

storytelling as *resistance* :
the affective role of style in
remediated stories

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Abstract

Transmedia storytelling is having a momentum in our present cultural climate; the ruling mediums of storytelling—in this case, literature and cinema— seem to be more related to each other than ever before. At the same time, the swiftly evolving interconnections of the globalized world demand a constant analysis of the nature of the new liaisons and relationships that have emerged from it. Such panorama raises several questions in regard of the social dimension of storytelling and storytellers, and of the position of the creative act for contemporary authors and audiences. This research analyses the fictionalized documentary *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story*, that follows israeli author Etgar Keret and his short stories. This hybrid documentary by dutch filmmakers Stephen Kaas and Rutger Lemm offers a fruitful terrain of exploration of the act of storytelling through a cinematic language that appropriately remediates Keret's stories, and that creates a mediation of feeling that acts as the emotional bridge between the stories and the viewer. The focus of this research is to determinate the affective qualities that enable the remediation of stories and that perpetuate the success of a literary piece, regardless of gender or race and nation specificity. The focus on affect will be sustained by Gille's Deleuze philosophy, particularly through his notions of style, territorialisations, micropolitics, and constant becomings. The act of storytelling will be first revised through the lenses of Arthur W. Frank's socio-narratology, in order to establish the main affective capacities of stories, and cinema will be revised as an affective machine, with a focus of the notions of perception and of the act of viewing as an experience.

“I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. Amor fati: let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. Looking away shall be my only negation. And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer.”

-Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*





Introduction

It began with a story. It almost always begins with a story. Actually, this is a rip-off of a particular one that begins just like this, but with the word ‘kiss’ instead of the word ‘story’. “*Ella and Tsiki were in bed, naked, with only their tongues touching—when she felt something prick her*”, Etgar Keret tells us at the beginning of his short story *Unzipping*¹. In this short story, the reader is presented with the tale of a young woman, who one night discovers a zip that unveils a hidden person in her partner’s insides. She unzips him, fully revealing the ‘other’ person inside him. She disposes of the former bodily container of her lover, and takes in this new person, with his highs and lows. Eventually, the relationship ends; she’s left alone, but she is not remorseful —she is left curious, not so much about the person she lost and then met again and then lost again, but about herself. At the closing scene, she looks at herself in the mirror, wondering what she might look like inside, secretly wishing the new ‘her’ to have a tattoo. She unzips herself. The end.

I start this dissertation by telling a story, not only as the most suitable way to open a Master’s thesis about storytelling, but as an invitation to examine the intriguing faculties of storytelling, and how these affect the reader. This story in particular was my initiation to a sort of storytelling that works entirely based on unexpectedness. My interest within this dissertation lies in the type of stories that are, in appearance, anecdotic ones, but whose discrete charm follows the readers in surprising ways. *Unzipped* has the glow of a conversation with friends, and as such, soon enough the readers can find themselves sharing the story in bars and at dinner tables. The re-telling of this sort of story doesn’t exactly occur

¹ ‘Unzipping’ is featured in *Suddenly a Knock On the Door*. A compilation of short stories first published in 2012 and the book that put Keret on the international panorama.

in the usual way in which pieces of literature or cinema are shared with people; this is a story that slips away almost as a gossip, as telling an urban legend, despite the surreal events it describes.

What is it about a story that makes it affective? It is my intention to answer such question by offering a research on the capacities of stories on their remediated cinematic form. The focus of this research is **how the affectiveness of stories is enhanced by being remediated**. I have found in Etgar Keret stories a perfect case study to illustrate this circumstance. A constant in his stories is the unexpectedness in rhythm, length, and transitions. Such characteristics are commonly accompanied by the use of illustrations, a trait that gravitates around Keret's words even at the smallest of instances— such as literary reviews and articles. There seems to be a predisposition from these stories to be told in a much more expansive manner than the solely succession of words. This 'expansion' is also a textual one; Keret's handling of a story often claims to be read out loud —acted out, in the specific way provided by the page. In *Unzipping*, for example, the main character discovers the zip in her partner by accidentally cutting her tongue with it during kissing. He apologizes, she replies: "No——ing ha——ened". This playfulness in language is far more than experimental. It is, as I said, affective: in most cases, it triggers short laughs and reactions that, invariably, provide the reader with a feeling of being running in an open space that contracts at the very end. The abrupt turn of events and sudden endings in Keret's stories surprise the reader either favourably or not, but are they meaningless? **The second dimension of this research is to determinate the ways in which such narrative constructions in stories can be speaking of a re-conceptualization of storytelling itself, and the social and political possibilities of such re-conceptualizations.**

To formerly analyse these two main aspects —the social capacities of stories while being remediated, and the focus on narrative 'unexpectedness', I take as unit of analysis the hybrid documentary *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story* [2017], by Dutch filmmaker Stephan Kaas and writer Rutger Lemm. The film highlights the playfulness of Keret's stories, focusing on where the limits of reality and fiction can be drawn, and if fiction requires certain accuracy to be sustained. The documentary was based in Israel and NY, in close collaboration with Keret, as well as the main 'characters' that surround him. The film successfully combines enactments of Keret's personal anecdotes (a sort of fictionalization of them), a re-telling of a selection of his published stories in the form of animation, and interviews with Keret himself, his wife, his mother, childhood friends, career friends, and even his editor. The transfer of Keret's stories to the big screen —once again joined by illustration (in its animated form), creates a synergy between reality and fiction that led me to a deeper understanding of the affective qualities of his stories, while opening a new spectrum of questions; some of them are new, some of them are more of an internal questioning I continue to strive for every time I read a 'good' story: why do we need to

hear stories? Why do we need to tell them? I do not expect, of course, to resolve such grand questions, but I do aim for an approximation through the analysis of a documentary that acts as a tribute to storytelling, in both form and content. *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story* displays a friction between fantasy and reality that is faithful to Keret's stories, and in doing so it succeeds in shedding some light on the question of why telling stories can be essential to survival. Accordingly, this research aims to answer the following main question and sub-questions:

How is the 'affectiveness' of storytelling portrayed in *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story*?

What are the narrative and affective capacities of stories in their remediated form on the screen?

What is the portrayal of the figure of the storyteller and of the creative act in relation to the social aspect of telling stories?

How does visual style determine the affectiveness of the stories featured in the film?

The hypothesis I aim to put forward in this dissertation is that stories possess a set of capacities² that fully act upon our social dimension, and that such capacities are enhanced by a type of storytelling that shows an inherent and compelling 'need' to be told in as many formats and ways as possible. The remediation of stories from the written text to the aesthetic aspects of the visual form is, I propose, not only a feature of storytelling but the ultimate way of stories to reach their potential as agents of change. Stories are meaningful also through the way they affect us aesthetically. Furthermore, I aim to prove how storytelling can break free from ideological precepts in a more efficient way by being remediated. Therefore, I will conduct an exploration of the narrative and visual 'unexpectedness' and 'affectiveness' I ascribe to Keret's stories, which calls for a theoretical framework that would be as malleable as the set of narrative and cinematic moments I intend to analyse. Accordingly, I have chosen to build an interaction between philosophical and narrative theories that complement each other, pointedly on the central idea that **the creative act is a living and unfinished entity with effects on its own**. For these purposes I will mainly use the work of sociologist Arthur W. Frank, specifically of his book *Letting Stories Breathe* [2012], in which he introduces the scope of socio-narratology, a branch of narratology

² The use of the term 'capacities' refers to the theoretical model of socio-narratology, in which stories 'act' upon readers; Arthur W. Frank describes stories as possessing a set of 'capacities' that enable this action.

that aims to determine the social effects of stories, and I will connect it to some essential aspects of Gilles Deleuze's philosophy, through the careful revision that contemporary authors have put together of his work. The intersection of these two main theories —narratology and philosophy, will conform Chapter One, in which I will describe how is it that stories have their social effects, and ultimately become independent affective entities.

In *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story*, there are three intertwined dimensions at play: 1. The figure of the author, or how the author is depicted. 2. The stories as separate beings 3. A third dimension where these two other ones mingle. All these three aspects suppose a multi-level analysis, for which sticking to the textual narrative level of the documentary won't suffice. The remediation of the stories to animation and cinematic languages calls this research, therefore, to rely also on the notion of cinema as an aesthetic experience, in order to fully explore the levels at which storytelling is being displayed. In this regard, some crucial concepts will be outlined in Chapter Two, following Barbara M. Kennedy's use of Deleuzian concepts to formulate her 'aesthetics of sensation', and Laura U. Marks notions about the physicality of cinema. Chapter One and Chapter Two are heavily charged with theoretical grounds; this is executed this way so the analysis can be carried out by the concepts that have been already outlined in the precedent chapters, as the analysis of the film itself is substantially descriptive. Chapter Three is dedicated to the visual and narrative analysis of the film, a method that is highly informed by the revised theory. The analysis considers three narratives that speak as a whole: the animated stories, the fictionalization of personal anecdotes, and the interviews —which I regard as storytelling constructions as well.

The primordial thing to clarify is my position within my chosen theoretical framework. Storytelling has been formally studied by narratology, via the systematic interpretation of narrative structures. As a branch of structuralism (Althusser, Macherey, Voloshinov), narratology derives from the notion that language is not only a reflection of the world, but our very shaping of it (Barry, 2009: 59). Later on, as post-structuralism broke through in the 1960s by the hand of Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida proclaiming the freedom of the literary text (Barry, 2009: 63), a new set of narratology studies emerged as a consequence. Instead of focusing on the formal structures of text, narratologists tried to approximate an understanding of the "why and how we read stories as we do" (Martin, 1986: 26-27).³ My focus on a contemporary author sets the contextual frame of my interest in postmodernism, with one aspect of it as central to my decision to link narrative to Deleuzian notions: the emergence of micronarratives.

3 The 'death of the author' meant many more conceptual finals in narratology, as the death of the 'realistic novel', and the consequent 're-birth on narrative', crystallized in the 'new novel' in France and 'metafiction' in the American and South-American literary sphere since the 1960's (Martin, 1986: 28).

In the realm of postmodern studies, narrative has been recognized as pivotal “to the representation of identity, in personal memory and self-representation or in collective identity of groups such as regions, nations, race and gender” (Currie, 1998: 2). Hence, narratology has been extensively used as part of multidisciplinary approaches to engage and understand Otherness. The first way it does this is through diversification, that is to say, the multidisciplinary uses of narrative. The second is through deconstruction, which gently lands into a third characteristic of narratology nowadays: politicization. The revision of literary texts through the optic of Otherness and post-colonialism has reinvigorated a post-structuralist approach with a renewed attention towards historical revisionism (Currie, 1998: 4-6). However, this aspect of narratology also relates to a type of post-structuralism that offers a different angle on the politics of identity and asks for a re-configuration of certain essential concepts. This is the scope of my research, one of a re-assembling of the symbolic values in stories.

In close relation to this, Arthur W. Frank seems to be determined to provide a use of narrative that would take stories as ‘vital living things’, as embodied practices, with their own personal and pre-personal forces operating. He states: “[There is no] need to ask what artworks say, because what stories do is immanent in life and being”. This choice in phrasing inevitably resonates with Deleuze’s thought; just as he worked for a practical philosophy, Frank works to place storytelling as having practical effects. The bet on the intersection of these two theories aims to contribute to a set of contemporary studies that are far more concerned with the possibilities of the creative act in and by itself; although, of course, informed by the recognition of their social environments of creation. Such approach enables a study that is capable of escaping the “dream of the Other”⁴, to take instead a dialogical understanding of object and subject. About his approach, Frank comments:

Stories are made up of signs—their semiotic being—and they are material not only as they do things, including inciting love affairs and wars, but also in their capacity to take the material forms [...] machines, bodies, and buildings [...] Stories are “made of air but leave their mark.” (2010: 52)

⁴ “If you’re trapped in the dream of the other, you’re fucked” stated Deleuze in *Qu’est-ce qu’un acte de création* [1987]. Although he was speaking, in cinematic terms, about the danger of being trapped in dreams that do not obey your desires, the quote has been commonly taken as speaking of Otherness. A ‘tradition’ I choose to continue not as a misconception, but as a continuation of his discourse at large, that by accident got so beautifully sketched in this phrasing. The Other, any Other, is nothing but a dream we want to dream of.

This mobility in storytelling is what allows me to step away from the common places of semiotic readings and, especially, from the expected ideology-based interpretation of an Israeli author as depicted through the lenses of Dutch filmmakers. This is not to say that the intention is to escape meaning-making or politicization, but to enter the terrain of a new scope of meaning-making and the dimension of micro-politics that Deleuze defended throughout his work, and that ultimately is what ‘move’ stories: the personal political forces formed on our everyday, by our everyday stories. An approach that is all the more fruitful with an author as Etgar Keret and his particular circumstances, as reflected with kaleidoscopic vividness in *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story*.



Chapter One: Nomadic Stories

The introductory aspect of storytelling I intend to explore within this research is how it is, exactly, that stories become socially affective, first via their narrative instances and later through the aesthetics of their remediation. The notion that stories are pivotal tools for the construction of identity and the social dimension is followed by the idea that such capacities act, ultimately, as freed entities. Such approach supposes a field of exploration, within narrative studies, that ceases to consider stories as mere representation or as ideology constructions— especially if we consider the social weight (heavily attained to morality) that has been historically adjudicated to telling tales. As the literary critic Ian Sansom notes in his review of *Suddenly a Knock on the Door*: “as it approaches the horizon of its capacities and capabilities, the short story inevitably begins to resemble a kind of biblical narrative, a fable, a wise saying”. In contrast to this tradition in short stories, Keret’s stories are “thought-experiments [...] What if? they ask. Why not? And, what the heck? Like all art, they are highly patterned, highly charged, refracted reflections on the chaos and randomness of everyday existence” (2012). This exploration of the ‘chaos and randomness’ in Keret’s tales speaks of a style that is performative and that communicates by itself. However, to fully elaborate on this aspect, stories must be first understood as possessing a set of capacities that enable their social functioning and that determine, as consequence, their relevance in human dynamics. This chapter introduces the notion of stories as having capacities (as outlined by socio-narratology), in order to understand the theoretical foundations of stories as having social effects.

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the social role of stories through their capacities, and to link such capacities to possibilities of social change through the essential notions behind Deleuzian micro-politics. Gilles Deleuze helped in the construction of a political and social dimension that asked to be re-thought almost from scratch. His theory of thought asks us to reassign meaning to the systems we were born into; more importantly, to be able to re-configure our understandings of our social environ-

ment as many times as required, to become ‘nomads’ of thought.⁵ The nomadic of his ideas is not solely displayed in the transitions that he constantly refers to — his constant becomings, but on the very shift in thought the adoption of his philosophy presumes. What Deleuze brought to the table is not a compensatory or side theory, but a rather seismic way of thinking.⁶ This is why Deleuzian philosophy is often emphasized as a challenge of thought that lies:

[I]n whether we can conceptualise a single being that is nothing more than its different expressions [...] This means that any thought or representation that we have of being is itself an event of being. All the images and concepts we have of being are not pictures, metaphors or representations of being; they are beings in their own right. There is not being plus representation (Colebrook, 2002: 32).

