but also exposes the conditions of connectivity and gradience, that also share equal importance. The physical proximity — and connectivity — of the spaces where the story happens plays a crucial role in its development. Everything from the width of the pavements and streets to the height of the balcony where her room is, passing by the very presence of a boulangerie in front of her apartment and the existence of an array of walkable streets full of people to walk through and windows to glance at are all conditions that are fundamental functions of the story and contribute to the interplay of the characters. Similarly, the gradient character of the urban environment in which the story happens — the ground floor transparency of the boulangerie, the openable windows of her flat, the outdoor café where he spots her at the beginning of the film — is equally contributing to the development of the love story. Rohmer's extensive use of the café as a setting for his plots also exemplifies the idea of a space of possibilities. The

café, a space of random or arranged encounters, affords for the opportunities of different level of privacy. Its gradient degrees of intimacy — from the fully exposed outdoor terrace of *La femme de l'aviateur* to the cosy back of *L'amour l'après-midi* and all the in-betweens — the café, as pictured by Rohmer is a space of possibilities for events of love. A space where intersections happen because of the very nature of its program, architecture and geographical location in the city. A critique that recalls Eva Illouz (Illouz,2017), but also Richard Sennett's (Sennett,1973) (Sennett,2002) views, on the polarisation of intimacy under the influence of modernity. (Musial,2013)

It is also necessary to point to another element of possibility, the idea of access, as illustrated in his first full-length movie: *Le Signe du Lion*. In this film, Rohmer depicts how exclusion from love itself can happen through socio-economical rejection where he depicts a man deprived of money because of bad luck spending weeks watching lovers in the public realm, standing now on the other side of the story. (Herpe [Fujita], 2013) We could expand here and include anyone victim of discrimination in their right to love. Without the access and the safety for *all* to the right to love publicly, either from an economic perspective, but also from a civil rights point of view, no space is a space of love.

Secondly, Rohmer orchestrates his stories to be taking place within a context of difference. While Rohmer, as previously mentioned, doesn't do any effort to display any form of diversity on the point of view of its cast, he plays on a more subtle level by using the environment and the way his protagonists move through it to convey an idea of a space of differences. As observed by Richard Misek, Rohmer's repetition through sameness stands as a metonymy of our individualities. "*The daily repetition of the movement [of Rohmer's characters] between home and work is itself reflected millions of times in the movements of other commuters and yet each person's movements are slightly different. It is these differences, put together that form [their] individual trajectories through life.*" (Misek, 2017) Misek invites us to listen to the various unique ways that people repeat actions through time and space in Rohmer's movies. The sound of the steps or the way people enter and exit buildings display, because of their repetition through sameness, the unicity and diversity of the characters. (Misek, 2017) On this manner, the idea of the threshold, symbolised through the element of the door, explicitly and repetitively used in Rohmer's work, symbolises, in its

variety of form, colour and texture, the individuality behind the architecture. We could also look at the seriality of Rohmer's body of work, its dedication at repeating the same topics on different variations and locations, as an analogy for its acknowledgement of difference. <sup>(Schilling, 2007)</sup> Besides, the nature of the threshold also symbolises the last element falling within the category of a space of difference: liminality. The movement through space and its capacity to transform the characters by its distance, configuration or association plays a key role in the development of Rohmer's stories. One only has to think of Louise in *Les nuits de la pleine lune* and her transformation through her repetitive transits between her stable and rigid life of suburban Marne-la-Vallée and her exciting and sensual life of inner Paris.

Finally, Rohmer's events are spatialised within spaces of delights, perhaps the subtlest of the three conditions. Rohmer sets his characters' adventures within apparently environmentally comfortable spaces — rich, detailed and sensuous environments. Characters saunter smoothly in the streets of Paris — or the countryside — while interacting with visual, olfactory, textural or acoustic external triggers. Stimuli that often play a part in the story, wandering through cemeteries, parks, streets and squares reacting and commenting on views, sculptures and public art populating their discussions and challenging their opinions.