This apparent break up with representation, formerly defended by Deleuze in terms of the revolution in painting⁷ —and that is now posed in here as a challenge, locates the very core of my theoretical framework: **storytelling as an encounter with a raw ‘being’ and ‘becoming’, stories as events in life**. This speaks of a kind of storytelling that cannot be digested as merely a set of symbols assembled to speak about a specific social reality. Representation is seen, then, as a form of life in its own. This is the underlying foundation of socio-narratology, as proposed by Arthur W. Frank, in which he refers to stories as vital living things.⁸ Socio-narratology addresses stories as actors, focusing on what they are able to do through their capacities, and seeing these capacities as crucial factors to their vitality (Frank, 2012: 23-29). The present chapter is a selection of the most pertinent capacities of stories for my case study, as outlined by Frank on principle, but seeing them through the lenses of Deleuzian micro-politics.

5 The term ‘nomadic’ with which Deleuze aimed to capture the essence of Nietzsche’s thought can be said as well of his own work. In the opening of *Nomadic Thought*, Deleuze states: “If we want to know what Nietzsche is or is becoming today, we know very well whom we should ask —the young people that is reading Nietzsche” (2004: 252).

6 Deleuze’s theory follows a tradition of thought while re-formulating it, this tradition goes from Nietzsche to Spinoza.

7 “The theory of thought is like painting: it needs that revolution which took art from representation to abstraction” (Deleuze, 2001).

8 Based on Brian Boyd’s ‘evocriticism’, Frank follows an evolutionary take on literature, as means to “refine and challenge our understanding of human nature and thought” (Boyd qtd. In Frank, 2012: 23).

1.1 Stories as events in life

The scope of socio-narratology dictates that we can define a story by watching it act. How do we recognize a story acting? By one of its main acting capacities: the creation and resolution of **trouble**: “A story begins with some breach in the expected state of things—Aristotle’s peripeteia. Something goes awry, otherwise there’s nothing to tell about” (Bruner qtd. In Frank, 2012: 30). As much as a story is all about its effort to come to terms with trouble, the process of troubling is relevant not only in its resolution, but in itself. The problematizing or troubling of life is significantly important in Deleuzian philosophy: “a ‘problem’ is not a simple question that needs to find an answer; a problem is something that disrupts life and thinking, producing movements and responses” (Colebrook, 2002: xxxiv). **In stories and in life, trouble is what calls for action, for change. Trouble calls for a response that would invariable alter the character’s possibilities, but also the possibilities of their environment.** As a result, stories have the capacity not only to create and resolve trouble in the fictional realm, but also to create and resolve conflicts in the actual social sphere (Frank, 2012: 30). This **actualisation**, in Deleuzian terms, is an attribute of stories that is well acknowledged by storytellers. Actualisation refers to the transition in which something, anything, can come from the virtual (the metaphysic, the imaginary), into the actual (the real). Gregory J. Seigworth, when talking about Deleuze’s theory, considers we are all immersed in the same plane as these virtualities, as all life is only made out of virtuals (2005: 168). Perception and action are, by consequence, “new modes of existence” (Holland, 2005: 161). How does a ‘virtuality’ come to be an ‘actual’ is explained through what Deleuze calls **encounter**: the moment in which perception and the object perceived first interacts with each other, and produce each other as a result (Colebrook, 2002: 56). That is to say, **that everything comes to exist the moment is perceived.** We could say stories exist the moment we perceive their effects; from the storyteller’s mouth pronouncing the words, to the tears we might shed at a particularly moving passage, to the personality traits we can identify as coming from the stories we have been exposed to.

Stories actualise themselves socially, and in doing so they take a life on their own. Linguist Charlotte Linde explains that this occurs when a story appeals to a new range of storytellers, then a story has the possibility to “break free of the lifetime of its participants [...] and develop what is potentially an

indefinitely long lifetime” (Frank, 2012: 33). In a similar vein, W.J.T. Mitchell collaborates to this notion of the freed creative act:

The aim is to look at the varieties of animation or vitality that are attributed to images, the agency, motivation, autonomy, aura, fecundity, or other symptoms that make pictures into ‘vital signs,’ by which I mean not merely signs for living things but signs as living things (Qtd. In Frank, 2012: 29).

The relevance of stories as vital, living things, relies in the understanding of the stories around us as an ongoing process of actualisation, in which any given single one can be called out to act in our actual lives. Through the encounter with stories, we form a virtual with the potential to be actualised, a story with the potential to be reproduced in our social dynamics. This reverses the common idea that stories are the resultant representations of experiences, thus that they behave solely as mimetic constructions, imitating life. In this regard, anthropologist Cheryl Mattingly says: “There is no reality without narrative. Because we have stories, we believe we are having experiences. Experience is, at best, an enactment of pre-given stories.” (Qtd. In Frank 2012: 30). Mimesis is seen in socio-narratology as an existing feature of stories, but one that acts dialogically. It is precisely inside this dialogical process that stories acquire an active capacity, as they continuously imitate each other. It is in this overlapping of the virtual and the actual, of the fictional and the real, that Frank defines **truth telling** as a capacity of stories to:

Report truths that have been enacted elsewhere, [as well as a] capacity to enact truths. These truths are not copies of an original. They are enactments in which something original comes to be, as if for the first time, in the full significance that the story gives it (2012: 49).

All stories claim a truth. Stories, however, also possess the ability to display a multiplicity of truths, each of them with their own rights to be expressed (Frank, 2012: 51). Consequently, the larger the number of truths a story can hold, the more complex the understanding of a specific social reality can become through a certain story. Each displayed truth behaves as a potential reality, this is the inherent power of telling stories. This reflectiveness between the actual and the virtual is a constant in storytelling, which informs the unconscious choices in the stories we might go for, to tell and share, as well as an equally not always self-revealed path of stories that shape our identities. In this regard, stories have effects on us whether we are aware of them or not. To understand how is it that

stories act on us, we have to revise one of its major capacities: **Performativity**.⁹

Whatever else storytellers are doing—reporting, convincing, instructing, indoctrinating, recruiting, amusing, generating sympathy or antipathy, or simply passing the time—they are always performing, and how they do whatever else they do is affected by the needs of the performance (Frank 2012: 49).

Performativity is crucial for stories to ring true, and to remain true to their claims (Frank, 2012: 50-1); which can only mean that the act of storytelling is being affective, that stories are acting upon something. This takes us to, perhaps, the most significant capacity of stories: **symbiosis**. Stories work in varied networks; relating and merging people, objects, and places. The pivotal symbiotic element of storytelling occurs within the constant interaction between stories and people, both storytellers and listeners.

1.2 The Perpetual Reassembling

According to Frank, stories ‘breathe’. This refers to the ‘breath of life’ that is conferred to them by us humans; the human element, any human element in fact, can be regarded as a God of his or her own displayed creation, one that is bound to set loose at any point.¹⁰ For socio-narratology, this is an essential characteristic of stories we need to assume and inform. Such scope is far from moralistic, what it advocates for is the social possibilities of stories as ultimately independent and changing entities. The ‘breathing’ of stories functions dialogically: the life we breathe into stories is what enables them to take off in their own specific paths. The relevance of such understanding relies in the fact that stories become communally lived, as they “breathe life not only into individuals, but also into groups that assemble around telling and believing certain stories” (Frank, 2012: 12). The breathing of a story relies on the effected instances it derives to: **stories ‘breath’ because they are socially lived, and because they become sensorial, embodied experiences. Stories are socially breathed and lived, but first, they directly influence our construction of self.** We are the result of the stories we

9 Frank refers to such capacity of stories as ‘performative’. I choose to call it ‘performativ’ instead, as a way to acknowledge the wide use of the word within cultural studies.

10 The idea of the ‘word’ giving birth to ‘life’, or at least to a degree of independence, has been frequently explored in tales that take the power of words to warn us of the dangers of human’s creating capacities. A personal favorite is Jorge Luis Borge’s poem ‘The Golem’, based on the legend of Rabbi Löws of Prague: “Why did I add to the infinite series another symbol? Why to the vain skein that winds in the eternal did I give another cause, an effect, and grief?”

tell, a pivotal power of stories that we can trace back to “the relationships constructed around shared stories, and the sense of purpose that stories both propose and foreclose” (Frank, 2010: 12). In this respect, stories provide us with our “first system of thinking” (Frank 2012: 56); one that can, nevertheless, broaden or change with the encounter of more stories, but whose initial configuration needs to be first acknowledged in order to be applied any significant change. The challenge is to identify the ways in which stories act on us, as separate entities that undoubtedly shape us. Within such scope, stories acquire new meanings and usages through dialogical power relations, which are socially re-arranged in a continuous manner.

Narratives are crucial in the continuing re-arrangement of our social sphere. Narratology functions on the premise that underlying models of narrative explain an inherent human ability to understand and engage in stories (Frank, 2012: 13). The aim of socio-narratology comes from the basis that being human, and thus being social, forcefully presumes an ability to abstract the social dimension into stories. If such ability is diminished, or somehow significantly altered, social life is significantly altered too. This ability dictates, then, collective and individual formation. The distinction between ‘narrative’ and ‘story’, provided by Anne Harrington, regards stories as “living, local, and specific” (Qtd. In Frank, 2012: 24), and narratives as “the resources from which people construct the stories they tell and the intelligibility of stories they hear” (Frank, 2012: 24). Stories are informed by narratives, but not every narrative is turned into a story. Harrington refers to narratives as templates that grant us with a plotline, luckily a variety of them, that are put in use not only to create new stories, but to make sense of the larger ones that come our way: “We learn these narrative templates from our culture [...] in the way we might unconsciously learn the rules of grammar at home” (Harrington qtd. In Frank 2012, 25). A learnt narrative might be, for example, the characteristics that we believe to be inherent to our gender or nationalities, but these narratives do not come into our lives as a list to memorize when we are kids, they are reproduced by the stories we tell and that are being told to us. It is by this means that stories have their more powerful effect, as they modify people’s perception of what is real, of what if possible, and of what is worthy to do or to avoid (Frank, 2012: 12). Stories are all the existing ‘possibles’—all the virtualities, that can be rendered real at some point, according to the narrative habitus of each individual.

This narrative habitus₁₁ works in close relation to two essential capacities of stories: **interpellation**

11 Adopting Pierre Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’, Frank refers by ‘narrative habitus’ to the human behavioral processes thought of as “second nature” (2012: 61). This implies a sort of disposition that does not directly determine what people might want, think, or choose, but that conditions what they feel as compelled to do; a set of behaviors that seem the most ‘natural’ to them.

and **resonance**. Interpellation predisposes a certain someone to perform a certain identity.¹² A story interpellates as in a way of calling someone into action, characters are “hailed, or cast, or called to be a certain identity” (Frank, 2012: 58), and in doing so, in being called out to perform a specific version of themselves, characters in a story present a collection of identity tropes in which the listener/reader is able to recognize himself in (Frank, 2012: 58); this is a part of resonance. The other part of resonance, just as equally important, unfolds as stories resemble and continue previous stories, adding vitality to the particular present story. Stories echo past stories, and stories are meant to be echoed in the future (Frank, 2012: 46); a crucial attribute to their relevance.

In this regard, stories act as cultural exchange values. They have the ability to summarize the entire identity of a group, but in order to do so, they first summon up individual identities. As Umberto Eco wrote “books always speak of other books”;¹³ a particular story is all the more valuable, or valuable at all, as it is related to all the others that came before it (Frank, 2012: 62). A helpful way of understanding this process is through the notion of the **inner library** and the **inner book**.¹⁴ The inner library refers to “the organization of all the stories a person can be influenced by [...] this all includes stories the person could not actually tell but nevertheless knows, preconsciously or unconsciously”. Out of this, an inner book is constructed, which functions as “grid through which we read the world” (Frank, 2012: 62-5). The inner book shapes the reception of new stories, while also giving form to our very understanding and consequent desires for how the dynamics of the world should perform, and for how life should unfold itself to us. This is where, to Pierre Bayard’s understanding, the desire to encounter stories comes from:

The individual inner book is at work in our desire to read—that is, in the way we seek out and read books. It is that phantasmagorical object that every reader lives to pursue, of which the best books he encounters in his life will be but imperfect fragments, compelling him to continue reading [...] People spend their lives seeking a story that can match the inner story. This search will never end, because each actually encountered story will necessarily be an imperfect representation of the inner story [...] Seeking stories becomes

12 Interpellation, as most notably used by Louis Althusser through the verb “to hail”, is illustrated by Frank in the dynamics of a new born child and the mother: “The baby hails the person to be a mother” (2012: 58).

13 In the postscript of *The Name of the Rose*, Umberto Eco writes: “Thus I rediscovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again): books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told.”

14 Frank takes these two concepts after Pierre Bayard.

a process of displacement—each next story displacing the imperfect one before, seeking what can never be found (Frank, 2012: 66).

Frank assigns a psychoanalytic reading to the quest described by Bayard, which can also be translated into constantly seeking unconsciously learned plots to be followed in our actual lives. Are we condemned to unmistakably follow only certain plots, and are these plots bound to remain unchosen by us? Another one of Bourdieu's concepts comes handy in this topic, what he calls unchosen choices, under the loop of socio-narratology, refer to the set of stories people grow upon on as being 'unchosen', which eventually leads to unchosen "templates for experience" (Frank, 2012: 22). This angle is in line with the modern tradition of Marx, Freud, and Durkheim, reflecting on the disturbing effect such lack of control over our consciousness still causes us. Socio-narratology starts from this gloomy assumption towards reaching a more hopeful end-goal: assisting us in expanding our narrative possibilities. A central aspect of socio-narratology, as in Deleuze's theory, is that they both encourage a deep knowledge of the inherited social forces that operate in us, in order to become capable of in fact do some choosing ourselves. In this regard, perhaps the main idea introduced by Deleuze is a renewal of the notion of desire, understanding it not as a lack, but as a productive force, the playground for creation. We are not inmates of desire, or of what desire do to us; we are the product of a desire that is creative and constructive. This new light on desire is established, in parallel, by the re-configuration of the notion of difference, understanding it as positive. Thinking difference positively entails not only to cease to think of difference in terms of binary oppositions, "as the difference between distinct terms", but to think of it as "a constant, ungrounded and unbounded process of differentiation" (Colebrook, 2002: 63).

Deleuze and Guattari construct the basis of a free reign desire that culminates in experience, and thus, in the creative production. Desire as coming from the unconscious was an aspect of Freud's thinking that Deleuze and Guattari continued to explore. However, they elevated desire from its psychoanalytical treatment as a 'lack',¹⁵ to be understood as a creative energy in which the forces of difference fully act upon each other (Colebrook, 2002: xv). Through this model, Deleuze and Guattari offered an answer to the question of why is it that people desire their own repression, by cataloguing Freudian

15 Deleuze and Guattari strongly contraposed Freud's reasoning on how desire works, as this was seen by the duo as a mirroring of the labour-power dynamics exposed by Marx. Deleuze and Guattari condemned as a failure the placing of desire within a system that only functions by the flows of capital. Marx regarded power as negative, as ideology that neglected life, to which Foucault provided an idea of power in which dialectical forces operate and that exposes, as a result, a process that behaves positively. Deleuze and Guattari's contribution was to establish a balance between these otherwise crashing notions, through the conception of a desire that behaves positively.

understanding of desire as a misconception that is inherent to human formation in capitalist societies. The aftermath of this misconception is that we come to see ourselves as continual lacking entities, as if a fundamental something has been taken away from us by social order when, actually, this longing is nothing more than desire being productive, calling us to move, to action, to hold onto reality (Holland, 2005: 55-56):

Marx notes [that] what exists in fact is not lack but passion, as a ‘natural and sensuous object.’ Desire is not bolstered by needs, but rather the contrary; needs are derived from desire: they are counterproducts within the real that desire produces” (Deleuze and Guattari Qtd. In Holland, 2005: 54).

This “passionate attachment to reality” (Holland, 2005: 61), put forward by desire being productive, and as long as it has desire in motion, without fixating on codes, representations, or reductions, is what Deleuze calls a plane of immanence, a Body without Organs. For Deleuze, while it is clear that we cannot expect to entirely break free from the social constructs we were born into, it is equally important to acknowledge how they act upon us. The aim is to decentralize them from their sovereignty by placing the real, what constitutes our human fabric, as an ongoing process above any fixed meaning or identity: “we cannot avoid meaning, precisely because these systems are trans-individual. We do not choose languages; we are situated within them” (Colebrook, 2002: 24). What Deleuze proposes is to embrace the **constant becomings** that establish us as differentiating forces ourselves, **a detachment from a fixed ‘being’ that has been imposed to us and to everything through the systems that surround us. This shift in the way we perceive ourselves and the world we make sense of, implies a mobility of identity and of our identity systems, which allows us to reassign meaning in function of the affective qualities of desire.** This is what Deleuze refers to as a desire-machine:

[The desire-machine begins] with functions and connections before we imagine any produced orders, purposes, wholes or ends. A desiring machine is therefore the outcome of any series of connections: the mouth that connects with a breast, the wasp that connects with an orchid, an eye that perceives a flock of birds, or a child’s body that connects with a trainset [...] Desire is connection, not the overcoming of loss or separation; we desire, not because we lack or need, but because life is a process of striving and self-enhancement. Desire is a process of increasing expansion, connection and creation (Colebrook, 2002: xxii).

Desire functioning as a machine could also say something about the seeking of our inner book; perhaps this searching should be also posed in terms of a desire that speaks of an inherent ache for connections, instead of a desire that refers to a lack. To place the formation of our identity in a psychological environment of absence and inadequacy has given birth to a variety of dangerous truths, as the encounter with Otherness that can only perceive difference through the lenses of reductions. Such misconceptions can be reversed, by reversing stories before experiences, and by reversing our understanding of difference. For Deleuze “essence is always difference” (Deleuze qtd. In Colebrook, 2002: 53), that is to say that it is difference, and no identity, the vital human force (although identity is a derivation of difference). Difference cannot be understood as the intrinsic relation between two things as assigned by common sense, neither as an imposed system of negative difference as showed by structuralism. Difference is a differentiation process that produces stand-alone differentiated entities, that human conception has tended to group in larger classifications:

Sexual difference between bodies is different in each case (although we generalise and refer to men and women); genetic difference creates differently in each mutation (although we generalise and refer to species); visual differences are in each case different (although we generalise and refer to the colour spectrum) (Colebrook, 2002: 27).

The constant becomings of Deleuzian philosophy are key to positive difference as, in each becoming, it is life manifesting itself as different, instead of producing a series of groups sharing a ‘sameness’ to be categorized accordingly. Throughout human history, there has been a cult for difference that is widely perceptible, a search for ‘uniqueness’, the extremely ‘stylized’. Paradoxically, there has also been a latent terror for what is alarmingly different, enclosing it then in terms of the ‘bizarre’ or the ‘aberrant’. Human search for beauty; human subjugation to what is incomprehensively different; cultural difference expressed both as a romance and as fear; human encounters with a presumed ‘Other’, are expressions of nothing more than a history of what Deleuze call **intensities**. A history that for Deleuze and Guattari is anchored to the very history of politics (Colebrook, 2002: 47): as intensities are socially overcoded, they lose their affective qualities to become tools for the flow of capital. The result is that these intensities are taken out from their fluid form, from their core affective capacities, to be assigned a fixed meaning, to be “organized to produce a ‘territory’ of identity” (Colebrook, 2002: 47). Identity is, then, the result of the grouping of intensities, the history of representation. We part from a multiplicity of differences:

Not just linguistic differences, but genetic, geographical microscopic or imperceptible differences. We eventually have sexes, not because difference is imposed but because it is re-

duced. From all the possible sexual and genetic variations, we coded bodies into the binary difference of male and female (Colebrook, 2002: 43).

As it happens with human identity, where a set of intensities or singularities are reduced to a general grouping that serves as a limit for it; stories, and its various instances and intensities, are sometimes given a fixed identity by a reading that is almost entirely based upon carefully selected semiotics. In relation to this, Philip Smith conveniently calls stories “machines for the reduction of complexity” (Qtd. In Frank, 2012: 158), warning us about the danger of everyday stories going slowly and imperceptibly autonomous. Stories are dangerous when they are successful in reducing “too much complexity” (Frank, 2012: 158) in a collective usage, as they:

Connect people into collectivities, and they coordinate actions among people who share the expectation that life will unfold according to certain plots. The selves and collectivities animated by stories then animate further stories: revising old stories and creating new ones [...] Stories and humans work together, in symbiotic dependency, creating the social that comprises all human relationships, collectivities, mutual dependencies, and exclusions. (Frank, 2012: 24).

This expectation of life unfolding according to certain plots is understood in socio-narratology as emplotment. How do we avoid to remain fixed in a single emplotment? By sharing as many stories as possible, or by adding as many signification levels to a story. Just as the aim is to detach ourselves of any fixed identity, such treatment should be given as well to our inner libraries and, specially, to our inner books. Bruno Latour’s *Reassembling the Social* outlines a life that is made social by constantly re-grouping itself via our everyday practices. People need to tell stories; whether these stories are mimetic to life or precede it, they speak about human characters whose life is always in progress (Frank, 2012: 26). A story might have an end, but storytelling as a practice is opened to be perpetually assembled.

1.4 Changing The Plot

Stories are a play of lights and shadows; they are selective in their mechanisms to show us the world. They display with poignant clarity specific aspects of it, while neglecting others. In this sense, stories show a point of view, with the capacity to engage listeners so much that they believe in the truth of a particular story as a definitive one. Therefore, stories also have the capacity to enact an inherent morality: stories prepare people’s reactions; they arrange a virtual set for situations that might occur in

the actual. Through this, stories foster certain behaviours, operating through a “principle of response” that can either be performed in the moral basis of good or bad. In relation to this, the figure of the trickster in storytelling is highly significant; trickster stories are the motif behind cautionary tales as they perform the consequences of human action, in which a moral education is the basis to share a story. Tricksters exemplify the mistakes and flaws humans are bound to make; in this sense, narrative humanizes life (Frank, 2012: 53).

Good stories are effective stories, we cannot blame a story for excelling in its affects and intensities, but we can pinpoint the indoctrination usages a story has undergone, with dangers as palpable as a story used to claim a person or collective stand point as an absolute truth. How do we avoid getting lost in a single story? Or worse, being caught up in a single reading of every story that comes our way? **A story must be battled (balanced out) with another story, or rather: with multiple stories and understandings.** Stories, although often obligated to behave differently, cannot be forced into any signification. Stories are multiple in their being, they can change form according to the listener, they are **shape-shifting, out of control**, and, most importantly, they perform **interpretative openness**. Through these capacities, they “equip humans to live in a world that not only is open to multiple interpretive understandings but requires understandings in the plural” (Frank, 2012: 42-45). A key notion when telling stories should be that there is no such thing as a singular voice, as each story contains multiple micro stories (Frank, 2012: 38). In relation to this, Deleuze pushed for genealogy, a method of thought by which the validity of present structures is questioned by tracing back its origins. What he found was a multiplicity of plots and voices, a thousand plateaus.¹⁶ His major finding was that the history of human development should not be regarded as strictly linear, but it should acknowledge multiple histories within; a conjunction of “overlaid strata or plateaus” that, altogether, conform human history, as well as the history of what we have regarded as non-human (Colebrook, 2002: xxiv).

It is in this proliferation of new strata or plateaus, that Deleuze installs the notion of the ‘micro’ into politics, as opposed to the reigning ideological reading of the time (Colebrook, 2002: 46). A Deleuzian understanding of storytelling implies a conscious search for the discovery of the multiple stories a single story keeps within, it calls us to understand stories as multi-layered, as portraying a multiplicity of voices. This distinction can re-arrange our social dynamics by consequence. We act upon the stories we have known our whole life, surrendering to them (by not changing the plot, but reproducing it) or by changing the plot (discovering and creating new plots that deviate from that which ‘we were once told’):

16 A Thousand Plateaus act as a genealogy of capitalism and humanism; it is an attempt to show how ‘man’ and ‘capital’ emerge from the play of interacting forces.

“People are like actors cast into multiple scripts that are all unfinished. From all the stories that people hear while they are growing up, they remain caught up in some, forget many others, and adapt a few to fit adult perceptions and aspirations” (Frank, 2012: 19). The interpellation to perform a certain identity is displayed in a story through its characters, all of whom are cast into certain stories. The interest of any story relies in “what the character does with that casting” (Frank, 2012: 38). Suspense, another pivotal capacity of stories, translates as meaningful when it shows either a resisting or embracing of these castings. A character must become something through trouble, but it is the uncertainty of suspense which “remind[s] people that endings are never assured” (Frank, 2012: 41). Suspense tricks the listener by shuffling a variety of potential outcomes, it plays with a tension between the actual and the virtual.

The ability of a story to abruptly change its plot—its narrative unexpectedness, holds the highest rhetoric value of stories as micro-political forces. There is an inherent power in potential scenarios. Potentialities are defined by Deleuze as lines of flight: All groupings of life are established by connections (desire-machines), these connections are always open to abrupt change, taking an unexpected turn, a mutation, a line of flight that would transform a territory or a form of life into something else (Colebrook, 2002: xxiv-xxv). This serves as cornerstone for two other concepts that are central to Deleuze and his micro-politics: **territorialisation** and **detrterritorialisation**. Territorialisation refers to the processes through which social space is categorized; such processes give form to the ways in which we learn to read our social world:

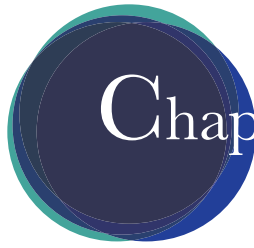
[Territorialisations] manifest themselves in how culture reads and categorizes individuals in terms of ‘their’ race, class, gender, nationality, religion, physical ability [...] Such categories do not pre-exist society, but they structure social space according to certain culture-specific values. Territorializations provide us with social identities, with a social face (Albrecht-Crane: 122).

However, any form of life, just as stories, can break free of such categorizations at any given instance. The very same dynamics that allow territorialisation to occur, can impulse us to become something other than what we are—detrterritorialise (Colebrook, 2002: xxii). Consequently, we can conceive identity as the territorialisation of the self; one that follows the path of previous territorialisations—or personal forces, including gender, race, and national identities. The inherent tragedy or dilemmas in stories, is that by being on them, by existing, characters are interpellated to perform a certain identity and to follow a pre-written plot. However, stories also show us that resistance to interpellations is possible (Frank, 2012: 60-1).

Conclusions

As conclusion for this chapter we can understand the act of storytelling as a multiplicity of point of views, a thousand plateaus. A story that ‘breaths’ is a story that is affective, a story that performs itself into our practical sphere, so that stories cease to being understood in mere linguistic terms, to be directly assigned a role within our social environment. Just as Deleuze strove for a comprehension of a philosophy that would directly modify our praxis, the scope of socio-narratology assigns a further role to stories than their semiotic charge, and such understanding is expected to modify our collective interactions. Stories are nomadic, as they are constantly re-shaped and re-shaping our social assemblages. A common understanding of storytelling is that we ought to tell stories to live,¹⁷ part of such notion involves stories as acquiring a life in being told, but we also construct ourselves in telling stories. Through stories, we make sense of us, and on the same level, we make sense of the world around us. In a symbiotic manner: “we are born into stories”, but we also depend on them to build our identities, just as much as stories need us to perpetuate them (Frank, 2012: 46). What the stories we tell entail is not only our past or present, but our very own futures, individual and collectively.

17 The need to tell stories has been widely studied and artistically expressed. See Joan Didion’s *We Tell Ourselves Stories in Order to Live*, and James Phelan’s *Living to Tell about It: A Rhetoric and Ethics of Character Narration*.



Chapter Two: The role of aesthetics in remediated stories

As mentioned in the introduction, Keret's storytelling is an exploration of the seemingly chaotic and random narrative instances of everyday life; which speaks of a larger capacity of stories: the handling of the 'unexpected'. The exploration of the 'unexpected' becomes richer in its remediated cinematic form. To fully understand how Keret's stories are effective exercises of storytelling, I propose that this effectiveness relies not only on the social capacities of stories, but in their attachment to affective qualities as given by the cinema medium. This narrative unexpectedness, I propose, acts in accordance to the combination of social and affective qualities given form by aesthetics. Such 'unexpectedness' goes beyond the usual narrative suspense and drama, by acquiring lived instances that do not only imitate life, but are themselves experiences in life. Such notion will be the central argumentation of this chapter, and will be explained through the lenses of the aesthetical and remediated dimensions of cinema.

2.1 Aesthetical affect

Film theory has been constantly revising cinema as a formal container of ideology, focusing on the critique of representation and signification. What Deleuze's philosophy contributes to cinema instead is a "post-semiotic space, a post-linguistic space", that allows us to understand cinema as much more than merely visual, as "tactile, sensory, material and embodied" (Kennedy, 2000: 3). This contemporary take on cinema —with the appliance of Deleuzian notions— is not accidental, as cinema was one of the

main topics of interest for Deleuze. However, the selection of concepts I present here works more in function of the renewed usage of Deleuze's theories, in matters such as post-feminism and post-colonialism examinations of the cinematic language. Cinema under this light strives for a micro-political position, in which it can be understood not only through signification but as working in conjunction with an affective physicality. **A conception of cinema as experiential instead of solely representational.** Such an approach counterpoises macro-political discourses which commonly function as binary discourses (left, right; masculine, feminine). A micro-politics reading advocates, instead, for changes that take place in "smaller, less coagulated or clearly framed groups and structures" (Kennedy, 2002: 10-2). This take on the socio-political dimension becomes relevant in cinema when joined by emotional aspects, which are harder to classify and pinpoint. The relevance of film studies is that such socio-political examinations are anchored in subjectivities; the aim then is to describe a dimension of study in which the formation of these subjectivities is also coming from stylistic expressions. In this sense, Deleuzian notions will continue to function as the theoretical backbone of this research during the first half of this chapter, in which some fundamental aspects will be explored: the notion of Deleuzian **style** and **affect**, and perception divided in the notions of the figural and of haptic visuality.

2.1.1 Style

The primordial aspect of style that I aim to put forward is how, in some instances, form and content are equally important. In the modernist tradition, aesthetics were not only the carrier of a message, they were the message itself (Kennedy, 2002: 13). For Deleuze, the conventional social structuration, the dominant one, provides us with clarity and certainty about our identities: a 'rootedness' to a specific social territory. Deleuze refers to this as a molar line. Such roots in molar lines have, of course, definitive and positive effects in our construction of the self, but can also be restraining in a true knowledge of us and of the events around us, as we become at times too immersed in our own subjectivity (Albrecht-Crane 122). To avoid this, Deleuze proposes **a notion and usage of style that is subversive**. He positions language among the major systemic molar lines that shape us, as social order is articulated through it. His concept of order-words is based on the idea that our construction of language already predisposes us towards the repetition of certain actions. To combat this, Deleuze continuously refers to a use of language with the ability to re-assign meaning to common words, and with a structure that behaves eclectically, against convention. It is through this reasoning that Deleuze introduces his concept of a rhizome, as a freed machine that revolves around "the capricious, undifferentiated and 'nomadic' character of life and language" (Albrecht-Crane: 126).