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*“Am I classic, am I modern? I believe that it is not impossible to practise these two virtues at the same time, and even to cultivate them better than those who opt for one at the expense of the other.”* — Eric Rohmer, *Le Celluloid et le Marbre* (2010)

Through this text, we've attempted first to locate the study of love within a contemporary and academically supported frame-

work, exposing its social dimension and its contemporary view as a drive to be reclaimed in the face of hegemonic systems. We've then mediated the gap from a theoretical point of view coming from sociology, philosophy and politics with the use of film as a conceptual bridge. Focusing specifically on the work of Eric Rohmer, for its relevance based on its geography, methods and themes, we've extracted, from the analysis of his films, a taxonomy of a spatiality of love. By reflecting now on the components' categoriality, we can acknowledge an association with the above-mentioned views of Micheal Hardt on a desirable political force of love. His conditions, responding to ideas of (1) blurriness between public and private sphere, (2) encounters through multiplicity and difference and (3) transformative character echoes consonantly the spatiality of love observed in the work of Rohmer. We can unsurprisingly look at this thematic synergy when thinking of love, as it has been qualified, as a fundamental survival instinct. <sup>(Lewis, 2001)</sup> One that has been compared to thirst or hunger. <sup>(Fisher, 2005)</sup> Such drive and its spatial correspondence, by its primal character and inherent subjectivity, predictably and necessarily had to find its way in the fashioning of our imaginary, cultural reproduction and ideological aspirations.

Finally, analogously to the way film locates love within a time-space framework and shapes our understanding of love through a context powered perspective, the current text attempted to expose how love's spatial conditions, affect time and space in a reverted manner to what has been identified by Anthony Giddens as “*dis-embedding mechanisms*”. <sup>(Giddens, 2015)</sup> Love's spatiality is defended here, in reaction to a spatiality of fear or indifference, to function as *embedding mechanisms*. In the manner that it integrates social relations in the immediacies of their context and encourages the fusion of time and space by producing the points of contact and spontaneity to counteract the necessity of intermediary “*guarantees*”. /

## ON TYPE AND LAYOUT

Of all disciplines, none emphasize the relevance of the context more than architecture. It could be argued that architecture itself is the study and practice of this relevance. It would therefore be absurd to deliver any content related directly or indirectly to architecture or urban design without careful attention to be put on the environment in which it is set in. We could compare typefaces to materials, layout to structure or content to program. In the same manner that a building is never solely its program, a text is never only its content. It is always set within a framework that supports the story and attires it coherently. Without that coherence and synergy between the elements, the building or text fall short and we deprive the reader from a comprehensive reading.

For this reason, the typefaces used to dress the current content are representative of the intent of the current essay. Belonging to two different eras and tradition in typography, they locate visually the straddling temporality explored in the text. For titles, two fonts were used. First, Clearface, by Morris Fuller Benton, a serif font with cursive and structural components from the beginning of the century that recalls the effusions of love of the post war era while belonging to the tradition of the art nouveau of the pre-wars era. While Fakt, a contemporary font designed by Thomas Thiemich in 2010, was also used in close proximity to Clearface to represent the joint existence of both modern and classic themes explored through the text and Rohmer's filmography. Fakt's unusual character comes from its capacity to unify the grotesque (exemplified by Helvetica) and geometric (exemplified by Futura), traditions of the beginning and mid century respectively. And finally, Arnhem, the body text, designed by Fred Smeijers in 2002, is another contemporary take on classics. Making a highly readable serif font with a contemporary edge. Close text wraps were used to emphasise citations. Serving as an echo to the argument for the embedment of the components within the immediacies of their context.

The stylistic uniformisation of text within an architectural or urbanistic discourse is not only deeply paradoxal but formalistically neglects the very existential root of the profession.

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