Style is, in this sense, the ultimate expression of micro-politics. Style can be subversive, style can be form and content all the same. Author Sandra Cisneros evokes a whole contextualization of a very specific micro-narrative in her short story *Baby Q*; it is in style and through style that she is able to convey a group of singularities in relation to class, gender, age, and ethnicity as a ‘chicana’ girl. Etgar Keret, in the story that opened this dissertation, relies on stylistic usage to speak about his specific social reality as well. In *Unzipped*, when Ella introduces his renewed boyfriend to her parents, they roughly call him the ‘goy’. The way the word is inserted in the text seems somehow unattached; showing that, in the narrator’s perspective, this clear nod to a Jewish upbringing does not necessarily follow an imposition of moral rules to act accordingly. Although such expressions of style are anchored in social territorialisations, their power relies in the way they de-territorialise themselves by offering an unexpected turn in style and narrative, and in the moment an external perception act upon them. Thus, storytelling provides the possibility to ‘free’ the narrative voice from the social constructs that is initially describing.

Deleuze regards literature as an act of liberation: literature has the ability “to set free, in the delirium, [...] the invention of a people, that is, a possibility of life” (Deleuze qtd. In Albrecht-Crane: 130). What Deleuze calls ‘the delirium’ can be considered as the fictional reality constructed by literature, that parts from the molar aspects of the story that is being told, to take a line of flight into the ‘unexpected’, into the conception of a new reality —providing a new meaning to a social reality that was ‘invented’ by social order in the first place. This assertion is fundamentally political: “Through the concepts of style and stutter, [Deleuze] articulates a revolutionary, political aspect, one that links style and artistic creation with resistance. As he puts it, creating isn’t communicating but resisting” (Albrecht-Crane: 130. Emphasis added)”. Deleuze fosters resistance through style and constant becomings. Through style, the reader is called to fully engage in the social dimension that is being described, to become the ‘Other’ that is thinking or speaking in the page. Cisneros accomplishes this engagement from the reader with a fast-pace rhythm and a use of language that corresponds with the specificity of the narrator. She is not a middle-age woman talking about her past as a chicana girl, she uses language as an 8-year-old girl in her quest to obtain the Barbie doll of her liking:

Your Barbie is roommates with my Barbie, and my Barbie’s boyfriend comes over and your Barbie steals him, okay? Kiss kiss kiss. Then the two Barbies fight. You dumbbell! He’s mine. Oh no he’s not, you stinky! Only Ken’s invisible, right? Because we don’t have money for a stupid-looking boy doll when we’d both rather ask for a new Barbie outfit next Christmas (Cisneros, 1991)

In the same way, Keret does not speak as himself; he uses language as a someone in their mid-twenties would, and then he uses an alteration in pronunciation (in this case an actual stutter), to convey the physical defect of someone that at some point cannot speak because a zip has cut her tongue:

'I'm sorry', he went on, turning paler, 'I must have bitten you. You know, in the heat of passion.' 'Never—nd,' she smiled at him, the ice cube sticking to her lower lip. 'No——ng ha——ened.' Which was a lie, of course. Because some——ing had ha——ened. It isn't every day that someone you're living with makes you bleed, and then lies to you and say he bit you, when you distinctly felt something prick you (Keret, 2012).

It is through style that the readers are able to immerse themselves in the reality proposed by the page, becoming an 'Other', or any number of 'Others'; and inserting themselves also in the sensorial aspects of these 'Others'.

2.1.2 *Affect*

As previously mentioned, a story can territorialise and deterritorialise itself through style, but it can also become an independent event in life the moment an external perception acts upon it. Style is, in this terms, a derivation of desire. Deleuze understands identities as primordially constructed from desire, from an investment in "colours, body-parts, tastes and styles" (Colebrook, 2002: 52). Style is what moves desire, what moves attraction. Under this light, Deleuze introduces his notion of affect:¹⁸ "Every mode of thought insofar as it is non-representational will be termed affect" (Deleuze qtd. In Seighworth, 2005: 16). Although this definition may place the word in rather negative terms, what Deleuze aims at is not to simply nullify a semiotic reading, but to highlight the effects of experience as events on its own and, ultimately, to emancipate the creative product through its affects, so meaning cannot be attained to it in a fixed matter. The affections that might arise from seeing a specific play, or listening to a particular symphony are, by themselves, events in life, as they become affects when they are suspended from the creator and the perceiver's subjectivity as stand-alone events:

18 Gregory Seighworth makes a quick revision of the term affect in order to define it: "first as Spinoza's affectio, is the transitive effect undergone by a body (human or otherwise) in a system—a mobile and open system—composed of the various, innumerable forces of existing and the relations between these forces" (2005: 161)

Fear, depression, laughter, terror or boredom are all possible affects of art. Affects is not the meaning of an experience but the response it prompts [...] whereas affections and perceptions are located in perceivers [...] Deleuze argues that art creates affects and percepts that are not located in a point of view. (Imagine a painting that is just terrifying or depressing; we may not be depressed or terrified when we view it but it presents the affect of depression and terror) (Colebrook, 2002: xix-x. Emphasis added)

Seighworth points out another essential distinction of affect by marking it as a “moment of singularity” (2005: 76), which take us back to the importance of difference as the playground for the flux of desire. What moves us, what drives us, is a series of frenetic attraction towards difference; a certain expression of difference that become so poignant to us, that speaks to us so loudly —amongst all the other infinite expressions of difference— that we render it as singular. What comes through is the creation of intensities, the exaltation of a single feature of difference. In this sense, stories’ capacities as discussed in Chapter One are the categorization of their affects as offered by socio-narratology.

2.1.3 Perception

In terms of the cinematic experience, sensation is put forward in a context of a set of aesthetics that affects the viewer beyond subjectivity, which prioritizes the bodily and emotional responses from the viewer’s part (Kennedy, 2002: 29). As previously discussed, Deleuze understands humans as desire-machines, who are driven by desires that work through connections with other machinic assemblages outside themselves. Accordingly, this scope considers cinema as a machine as well, one that functions by semantic connections, but also through **decentred perceptions**. Cinema acts as the exemplification of an abstract machine, that exceeds the limits of language and representation, to construct a “reality of different order [that is] premised on the material nature of experience” (Kennedy, 2002: 68-70).

Deleuze draws from Nietzsche the idea that language is limited in effectively convey the ‘wholeness’ of experience, as it turns a unique and specific experience into universal words that ultimately reduce the intensity and force of any lived perception. Hence, Nietzsche and Deleuze pose the senses as a more authentic form of relating with experiences. Deleuze then re-positions the process of thought as an affective one, in which the biological dimension plays a big part. We think and perceive the world through a desire-machine that is sensual-based, and that is also able to abstract meanings: the conjunction of brain-mind-body (Kennedy, 2002: 81-6). Affects, decentred perceptions, virtuals, potentialities, and constant becomings, are all the same and travel through our physical and biological instances but go beyond them. Desire produces, but such product is real as long as it is perceived. Images only exist

the minute they are perceived within this brain-mind-body machine: “Images we experience or see and affects that we feel are not out there in the world as such but exist within our brain’s formations [...] Deleuzian ontology presupposes and ‘in-between- of subjects and objects” (Kennedy, 2002: 91).

As with stories seen through the loop of socio-narratology, cinema operates through a set of capacities that enable its effectiveness. Cinema is able to go beyond subjectivity through movement, direction, speed, force; all of these are intensities that are displayed in cinema techniques, in the styling of camera movements, of lighting, rhythm, montages, etc. Our first contact with these intensities is a visual one, “the eye in the matter” (Kennedy, 2000:3). In direct connection to this, authors like Barbara Kennedy and Laura U. Marks refer to hapticity to expand the perception sphere of the cinematic experience. Marks calls **haptic visuality** to the capacity of the physical eye to connect with an image, in terms that go beyond mere visual conception. In order to arrive at such understanding, she preludes this definition by the distinction between haptic and optical visuality. Optical visuality can be considered as the one that provides the viewer with a centered point of view, that allow him or her to position the self as the ‘perceiver’ at all times. Optical visuality is then more directly connected to the biological function of the eye, as it serves to distinguish figures from their context through the perception of deepness and space. Haptic visuality has the capacity to ‘transfer’ to the eye a capacity of touch via sensorial memories and emotional responses that are located in the brain (Marks, 2000: 85-7). Within this capacity comes another one: the viewer’s perception is constantly re-arranged and re-positioned. Through a visuality that ‘touches’, **the subject and the object have a freed mobility**. Through cinematic techniques, such as camera movements, a haptic visuality allows the viewer to insert him or herself directly in contact with a rich piece of fabric, or to experience in full vividness the ‘green’ of an open field.

Haptic visuality is highly sensorial as it presupposes the involvement, at least in a synergetic dimension of the senses, to the act of viewing. But haptic visuality is also highly connected to memory; experiential and sensorial memory. When, in a cinematic scene, we watch someone eating a plate of spaghetti, our taste buds expand with the experience of eating something of the sort; but this is a memory, we have bodily reactions that impinge into us through vision, but they can only be effective as this visuality plays with our sensorial memories. Haptic visuality supposes then a multi-level, visceral act of viewing; viewing as an experience. These two types of visualities are not exclusive one from the other, but they are more of a matter of degree. Optical and haptic visuality are inserted within each other, each coming forward depending on the situation. Mark exposes this aspect with clarity: it would be extremely hard to look at a lover’s skin without our haptic visuality mode-on, just as it would be extremely hard to drive a car without our optical visuality (Marks, 2000: 88).

Perception does not only involve a categorization of the way in which we perceive images, but of the stimuli for this perception. Deleuze draws from Lyotard the notion of the figural in opposition to figuration. Deleuze's usage of these concepts can be understood as a classification of the images we encounter. Images that are figuration are inherently representational, semantically charged, while images that are figural are the ones that operate through sensation. About this usage in post-feminism cinema studies, Kennedy comments: "[The woman on the screen] may exist as figural, not as figuration, and thus the 'image' of woman might function as force, intensity", as opposed to a psychoanalytic or an ideologically gender-based interpretation (2002: 122). This example is useful to understand how these two terms are not exclusive to each other. Just as haptic and optical vision, images operate in various semantic and sensorial levels that complement each other to form 'an' experience.

I conclude the first part of this chapter, by emphasizing its two central notions. The first one is that perception is, as well as stories, nomadic; perception can be decentred from the subject onto the object and so on through affects derived from aesthetics. The second one is the consideration of the act of viewing as an experience. On Chapter One I allude to the act of storytelling, both in the form of listening and sharing stories, as events in life, as experience, I hereby conclude that certain forms of cinematic expressions should be regarded as experiences on themselves as well. I argue that a cinematic expression becomes 'alive' through its affective and perceptual capacities, that get enhanced through the combination of narrative and visual elements; hence, a story that is re-mediated to a cinematic form, gets somehow 'elevated', offering a double experience for the perceiver. I propose that storytelling is enhanced through a visual and narrative symbiosis.

2.2 Remediated constructions

Deleuze understands literature as a creative act that can serve as resistance. Writers have the capacity to shape language in such a form that it becomes 'freed'; in order to accomplish so, they construct a syntax that vocalizes sensation, in this way "standard language stammer, tremble, cry, or even sing: this is the style, the 'tone', the language of sensations" (Kennedy, 2002: 108). Such capacity of language gets paired up with an equally —or even stronger— medium through which sensation passes through: cinema. As Barbara Straumann notes: "film as a medium is synaesthetic because it engages various senses" (2015: 251). Cinema is novelistic discourse in an even more enriched form. It plays with the juxtapositions of words, sounds and images in its way to convey a multi-sensorial and multi-semantic message. What characters are saying in a scene plays as a complementation or as a contrasting meaning-layer to the image and sound that is being put into motion. Consequently, literary and cinematic forces acquire a supra-level of engagement with an audience when they are being interposed.

This conception of mediums merging with each other is presented here not as a cultural phenomenon, but as a ‘natural’ attribute of medium culture and, accordingly, of the contemporary ways in which we tell stories. The notion of intertextuality in a post-structuralist approach presumes that “any text is in dialogue with a multiplicity of other texts” (Straumann, 2015: 250). Nearly everything we see, read, touch, or experience as part of any media system has been through a process of remediation, reinterpretation, or simply possesses embedded layers of references on top of each other. Everything is a reference, of a reference, of a reference is, in this sense, my own interpretation of the famous *Fight Club* quote: “everything is a copy, of copy, of copy”. Do I mean David Fincher’s film, or do I mean the book by Chuck Palahniuk? It is hard to make a distinction as both references are already intertwined in popular culture. However, such distinction does matter. Literary remediation¹⁹ is currently understood as a dialogical changing process that is constantly transforming, mutating, and being affected by the interplay of internal and external forces. These mutations help to keep ‘alive’ the original literary message, while transferring it into different places of signification and value, which I propose as fundamentally anchored in visibility and aesthetics. Through remediation processes, the core elements of stories take lines of light, the possibility to constantly become, acquiring new levels of meaning and of sensorial connections; thus, a ‘circular’ experience of storytelling. This assertion does not state, however, that the literary text is always bettered or enhanced by remediation. In fact, literature turned into a cinematic experience is commonly considered to be condensed, concentrated; more significantly when it comes to characters and plots (Straumann, 2015: 251).²⁰ Here lies the question regarding remediation that I aim to shed some light on within this dissertation. How can cinema behave expansive, instead of reductive? How can remediation become effective, become enhancing, in its treatment of a literary text?

A concept that is pertinent to such questions is transmedia storytelling, coined by Henry Jenkins; which refers to the deliberate and coherent development of stories across several mediums. Such notion is not

19 Since its early beginnings, a common feature of film production has been the re-mediated treatment of literature, which a much later focus on it as a multifaceted phenomenon. The study of literary adaptations to film and television gained vast notoriety with the turn of the century, raising some fundamental questions concerning the fidelity of the literary text, and the political and contextual implications a literary piece can suffer in the re-mediation process. Beyond the mere study of a film-genre, literary adaptation as an ongoing phenomenon has established itself as a legitimate and growing area of study that aims to understand the literary message as “disseminated in many different media, undergoing a transformation or mediamorphosis” (Pennachia, 2007: 9).

20 The ultimate exemplification of the difficulties of remediation can be found in the documentary *Lost in La Mancha* [2000] by Keith Fulton and Louis Pep, as it follows Terry Gilliam’s seemingly impossible quest to adapt *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes.

so much focused on “how a story is translated into another medium (adaptation) or how a medium refashions another medium (remediation), but [on] the possibility of expanding the scope and meaning of a narrative by using a range of different media” (Strausmann, 2016: 256). Transmedia extension supposes the ‘enrichment’ of a certain story. Although this can be done through common narrative artifacts, such as the exploration of a new character or of a new dramatic arc or back-story, I propose that in the case of the documentary *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story*, what is at stake is the enrichment of the experiential and affective aspects of Keret’s stories as seen through the aesthetics of their animated form, and of the recreation of real life passages of the author’s experience. All of these elements come together to decisively blur the line between reality and fiction as the main discourse of the film. **My main hypothesis would be that such discourse can only be effective through a narrative and aesthetical symbiosis.**

Within the second part of this chapter, I have briefly point out the expansive ways in which remediation and intertextuality are able to affect storytelling; while in Chapter One I discussed the social implications in the construction and understanding of the stories around us. Now I would like to introduce two final concepts to conclude the theoretical framework of this dissertation, as both of them coherently unite social responses to narrative as displayed in cinematic fiction. Mary Caws’ fiction frames originally refer to the culturally-formed cognitive frames, that help us navigate our experiential dimension, and that “precondition interpretation” (Wolf and Bernhart qtd. In Meyer, 2015: 361). In Chapter One I describe this fiction framing in basis of what Frank calls narrative habitus, which holds within the concepts of the inner book and the inner library. The concept of fiction frames is presented here as a continuation of these concepts when related to the visual and intermedial aspects of the cinematic experience. A **framed scene** describes the type of scene that predisposes the viewer towards a certain emotional response based on his or her own experience. The framed scene is “the other in the same” (Caws qtd. In Meyers, 2005: 362). Therefore, a framed scene refers to those flashes of self-recognition in the flesh of a cinematically displayed ‘Other’, it refers to the creation of empathy in the foreign places of fiction. Caws highlights frames as “aids to perception”; in this sense, I will regard frames both as visual and narrative constructions. However, as *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story* is, at the end of the day, a documentary, it relies much of its narrative weight on interviews. The aim then is not to leave this ‘narrativeness’ unexplored just because is outside the fictional realm. To accomplish such analysis, Ge-

rard Gennet offers a fitting notion through paratexts, as they consist of the “text made outside the work in question”, such as, precisely, interviews. Paratexts live at “textual borders” that provide them with a privileged position within perception, in order to “negotiate generic, social, and cultural frames”, ultimately creating the limit between reality and fiction, between “the world and the artefact” (Meyer, 2015: 362). Paratexts are then particularly useful to answer the question of how the documentary is effective in blurring the limits between reality and fiction, and how at times it is able to dismantle the ‘truths’ in its own narrative in order to build them again in a different way.

To close this chapter, I stress that my approach to the remediation of literature is a positive and expansive one; considering it as a visceral encounter with storytelling. As with the Deleuzian notion of desire, literary remediation is not analysed within this dissection through a “rhetoric of loss” (Straumann, 2015: 251), but as an interpretative and further expansion of the creative art.

Conclusions

The inherent power of storytelling relies on the expression of specific, personal forces that can, nevertheless, take lines of flight to be absorbed by other subjectivities, and to effectively act upon them. The creation act is, in itself, a jump into a multiplicity of possibilities; the understanding of the creation act should be multiple as well, in recognizing all the variables in narrative it possesses, but also multiple in the way we perceive it, granting a larger degree to emotional and affective responses to perception. The role of aesthetics in cinematic storytelling is a fundamental aspect of this process, as it is the visual—the aesthetically pleasant or the aesthetically challenging or the aesthetically seismic, what predisposes our reception of stories as displayed on a screen.



Chapter Three:

An analysis of

Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story

ETGAR

based on a true story

KERET

INSPIRED BY THE SHORT STORIES OF
Etgar Keret

The film by Stephen Kaas and Rutger Lemm is a hybrid documentary composed by the merging of testimonials, montages, animation, and personal anecdotes. As Frank states, “stories are always semiotic as words, images, and gestures that signify. But storytelling materializes the semiotic” (2012: 53). In this sense, the aim of this analysis is not to disregard the semiotic dimension of the narrative constructions of the film but —quite the contrary— to explore the materialization of the semiotic into the aesthetic aspects of the film. To accomplish so, I will conduct an analysis that takes into consideration the paratexts of the film (testimonials and montages), the remediated short stories (as animated by Nina Gantz), and the enactments of Keret’s anecdotes —it is worth to mention that, in the case of the remediated stories, the analysis will also include some comparatives with the original texts as a way to assess the remediation work. All of these narrative constructions are grouped in function of their major storytelling capacities as linked to Deleuze’s philosophy. The following analysis is mostly based on how such capacities affectively behave on the screen.

The documentary opens with what serves as the unifying anecdote of the film: Kaas and Lemm arrive at Israel, they are set apart at the airport by a migration officer and they are asked to tell a story —the story of what brings them there. They proceed to do so, but there is a problem: their story sounds like a lie; the migration officer cannot conceive as plausible that two Dutch filmmakers are travelling all the way to Israel just because they love the stories of an Israeli author. In a humorous tone, this introduction of the film encloses its first proposal: sometimes truth is stranger than fiction; reality and fiction are intertwined. This introductory scene also guides the viewer to another two main ideas that are later developed in the film: how stories can territorialise and deterritorialise people, and how they can only do so through the figure of a particular storyteller as Etgar Keret.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Within this first paratext, the film shows one of its major narrative style: self-reflexivity. This speaks of a cinematic language that performs through humour, irony, and self-aware. Self-reflexivity shows an acknowledgment of the viewer's expectations, playing with them in order to tell the main anecdote of the film. This introductory scene also set the basis for a narrative that functions through three main storylines: the filmmakers 'struggling' to pass into Israel, the storyline of who Etgar Keret is, and all the micro-storylines presented in the short stories —each one of which is directly connected with the character development of Etgar Keret as presented on the documentary. The main narrative structure in the film follows then a variation of the hero's journey,²¹ as it poses the question: Is Etgar Keret a liar?, in order to explore who he is according to himself and the people around him, and what part of himself lies in the stories he tells. In this process, we see glimpses of Keret's childhood —as well of his young years and present days— in an intersection of testimonials and anecdotes, accompanied by his **stories as formations of the self, but also as living entities that gravitate around him.** The film is structured in a way that takes the viewer back and forth through events that happened in real life, through events that 'allegedly' happened in real life, and through events straight out from fiction. Such narrative entanglement is made to blur the limit between fantasy and fiction in storytelling.

3.1 Stories within stories and decentered perceptions

The first aspect to analyse is how the film presents a reality to the viewer that is later re-constructed or altered by the inclusion of new narrative elements. **This creates a plot that moves by telling a story within a story, and a context for these stories that is always changing.** At the beginning of the film, Kaas and Lemm are trying to prove to the migration officer that their story is true. In order to prove it, the migration officer asks them to tell their favourite story from Keret. This opening is significant in several levels. In the form of a joke, it exemplifies a social function of stories: it affirms that a story can gain validity through a second story; in other words, a story is 'truer' if you tell another story to support it. Which entails the notion that an affective story does not only echo past stories, but it also should catalyse a subsequent story to come in order to gain relevance. But this also means that each story is a claimed truth of the person who is telling it, an approximation to *a* truth. A reminder that, when telling stories, there is no such thing as a singular voice, as each story contains multiple micro stories. Therefore, each story performs as the particular angle of a wide kaleidoscope of stories, which denies the power of macronarratives in favour of the micropolitics within specific and seemingly or-

²¹ The hero's journey is a narrative model explained by Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* as the following: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man"

dinary stories. This scene also shows an inherent capacity of stories that is highly important in Keret's writing: **trouble**. While every storytelling artefact functions around trouble, what is notable of many of Keret's stories is that the troubling mechanism is, in itself, an active tool, a performing motive to tell a story. In *Suddenly a Knock on the Door*, Keret tells the self-reflexive anecdote of a writer who is threatened with a gun to tell a story, as an introduction to a collection of his short stories. Following this scheme, the introduction of the film shows two filmmakers in a stressful situation in which **telling a story becomes their freeing act; a story here functions as a bridge to go somewhere, as an escape from a menacing situation.**

The documentary as a whole speaks of stories as artefacts through which Keret is able to escape his particular social reality; such thesis is explored in visually affective ways that position the viewer in several points of views and within several stories. This constitutes the act of viewing as an experience itself, in addition to the experience gained by the narrative effects of the film. This is accomplished mainly by the insertion of animation into live-motion scenes, and through the incorporation of theatrical props that transform the context in which a story is being told. Such narrative style is accompanied by camera movements that behave as freed entities themselves—showing a decentred perception, as opposed to the fixed and centred management of the camera that is a constant in many documentaries. Movement continues to be present throughout the film, especially when a story is presented, conveying the idea **that stories are not motionless, but dynamic and changing.**

A perfect instance to illustrate this synergy between narrative and styling techniques is the sequence that follows the introduction at the airport. After being asked by the migration officer to tell their favourite Keret's story, Kaas—the director of the film, tells the story of Fatso. “It's this story about a guy who meets a girl. A beautiful girl”, he tells while the animated characters take over the screen in front of the viewer, leaving the live-action image of the migration officer behind. There is an affective quality in this transition as, instead of making a clean cut from the live-action scene to the animation one, the first scene seems to be absorbed by the richer world of an upcoming story, which is expressed through animation. **The fictional—the virtual—is introduced then as intensity, as colour and expansion in cinematic affects.**



Fig. 5

The way this first remediated story finishes is also without a clean cut. On the contrary: the remediated story is not finishing at all, as the characters on the screen slowly lose their illustration *facture*²² to become ‘humanized’ in front of the viewer. The characters and their situation actualise themselves in front of the viewer, and in doing so they demand a right to express their inner truth and to act by their own. This is all expressed in terms of **aesthetical malleability**, in the way the image changes its *facture*, by going from illustration to being animated to, at last, become humanly embodied; an allegory of what stories are that can only work through aesthetic decisions. At this point, which is still the beginning of the film, two fundamental notions can be already drawn from it: **stories work as encounters in life, and storytelling act as the bridge between the virtual and the actual**. The viewer watches Keret interacting with the characters in his stories as if they stumbled into his reality, an explicit encounter that occurs on a regular street at night. Such encounter does not receive the aesthetical treatment of a dream sequence or of a burst of inspiration, Keret is simply walking back home when he meets the people that happen to come from his stories. He receives a kiss on the cheek from one of them, from Fatso, the protagonist of the story that is named after him, in what can be interpreted as a sign of gratitude or just as a lively gesture. Nevertheless, the characters are indeed

22 The term ‘*facture*’ within this context is drawn from Simon Grennan’s *Drawing Dispossession: A New Graphic Adaptation of Anthony Trollope’s John Caldigate*. He uses the term to refer to the qualities in the drawing of comic adaptations.

lively, they behave intensely, expansively. This serves as a demonstration that **the creative act, as it is derived from desire connections, generate entities that behave through intensities**; as for Deleuze the virtuals are “a passionate attachment to reality”(Holland, 2005: 61). **This ‘humanization’ of the characters on screen also plays in favour of the notion of stories as freed entities that eventually become sensorial, embodied experiences.** It is interesting to note that such humanisation only occurs when Keret encounter the characters, which can speak of the power of perception to materialise existence. The characters, the virtuals, are presented not as non-existing, but as modes of existence.



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

This encounter also introduces in the film the notions of the *figural* and the *figurative*. The characters are figural in their animated form, they are made to convey emotions when they are brightly coloured and the traces of their illustrations are moving; the characters are figurations when they become ‘humanized’, then they are a representation of a certain gender and age, among other identity terrains; although their behaviour continues to be as intense as before, the characters have lost part of their affective qualities. After the encounter with his characters, Keret continues his way home. By the moment he finally reaches the door of his apartment, the viewer’s mind-set is fixed on the quotidian, believing to witness someone reaching his home when the day breaks. This is a *framed scene*, a familiar place for the viewer, that gets interrupted when Keret opens the door and there is no night-time calm inside as it was expected; what the viewer finds instead is daylight and movement. The film crew is setting the white screen for the interviews, moving light bulbs and cameras around. Keret is not alarmed by this; he greets his wife and takes a sit, without any further instructions. If the viewer is attentive, he is able to see Kaas and Lemm preparing the equipment, a subtle nod to the introductory anecdote, that confirms that they were able to pass to Tel Aviv to film what the viewer is able to see now; the suspense relies in the fact that the viewer still does not know how they accomplished so. This is left unexplained for a longer while, as the migration interrogation continues to be the anecdote that catalyses the action, it remains as the trouble that moves characters from real life to tell or to introduce stories.

At the end of the first third of the film, the filmmakers have already told to the migration officer the story of how Keret started writing, the officer then assumes this should be the main point of interest of a documentary and, therefore, that they shouldn’t have any more business in coming back to Israel. “You got what you wanted”, he says, “roll the credits”. In effect, the viewer sees the credits roll along with the exit music of the film. This scene works as a humorous act of self-reflexivity, but also as a wink to the unexpected endings Keret gives to his stories. In this case, self-reflexivity does not only acts as a narrative style that performs through humour, but it also communicates with the viewer in the way intermedial storytelling constructions do, by showing a previous knowledge about the original mediated material.



Fig. 9

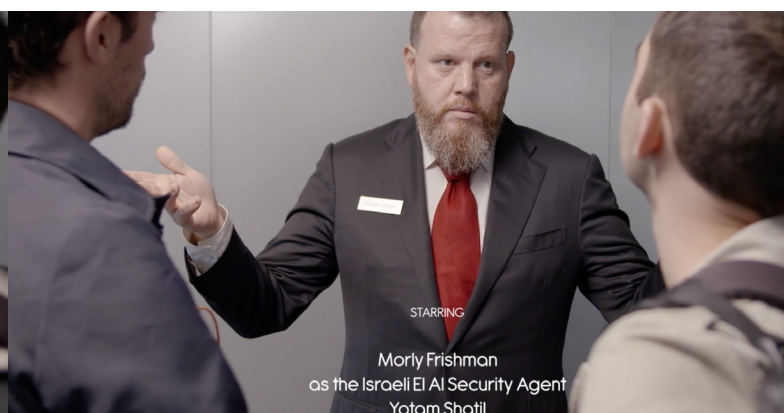


Fig. 10

Coming back to paratext of the preparation of Keret's apartment, the transformation of Keret's living room into an interview area is not white noise. First of all, **the raw becoming, the mutations, are not solely reserved to the characters of Keret's stories, but also for the contextual atmosphere of the places in the film.** This is significant as it materially exemplifies how trouble calls for a response that can alter the characters' possibilities, but also the possibilities of their environment. Optical visibility becomes haptic in the understanding of these new dimensions. During this time the technical mistakes are left in: the camera bounces, the camera zooms in and out in a blur, it loses focus; all of this, also with the affective purpose of conveying an ambiance of authenticity, of verisimilitude, of truthness.



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

Blurriness is a styling artefact that is highlighted in the visual discourse of the film. There is a montage that follows Keret walking on the streets of New York towards a presentation of his book. During this sequence, the camera follows him through dynamic movements which creates, in addition to a blurring effect of the background, a **disjointed point of view**. The viewer can see the frontal image of Keret's face, then the viewer can see him over his shoulder, then the viewer can see Keret again walking at some new distance. These camera movements produce an effect on the viewer that provides the illusion of a decentred perception, a mobility of the point of view that separates the mind-body-brain machine of the viewer to travel along with the point of view of the camera, of the abstract machine that is cinema when is clearly presented as working independently.



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

These decentred perceptions are also present in the remediation treatment of Keret's stories. Instead of narrating the stories line by line as originally written by Keret, Kaas and Lemm decided to include the short stories that were pertinent to the hero's journey exemplified in Keret, but in the words of the people telling such story. This exemplifies the affective qualities of storytelling, by being separated from the page, and absorbed by the subjectivities of their new narrators. The first remediated story is *Fatso*, outlined as it is perceived, remembered, and explained by the director of the film. Each selected story is remediated not only by acquiring an animated form on the screen, but by being re-interpreted in the speech and perception of different interlocutors. Thus, **the documentary shows a powerful affective quality by demonstrating in strong aesthetical and narrative ways that subjectivities on the screen are being transcended, and that stories and perceptions behave as unattached and unfixed.** Such variety of point of views and perceptions, as well as the fact that each storyline is expanded with new narrative elements, sustains the idea that storytelling is affective when it shows a multiplicity of stories and perceptions, a multiplicity of embodied truths.

3.2 The figure of the storyteller and the construction of a truth

Starting from the altercation at the airport, Kaas and Lemm open up a discussion of who Etgar Keret is in the eyes of the world and in the eyes of his readers. Through a montage, the film makes a quick revision that highlights Keret's playful personality and the eccentric facts that have resulted from his professional and personal endeavours. Such montage has *Carmen's Overture* by Bizet as music score, which plays as a funny contrast to the light-hearted images and information that are presented to the viewer. This first approximation to Keret depicts him not only as the author of his stories, but as a char-



Fig. 17



Fig. 18

acter in them. Eccentricity plays a big part in this first depiction of Keret; the peculiar personality and lifestyle traits of Keret are magnified in this section of the film as an introductory notion of **difference regarded as positive**. Although such eccentricity can be understood in binary terms —as opposed to the ‘normal’ or the ‘quotidian’, the narrative construction of the film does not continue to present Keret as a reduction of his intensities, that is, as an eccentric author that, by consequence, writes eccentric stories. On the contrary, the film backs up the notion that sometimes stories precede experiences, as the viewer is shown the ways in which Keret ‘makes’ the reality around him. The motif of the film is then that life is intense and different in itself, that every instance in life is a fertile land for the creation of stories, but these can only be discovered and encountered by a storyteller that can recognize them as such. Keret is portrayed as someone that is, just as any other person, defined by the differences within himself and within his surroundings, but he becomes a storyteller the minute he transforms this infinite differences into stories; making the ordinary intense, singular. This also puts forward the notion that an image or a concept only exists up until the moment it is perceived. A story only exists up until the moment is recognized by a storyteller.



Fig. 19

It is of interest how the figure of the storyteller is portrayed in the film as that of a liar. However, I choose to extend such adjective to that of the trickster. As Lewis Hyde states: “the trickster in the narrative is the narrative itself” (2017: 277), which means that storytelling is forcefully in need of some make-believe tricks that can only come from someone that is constantly testing the limits between reality and fiction, between good and bad, as it is the case with Etgar Keret. The style of Keret’s writing can be read as rough at times, both in the construction of it, as in the use of language and the assertions that this language seems to imply. In *Suddenly a Knock on the Door* [2012], Keret writes:

It’s hard to think up a story with the barrel of a loaded pistol pointed at your head. But the guy insists. “In this country,” he explains, “if you want something, you have to use force.” He just got here from Sweden, and in Sweden it’s completely different. Over there, if you want something, you ask politely, and most of the time you get it. But not in the stifling, sultry Middle East. All it takes is a single week around here to figure out how things work—or rather, how things don’t work. The Palestinians asked for a state, nicely. Did they get one? The hell they did. So they switched to blowing up kids on buses, and people started listening. The settlers wanted a dialogue. Did anyone pick up on it? No way. So they started getting physical, pouring hot oil on the border patrolmen, and suddenly they had an audience. In this country, might makes right, and it doesn’t matter if it’s about politics or economics or a parking space. Brute force is the only language we understand.

There is a disenchantment in these lines that, far from getting diluted by the use of grim humour, gets more effective in its communication with the reader. However, what truly ‘makes the trick’ is the insertion of the absurd, of the unexpected. After the bearded man from Sweden points at the writer with the gun in order to get a story out of him, there’s a knock on the door and suddenly there’s a guy from Morocco holding a revolver and asking, too, for a story. Then there’s another knock on the door, this time a pizza delivering guy, that after a while takes a cleaver out, and sits on the couch with the other two men waiting for a story...Keret’s writing style does not rely on the disenchanted lines about his country, but on the entanglements he constructs with trouble, suspense, and the unexpectedness of the absurd that comes and, might be the result, of such social reality. This management of the absurd is reproduced in *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story* in narrative and stylistic expressions, but the central figure for this to work is the portrayal of Keret as a trickster that juggles with the reality around him.

In the testimonials from his closest friends, Keret is indeed described as a liar, but as a necessary one. A trickster that “lies in order to make you understand the truth better”. The film states, then, that truth lies beyond facts. Such proposal is very Deleuzian in the assertion that true life is to be found in intensity, in the exaggeration that is inherent to storytelling. At the same time, Keret is known among



Fig. 20



Fig. 23



Fig. 21



Fig. 24



Fig. 22



Fig. 25

his friends as a good liar with good intentions; which confirms the inherited moral grounds that story-telling, even in its humorous and bold instances, still attains. **Stories in the film are conceived as independent truths that escape the perception of their creators. Truth in the film is conceived as malleable, as flying from perception to perception.** As it happens with beauty, what is truth and what is fiction lies on the eyes of the beholder. When Keret tells a story, there is the essence of the truth in it, which suffices to become a truth for him.

Such explorations are more palpable in two of his short stories that are remediated on the film. *Hole in the Wall* is narrated in the film by Keret himself, although in less detail. The story follows a sceptical man that yells, mocking the general belief, a fake wish into a hole in the wall believing it won't come true. To his surprise, a few days later his wish is granted, as he meets his guardian angel. But "this angel is a total asshole", Keret explains in the film. The story comes to an end when one day they are both on a rooftop and the man dares the angel to fly, to which the angel makes excuses not to. The

man then pushes the angel over the roof believing he will fly, but he doesn't. The conclusion, both in the published story as in Keret's words in the documentary is that "he wasn't an angel, just a liar with wings." What in the published story can be read as plain disappointment towards the system of belief of a country gets affectively amplified, and becomes more personal in its remediated form. In the film, while Keret is telling the story he is situated within the place the story occurs; he is telling the story from a rooftop where the story might take place. The viewer sees a medium shot of Keret's face when he is explaining that the man is trying to make the angel fly, but the next shot inserts the viewer inside Keret's point of view, showing, at the same time, what the man in the story sees when he looks down from the rooftop after pushing the angel. Here it is used again the decentred perception, as the eyes of the camera become first the eyes of Keret and of the character of the story, and then the eyes of the viewer again.

The sequence of the angel falling from the building is half-animation, half-live scenery; as it is only the characters in the story that are shown in animated form. The figural and the figurative are more intertwined in this scene, as the characters do not get a human representation, other than the hint that, symbolically, Keret might be the fooled man and the liar with wings at the same time. The entire scene first implies that the man fooled by the angel in the story is indeed Keret. When he breaks down the news to the viewer that the angel was just a liar with wings, the viewer's response gets enhanced by this visual association. But a brief closing of the scene adds another layer of meaning, as we watch Keret almost falling down from the rooftop border, just as the angel did. He recovers his balance on time, he smiles, and goes back to safe terrain. This shot is a nod to the brief closing of his stories, but also to their interpretative openness. Is Etgar Keret writing about being fooled by winged liars? Or is he a winged liar himself? That is, of course, for the viewers to discuss. What the film accomplishes is to situate the viewer in both the fiction and the reality behind each story, and how these two mingle with each other.



Fig. 26



Fig. 27

Later on the film, another story counterpoises the effects of the first one. Lieland is narrated by Keret's editor, on his own words. "It's about a boy called Robbie" he starts saying, and the scene shows Keret sitting on a porch reading a newspaper, when he sees a little boy pass by and recognizes him. The viewer already knows the kid's name is Robbie, but when Keret asks him if he's Robbie, the kid says, of course, that he isn't. The live action image changes then its facture to animation, starting solely by the image of the kid, until the entire background is transformed into animation sequences.

Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30



Fig. 31

The story of Robbie starts the day in which he discovers how to lie. He grows up to be an amazing liar, each lie becoming bigger and better. He lies about everything to get himself out of trouble, but these lies are always negative: "Robbie told dozen of lies: violent ones, sad ones, horrific ones. Never expecting to be confronted with them again". Until one day he decides to go back to the first place where he lied, in order to recover some money that he hid under a stone. When he uncovers the ground, he is swallowed by it and that is how he enters 'Lieland'. This is the place where all the products of his lies live, they are all living entities who suffer the conditions he inflicted on them by their creation: he

Fig. 32



Fig. 33



Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36



Fig. 37



encounters the injured dog he lied about once, and a grandmother on a wheelchair he used as excuse many times. “The moral of the story”, Keret’s editor concludes, “it’s not to stop lying, but to start lying. If you start now, only lie about positive things”.

These are two different approaches to the figure of the trickster, and to how tricksters should handle storytelling. *Hole in the Wall* speaks about disillusion, about the risk of a cynic to take a leap of faith only to be deceived. Should we all become deceivers ourselves then? While the next story, *Lieland*, proposes that you can be a trickster, just as long as you are a good one and for the good reasons.

3.3 Stories as encounters in life and constant becomings

So far in the analysis of Etgar Keret: *Based on a True Story*, the film puts forward the following assertions: A story claims more sides of a truth by the inclusion of another story —or of as many stories as possible (affectively presented by the interchangeable points of view and perceptions), and the notion that stories are encounters. Stories are all around us, we just have to catch them. A motif of the film is then that life is intense and different in itself, that every instance in life is a fertile land for the creation of stories, but these can only be discovered and encountered by a storyteller that can recognize them as such. One of the question the film raises is in which ways can a storyteller discover his own stories to tell. Keret provides an answer that is directly connected to affect as reviewed within this dissertation.

Although Keret is not able to exactly pinpoint his emotions, or precisely because of that, he turns

to storytelling as a way to, somehow, contain them. For Keret, storytelling is not about rationalizing emotions, but a channel to conduct them, to give them a ‘breath’ of life. **The fabrication of emotion in storytelling is, then, fundamentally affective; as it is coming from affect and resulting in more affects that will ultimately act on the readers or spectators.** In relation to this, the opening scene at the airport poses a scenario that presumes that it is hard to believe that two Dutch filmmakers, storytellers themselves, can be that involved in fiction that can act, at times, as very specifically located. However, when the film evolves **it shows Keret stories as independent beings, by showing them act and perform in relation to new subjectivities through animation. The stories in the film are not determined by the specific words that first expressed them on the published version, but they are determined by the emotions they carry with them.**



Fig. 38



Fig. 39

Such affective qualities are successfully translated on the screen; particularly, the unexpectedness that lies in Keret’s stories, and the treatment of each story as a vital, living thing. The ‘what if?’ that presents each of Keret’s stories is, as Ian Samson noted, always followed by a ‘what the heck?’; a deliberate turn into the unlikely. The characters and situations in Keret’s stories are full of ‘what if’s, as they are constantly taking lines of flight in order to become something else. Such condition is continuously portrayed in the film, as I’ve referred before, through the malleability of the facture of the image, but also in the transportation of narrative resources that symbolize change and mutability into accurate visual representations. The narrative constant becomings of the characters are transferred onto the screen by visual allegories that complement such notions. The characters are especially poignant on the screen when they are in transition, in the middle of becoming; going from one state to another, or going from one place to the next. The constant becomings of Keret’s stories rely much of their significance on the troubling situations their characters encounter. But, at the end, what brings a change in their beings is what the characters do in the midst of trouble. The characters in Keret’s stories, perhaps because of their short lifetime inside their constructed anecdotes, are interpellated to act in precise and definitive ways; their interpellation is to be subversive. Every character, far from resolving trouble is, instead, creating it, by performing a specific action that

Fig. 40



Fig. 41



Fig. 42



Fig. 43



Fig. 44



Fig. 45



alters the events around them; they are hailed to change, to evolve, by refusing the original emplotment in which they were conceived.

A perfect illustration of this is the remediation of *Pipes*. This is the second of Keret's short stories that is presented in the film; however, perhaps it is the most relevant as it is the first story Keret ever wrote —after a traumatic event in his life, as he tells us on the film. Keret retells his own story differently from the published version, as it seems to be the norm in the film. His tone of voice is low, quiet, inferring a touch of sadness. This is the story of a man who works in a factory making pipes. He hates his job; one could even say he hates his life. His only entertainment is to stay after working hours making odd-shaped pipes to put marbles on them. He finds a little joy in planning complicated designs that, nevertheless, safely deliver the marbles to the other end of the pipe. But one day he builds a pipe too intricate, so the marble never reaches the other end. He tries with other marbles, but he soon realises the marbles are not stuck, they are simply disappearing. Inspired, he builds a pipe in which he can fit. When the pipe is ready, he crosses it anxiously, to discover that on the other end there is another world; one that is full with people that “couldn't find a place on Earth,” concludes Keret, “and [that] had to reach this place for things to start to make sense”. In this story, what is troubling is life itself; therefore, there is no trouble which can be resolved. The character is interpellated to create a new trouble, a trouble bigger than life itself, in order to find freedom.

The main difference between the original story and the remediated one is the tone of the ending. Although Keret's stories are characterised by being, perhaps, extremely open-ended, a more obscure closing message is undeniable in the original story. What the protagonist of *Pipes* finds in the original version is not only a place that is not Earth, but that it is clearly Heaven:

I always used to think that Heaven is a place for people who've spent their whole life being good, but it isn't [...] Heaven is simply a place for people who were genuinely unable to be happy on earth. They told me here that people who kill themselves return to live their life all over again, because the fact that they didn't like it the first time doesn't mean they won't fit in the second time. But the ones who really don't fit in the world wind up here. They each have their own way of getting to heaven. There are pilots who got here by performing a loop at one precise point in the Bermuda Triangle. There are housewives who went through the back of their kitchen cabinets to get here, and mathematicians who found topological distortions in space and had to squeeze through them to get here.

Such ending gets expanded in its meaning on the film, it gains interpretative openness. There is a factor that is crucial to remediation and intermedial constructions: the previous knowledge from part

of the viewer. For viewers of the film that have not read *Pipes* before, the story probably acts on them as an allegory for misfits. But for the viewers that have read the original story, we get the understanding that, initially, what Keret was conveying in the story was a comforting place for people that suffer from the departed of a dear one that committed suicide. In this retake of the story, such viewer understands that, this time around, what Keret finds in this place is still not Earth, but it isn't Heaven; he finds a life that is enjoyable in the place where stories live. A story that gets separated from his author, a story that with time acquired the opposite meaning even to his creator; this works as a great example of stories as independent and mutable, and as affective entities that are capable of acting on people in different ways, by being displaced in time or place. As it happens with *Hole in the Wall*, the juxtaposition of live-image and illustration mutates Keret into the protagonist of the story.

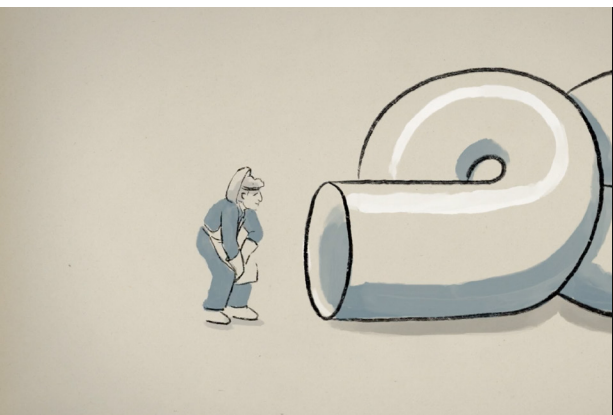


Fig. 46



Fig. 47

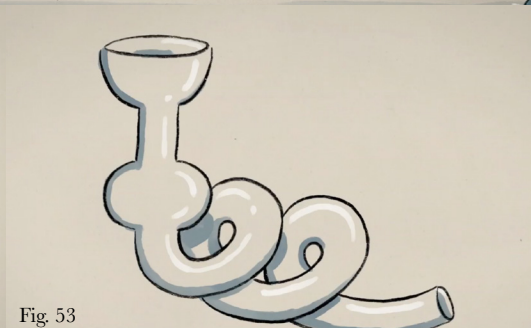
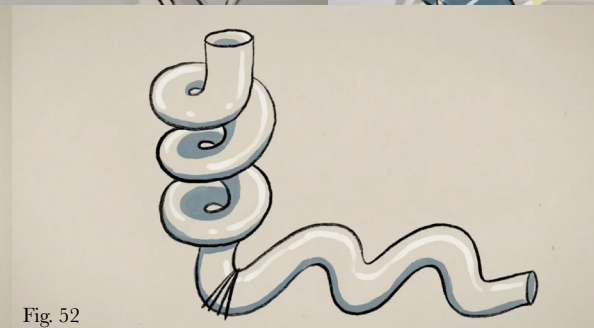
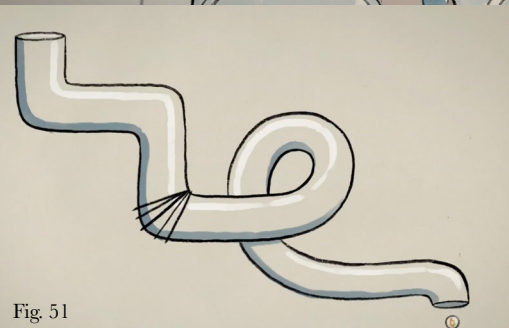
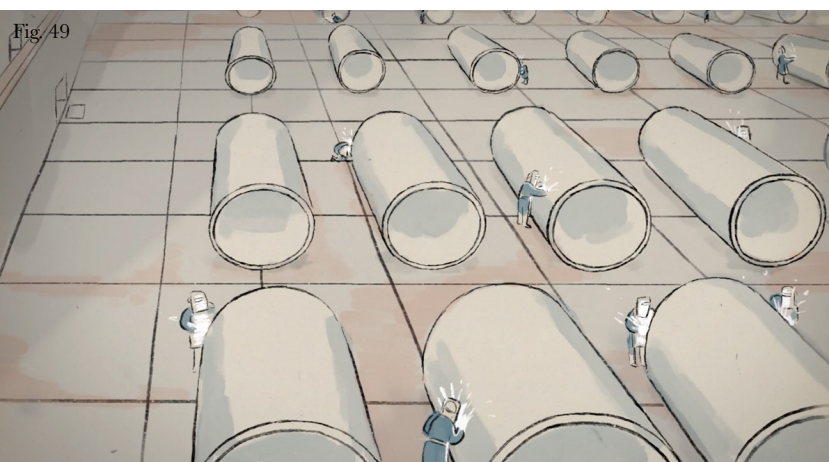


Fig. 48

Despite its interpretative openness, *Pipes* is also effective, as mentioned before, as an allegory of misfits. It displays a vindication of the notably different, of the singular. In the original text, Keret writes:

When I got to seventh grade, they had a psychologist come to school and put us through a bunch of adjustment tests. He showed me twenty different flashcards, one by one, and asked me what was wrong with the pictures. They all seemed fine to me, but he insisted and showed me the first picture again—the one with the kid in it. “What’s wrong with this picture?” he asked in a tired voice. I told him the picture seemed fine. He got really mad and said, “Can’t you see the boy in the picture doesn’t have any ears?” The truth is that when I looked at the picture again, I did see that the kid had no ears. But the picture still seemed fine to me. The psychologist classed me as “suffering from severe perceptual disorders,” and had me transferred to carpentry school.

In this text, the understanding of difference is highly important. The whole reason the protagonist of *Pipes*, a kid back then, was catalogued as negatively different —as in lacking intelligence— was because he was not able to marginalize an image by a difference that he regarded as positive —the fact that the kid in the picture has no ears is, after all, just one difference among a series of infinite differences and, therefore, not special or singular at all. The subsequent categorization of the protagonist, as “suffering from severe perceptual disorders”, exemplifies the Deleuzian notion of the malfunction of social order in coding something as alarmingly different, as bizarre, aberrant or, simply as undesirable; all because it involves a shift in perception. Although this part of the story is skipped in its remediated form, there are still some subtle nods to the notion of positive difference, expressed through style variations. In the opening animated scene of the story, we can see all the workers of the factory styled in grey colours, working at the same pace on the exact same type of pipes; the homogeneity of the scenes is followed through until we see the different designs of pipes that the protagonist produces, in a sequence whose rhythm and speed become —even if slightly— more agile and energetic. This is the first break of homogeneity, but also a short parade of difference as illustrated by the singularities of each pipe. This is a visual manifestation of the notion of style as resistance and of difference as positive, as for Deleuze “essence is always difference” (Deleuze qtd. In Colebrook, 2002: 53).



Another central affective aspect of the film is the animations themselves, even when they are let to be free from juxtapositions or associations with other images. The illustration technique is, as the style of Keret's stories, very precise but expressive. The strokes are simple, and the colour palette is a reduced one. Even so, there is an affective quality to them, marked most notably in the expressiveness of the faces and the movements of the bodies.



Fig. 54



Fig. 55

3.4 Stories as territorialisation and deterritorialisation

The major notion of the film is how storytelling is a tool for survival. In order to expose such truth, the film performs at times a more canonical narrative treatment, very common in documentaries, by providing a biographical insight on Etgar Keret. At the beginning of the film, Lemm, the writer of the film, asks Keret: “Your stories are a combination of grounded realism and surrealistic elements. How did that style come into existence?”. The first question the film aims to explore is how Keret's narrative style was originated. As an answer, Keres does not refer to any known author to talk about the stories he grew up with as a kid; as these weren't so much stories of popular fiction, or children stories per se. He specifically talks about the “made up” stories her mother and father shared with him. However, in Keret's inner library are not only grouped such stories, but also the ones that speak about the social environment that propelled his parents to make up their own stories, as opposed to consume and reproduce popular ones. Keret briefly talks about his mother's upbringing in a Jewish ghetto, and how this particular circumstance made of her a good storyteller; he later mentions that his father was a Holocaust survivor as well, and how the aim of both of them was to convey a sense of optimism through the stories they shared with him. Keret also compares the storytelling style of her parents; his mother was, according to him, more inclined to fantasy, while his father told him much more crude stories that involved a set of adult situations, that were ‘disguised’ to be understood by a five-year-old

kid. The father would say, for example, that a prostitute is “someone that gets paid to listen to other people’s problems”, that mafia people “collect rent from apartments they don’t own”, or that “drunk people have this physical condition that the more liquid they drink, the happier they become”. In the commentaries allegedly expressed by the father, specifically in the mix of naivety and acid humour, the viewer can trace Keret’s style as a storyteller. The next scene features the commentary of one of Keret’s good friends, who states that it is not, precisely, that he has been surrounded by special circumstances, but that Keret possess a special and intensive way to revise and retell even the most autobiographical events of his life. As with any film, edition is key to construct the narrative discourse of the film; what this scene tell us is — by being positioned right after Keret’s testimonial — that there is no such thing as a truth to be discovered, but a variety of them and, most importantly, that the specific truth of a storyteller will always be brighter, funnier, exaggerated. I have already discussed the degree in which the figure of the storyteller is portrayed in the film as a trickster that extrapolates truth and life; however, the blurry line between fiction and reality in the way Keret retells his own memories becomes relevant to understand that our identity is not only defined by the stories that we are told while growing up, but also by the stories we tell ourselves since our early identity formations.

An example of this can be found also in the first third of the film, when Keret tells the story of how his parents met. Keret starts telling the story in a Rumanian restaurant, as that is where the story took place sixty years ago. Keret’s father was celebrating that he got a big pay check from his job as an electrician, so he invited a nice group of friends to celebrate with him. At some point, a gipsy band arrived —as soon as Keret states this fact on the screen, a gipsy band as the one in the story slowly walks into the frame in the background. When his friends went home, Keret’s father decided to keep celebrating so he hired the entire gipsy band as his personal band for the rest of the day. What follows is a very



Fig. 56

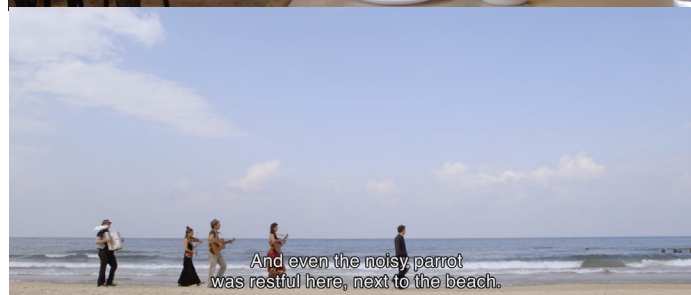


Fig. 57

cinematic scene in which Keret walks next to the beach as his father did, with the line of musicians following behind.

Then, the action on the screen takes over the narrative voice. Keret stops narrating and instead performs the actions of the story so the viewer can understand the situations. This performs the Deleuzian notion that there are moments where language is limited in effectively convey the wholeness of experience; while action and movement can better portray the intensity and force of the moment.



Fig. 58



Fig. 59

Keret's father was took by the police, in what they thought it was a rebellious act; but that was, in fact, an innocent mistake. He realised too late that he was not urinating any wall, but the wall of the French embassy, and that, in conjunction with the gipsy band, the whole scene seemed like a reactionary movement. In this instance, the figural and figuration become central again. The gipsy band was figural as it moved sensations through music, colours and rhythm, but it became figuration, the representation of an ethnic group with its history of political assertions, the moment they were assessed as so by the police. In the enactment of the anecdote, we can see Keret being dragged to the police car. Once inside, he keeps telling what happened after: while the gipsy band fought the police men, Etgar's father saw a beautiful girl passing by; he stepped out of the car and introduced himself as an inspector, asking for her contact details. The moment the girl realised that he was not part of the police force but the one that got arrested it was, again, too late; he already had her number. Luckily for Keret, she agreed to meet him the next day. This simple anecdote informs the viewer that Keret's inner book was greatly influenced by the notion of the storyteller as a trickster, as if the best way to achieve what one wants is through a story, better yet if such story is slightly deceiving. A second significant notion conveyed by this anecdote, and that helps to understand Keret's inner book is a humorous approximation to politics. As the film implies, all of Keret's anecdotes are 'based on a true story', but the extension to which such stories are stretched into the terrains of fiction remains unknown.

In the following scenes, his mother shares the difficult conditions in which Keret was born, mentioning the fact that his name means ‘challenge’ because of this. In the subsequent scene, Keret shares: “[my mother] called me Challenge because it was a challenge to have me, and it would be a challenge for me to stay alive”. In this phrasing, another side of Keret’s emplotment becomes evident: the belief that he was born to find struggle in living. This assertion gets even more affective with the insertion of a complementary story that tells the viewer about how Keret started writing.

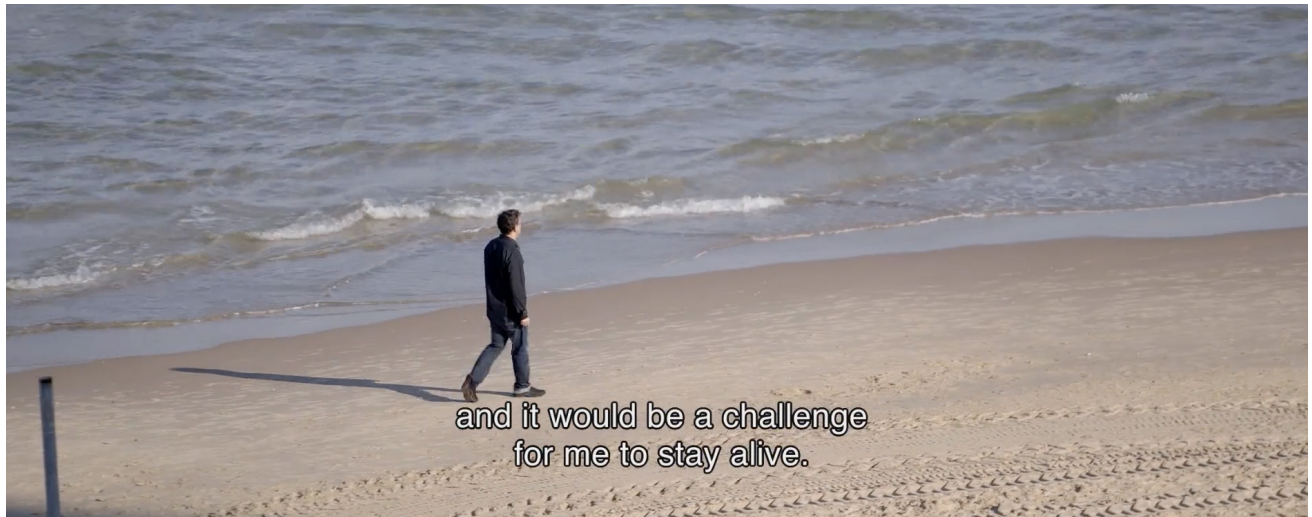


Fig. 60

Before introducing that particular enactment, I ought to outline the ways in which stories are shown to territorialize Keret in the film. First of all, he is described by his friends as a solitary and fearful kid, that would find a place of comfort in telling stories. His childhood friend, Gur, comments about the relationship of Keret with stories as a child: “maybe that’s a strategy he built up growing up as a small kid. He said: I’m good with words, but I’m not going to fight. I’m going to dazzle them with my talking, and this way I’m going to survive”. This is the first textual link about storytelling as a tool for survival, but what the film shows next is how only a specific style of storytelling can serve such purpose.



Fig. 61



Fig. 62

Keret's upbringing was based on the alteration of rules, which could have resulted in his particular style of telling stories. Keret recalls: "When we played a game, [my parents] told us there are no rules. While the other kids were playing soccer, basketball, or handball, we were on a beach and we had the ball, and they said: you can use your hands or feet. You can decide that if you lose, you actually win". As discussed on Chapter One, narrative templates actively influence people's perception of what is real, of what if possible, and of what is worthy to do or to avoid. The way we relate to stories dictates individual formation. Keret's narrative habitus was one of freedom.

In an opposition to this, the next scene shows three men from the army standing on the street in what is staged as a quotidian scene. This framed scene predisposes the viewer towards sensations that are universally similar. As the imagery around military might change from country to country, there is still some common ground in such imageries that condition the emotions the viewer will experiment on the scenes that follow. "I began writing during my compulsory army service", says Keret while we see him going down the stairs; he keeps talking and, simultaneously, he removes the shirt he is wearing on top. He complains about having received such a rule-free upbringing if later in life he would be forced to become a soldier. As he explains this, he puts on a shirt from the army on top. Little by little, as if he was a theatre actor that is preparing backstage, he takes into the scene new visual elements —as if they were theatre props, until the scenery is complete and the viewer understands he is being situated along Keret in an army service chamber. Haptic visuality is crucial in the scene, as the affective quality of this transition relies on the viewer 'feeling' the new weight of the uniform on Keret, grasping in full the contained emotions within the story he is narrating. "The whole idea of the army is losing you individuality", he says as he continues to get dressed, "conforming, trying to hide everything that's different in you". He goes on telling how his two best friends served at the same time that him, but one of them, Oren, started showing signs of depression that led to his suicide in the same computer chamber he shared with Keret. After a short examination to evaluate his mental condition because of the trauma, Keret was classified as 'ok' and put back to the chamber where he found his friend after the suicide. Such confinement, both mental and physical, led Keret to write his first story, *Pipes*.

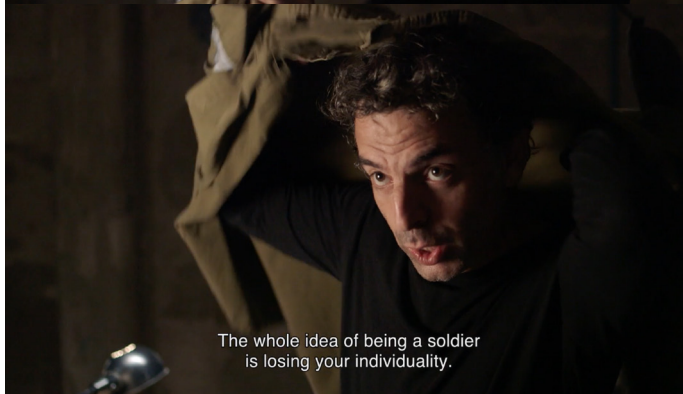


Fig. 63



They trained me for eighteen years
to become a crap soldier.

Fig. 64



The whole idea of being a soldier
is losing your individuality.

Fig. 65



Conforming, trying to hide
everything that's different in you.

Fig. 66



Fig. 67

As stories provide us with our first system of thinking, the territorialisations of Keret through stories marked the grand motifs that are present in his storytelling: he grew up believing in the figure of the trickster as a positive force that catalyses life to get into motion, and as such he creates characters that orchestrate trouble and, therefore, a reason to tell a story; and it is through stories that Keret territorialised himself as a sort of misfit, as someone that would always struggle to keep himself alive. However, it is also through the capacities that are inherent to telling stories, that Keret was able to deterritorialise himself from painful and caging situations in his life. After the remediation of *Pipes* ends, we see Keret coming out from the enormous last pipe of the story, emerging to reality. He carries the first draft of *Pipes* with him as we see him walk to his brother's house to show him the story. The brother just says “cool story”, and asks if he has another copy of it. Then the viewer learn that the story has been trashed; the contrast of dialogue and image is extensive in its use of humor.

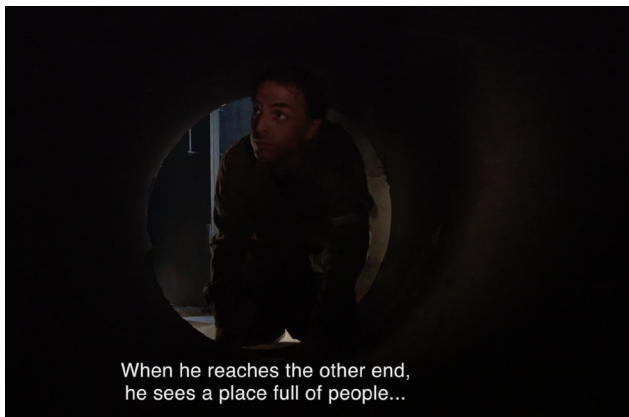


Fig. 68



Fig. 70



Fig. 69



Fig. 71

With this gesture from his brother, Keret came to a realisation: “he was telling me that the story wasn’t in the paper. It was in his mind now. I kept on walking and thinking about it. And I said: wow, this is a kind of magic. You can transform your emotions to somebody else’s mind”. This assertion conveniently encloses that storytellers believe in stories as becoming entities on its own, travelling from subjectivity to subjectivity through its affective qualities.



Fig. 73



Fig. 74

The final aspect to highlight of film is how, in terms of style, one of the strongest points of the film can be found in its transition narratives between scenes. These narrative bridges continue the cinematic conversation after one scene is apparently over; however, these subtle paratexts still communicate with the viewer. The reason that I thoroughly refer to *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story* as a film and not as a documentary per se is because its paratext are mainly fictionalized. The bridges between scenes, and the enactments of Keret's anecdotes are working completely based on affect through framed scenes that connect to the viewer through sensorial memories and emotional associations. Through cinematic language, Keret's feelings are being mediated, they are granted with a visual form. Such examples can be found in the bridge paratexts that used of the sea and the desert. Both images are territorialised to the geographical context of Israel, but are deterritorialised by the subjectivities of the viewers. The sea is used then as a place of introspection and the desert as a place of freedom. The ability of the narrative in the film to convey such emotions in paratexts mediates the feeling of Keret's anecdotes, and the feeling that lies inside his personal territorialisations in a way that is affectively magnified for the viewer.



Fig. 75



He seems to be always
engaged in this battle...

Fig. 76



with senselessness.

Fig. 77



Whether it's the senselessness
of his parents' experience historically...

Fig. 78



or the senselessness of his own life.

Fig. 79



Conclusions

The aim of this dissertation is to determine the affective qualities of storytelling in relation to narrative and visual style. The selected case study provides a fertile terrain to answer such question, but also to explore how these affective instances behave in a context of remediation and intermediality. The exploration of the topic led to individual conclusions for each chapter. The first dimension of the research—that implied the combination of socio-narratology and selected notions of Gilles Deleuze’s philosophy—put forward an understanding of storytelling as a pivotal social act—in terms of individual and collective identity formation, and the importance of storytelling to behave ‘multiple’, to combat a story with a story; that is to insert a multiplicity of point of views within storytelling in order to offer a more complex representation of a specific reality.

The second dimension of this research focuses on how storytelling works in matters of affect and style. The Deleuzian understanding of style speaks of a power in which stories communicate not only by what is being said, but the way in which it is being said. Style in this context is fundamentally subversive, as it modifies the language canons in order to construct an affect; that is, an emotion that is not anchored in words, but that uses words as a medium to travel from subjectivity to subjectivity. On chapter Two, I referred to two ways in which style is subversive through affect. Language in storytelling can be used as deeply anchored within a subjectivity; which means that language can be used as specificity towards a social reality, towards a claimed truth. In this way, storytelling deals with a micro-scenario, a micro-plot. However, this is a storytelling territorialisation that is attained to affect. The example, used on Chapter Two, about Sandra Cisneros using the language of an 8-year-old girl inflicts on the reader the feeling of being a female that age inserted in that particular social condition; an affective encounter

with what being a chinaca young girl feels like. This is a territorialisation that performs against the macronarrative of the American dream. The second way in which style is subversive through affect is also explained on Chapter Two through a fraction of Etgar Keret's *Unzipped*; the use of language in the story breaks syntax in order to convey a sensorial impact on the reader, by creating the sensation one might feel if one's tongue has been pricked. Such use of language goes against its construction itself as a way to prioritize the affective quality of storytelling. This in an exploration of telling stories that does not work based on representation, but on the 'mediation' of a feeling. Cisneros does not describe what a small chicana girl is feeling; she is writing as being inserted in such subjectivity, with the affective consequences of that. Keret does not describe what it feels to be pricked in the tongue, he simply expresses himself as someone that have just been pricked in the tongue. The mediation of feelings leads to the third dimension of this research: storytelling in a context of remediation.

On chapter Two, I make a brief revision of contemporary storytelling as being posed in a cultural momentum of remediation and intermediality. The scope of this revision understands literary remediation as a dialogical process whose nature is change. This translates into the Deleuzian notion of constant becomings, as mutations is what helps to keep the intermedial message alive. Therefore, remediation and intermediality are proposed within this dissertation as a positive and expanding process that enhance the literary message via a set of affects that perform through aesthetics. This involves the notion of **cinema as a fundamentally affective mechanism to tell stories; as an ultimately independent medium, that operates through affect and perception**. As such, the act of viewing is proposed here as an experience. This confirms that the scope of this dissertation is the notion that the creative act is a living and unfinished entity with effects on its own.

With these conclusions of the theoretical framework as the basis of my dissertation, the aim is to answer the question: how is the 'affectiveness' of storytelling portrayed in Etgar Keret: *Based on a True Story*? To start the consequent argumentation, I will refer first to the several findings of the visual and narrative analysis of *Etgar Keter: Based on a True Story*. Firstly, the narrative capacities —as outlined by socio-narratology on Chapter One of this dissertation— were found to be successfully translated on their remediated form in relation to their affects; the narrative capacities of 'trouble' and 'truth telling' were particularly crucial to the visual and narrative experience as translated to the screen. Trouble —the conflict that initiates the events of an anecdote— is aesthetically translated on the film as a change in the facture of the image; either going from live-action scenes to animation, or by adding visual elements into the scenery—as it happens with the enactments of Keret's personal anecdotes in the film. The **malleability of the image**, then, becomes the major affect that acts on the viewer through the aesthetics of the film, but that is ultimately linked to the affective motifs that characterize Etgar Keret's

stories. The narrative motif in most of Keret stories is characters that are hailed to change, to evolve, to mutate. This is expressed in the film through the transitions in image; transitions in which **affect operates on the brain-body-mind of the viewer through a visuality that reaches the terrain of the sensorial and the emotive.** This is a manifestation of social constant becomings in an aesthetic form. Each displayed truth behaves as a potential reality, which is proposed within this dissertation as the most important and inherent power of telling stories. **These two capacities of stories, trouble and truth telling, are the vehicles through which affect travels from subjectivity to subjectivity, and act as the catalysers for the remediated stories to retain the affective and social force that the literary versions hold.**

Secondly, the figure of the storyteller was portrayed in *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story* as a trickster; the relation between the figure of the trickster and the storyteller was found pivotal for the social function of stories, as tricksters humanize the narratives, and set the limits of the perception of good and bad. On the film, the figure of the trickster is present in the social role of stories as formers of identity, as well as an archetype that is still crucial to contemporary storytelling. Accordingly, we can assert that the role of the trickster is pivotal in the social implications that stories impart. As Lewis Hyde states:

Individuals who never sense the contradictions of their cultural inheritance run the risk of becoming little more than host bodies for stale gestures, metaphors, and received ideas, all the stereotypic likes and dislikes by which cultures perpetuate themselves. As Carl Andre once said, ‘Culture is something that is done to us. Art is something we do to culture’ (2008: 319)

Through the figure of the trickster comes a responsibility within storytelling to act as morally and socially seismic, in order to reshape and reevaluate the validity of the accustomed social codes. This is why I chose to insert Deleuzian philosophy into storytelling practices; as we can find in these practices one of the most relevant instances in life in which we constitute the grounding notions of who we are as individuals and as members of a group. Deleuzian philosophy calls for change in the same spirit that Keret’s stories do: to remain unchangeable is to deny life, to remain chained into a single territorialisation is to deny the other forms of life that are anchored within different territorialisations. However, one important finding is that within storytelling as portrayed on the film, the power of territorialisation is equally important as the one of deterritorialisation: the emerging of Keret’s style was grounded on his territorialisations. Accordingly, **the creative act as portrayed on the film is essentially produced by personal forces, but it is bounded to be freed through its affects.** In this sense, identity systems perform not as limiting, but as the ground for a desire that is productive, and that finds its way through the creative act. Therefore, the main conclusion

of this dissertation is that storytelling can be an act of resistance and freedom that is effective through its emotional resonance, and that becomes relevant in each territorialisation, in the usage that storytelling is given by people.

The second aspect of such conclusion relies in the Deleuzian notion of constant becomings, as a typology of the creative act that ought to live in different mediums. In a context of transmedia storytelling, the individual affective mechanisms of literature and cinema get enhanced when merged with each other. This conception of mediums merging with each other is presented here as a specially outstanding characteristic of contemporary storytelling. On chapter Two I outlined the ways in which cinema affects the viewer beyond language, through affect and perception. In the remediation processes, the core capacities of stories acquire new levels of meaning and of sensorial connections; thus, a ‘circular’ experience of storytelling. In cinematic storytelling the viewers expand their initial literary experience, not solely with a visual one, but with one that performs through sensation. The ability of a story to abruptly change its plot—its narrative unexpectedness, holds the highest rhetoric value of stories as micro-political forces with the ability to travel more easily to other subjectivities via style. If such style is correctly expressed in a cinematic form, the risk of a story to act, as Philip Smith called it, as a “machine for the reduction of complexity” (Qtd. in Frank, 2012: 158) is significantly minor, as it behaves, instead, as a better approximation to an abstract machine; as the Deleuzian terrain in which affect live. This expands the notion that narrative is forever fixed in specific ideology grounds, and it provides a terrain in which it is possible to construct a narrative that it is made to be absorbed by different subjectivities in their intrinsic manners of abstraction. The mobility of points of view, that constitutes the major finding of the film acts as “aids to perception”, in order to find “the other in the same” (Caws qtd. In Meyers, 2005: 362). It is through sensation that ideology is transcended, and the understating of the Other is magnified and multi-levelled.

The aim in storytelling should be, then, to be told in a multiplicity manner. Although storytelling is anchored in language, its affective qualities are what enable readers to engage with a specific social reality and to have an emotional response towards it. Stories become effective through their resonance; its narrative resonance can reach new subjectivities by sharing some common ground of fiction framing with readers all over the world, but stories also can become universal through its affects. Kaas and Lemm, and myself, might not be inserted in the social reality Keret references in his stories, but we are able to receive the emotion that travels through them, their affects, and translate them to our own subjectivities. **This process can be summarised as the transfer of narrative resonance to produce aesthetic resonance; thus, a narrative and aesthetic symbiosis that occur within style.** *Etgar Keret: Based on a True Story* speaks of cinema as an independent body that is able to communicate as a machine through which meaning is abstracted and through which emotion travels.

The relevance of this research relies in the conjunction of three characteristics: 1. the study of contemporary pieces of storytelling: the case study relates to the work of a contemporary storyteller (Etgar Keret) that is already of major cultural significance for his country, and the work of two young storytellers (Kaas and Lemm) that are initiating his careers. 2. The context of intermediality that led to the interaction of two, otherwise, unrelated creative producers. 3. The placement of affect as a central notion that enables the success of literature in remediated forms. These three aspects speak of a contemporary storytelling that is preoccupied with narrative constructions that are beyond nation-based territorialisations. What I describe as a **mediation of feeling** in literary style, becomes relevant in a narrative construction that is anchored in reality, as it is the case with documentaries, and it also speaks of narrative constructions that play with the limits of fiction and reality in an essentially affective manner.

To further research on cinematic narrative as contextualized within this dissertation, the mediation of feeling I describe can be the focus of a variety of interesting studies. A pertinent example can be found in the exhibition *Flesh and Blood* [2017] by Mexican director Alejandro G. Iñárritu that holds as center piece a short interactive film that, through virtual reality, positions the receptor in the perspective of Mexican and Central-American migrants as they try to cross the border with the United States. In terms of affect related to the multiplicity of point of views, another example for further research can be found in *Devil's Freedom* [2018] by Mexican director Everardo González and Mexican writer Diego Enrique Osorno. The documentary is constructed by testimonials about the violence in Mexico from the perspective of those affected by it and those who perpetrate this suffering. The peculiarity of this approach is also related to a stylistic decision that affects the viewer: every person that is featured in the documentary is wearing surgery masks, which homogenizes every storyteller in the film. The mediation of feeling is crucial in these two suggestions for case studies, as they both use style—one in the form of virtual reality, the other in the form of the theatrical prompt found in the surgery mask—as a way to neutralize or expand the affective qualities of storytelling. These examples are also connected to the intersection of the two other factors I propose as central in the conclusions for this dissertation: a cinematic portrayal of Otherness as conveyed through the fluctuation of points of views and perception, and the expression of such concern as inserted in micro-politics. The inference is then that contemporary storytelling is aiming towards a renewed notion of the Other, via a cinematic storytelling in which the objective is to become more and more sensorial and affective.

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Fig. 1

Keret, Etgar. *Suddenly, a Knock on the Door*. Vintage, 2012. (cover illustration)

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Kaas and Lemm. *Etgar Keret Based on a True Story*, 2017.

