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IMPASSE E INDULGÊNCIA EM EDUARDO WILLIAMS

DANIEL RIBAS

O cinema contemporâneo tem insistido em olhar o presente histórico de formas diversas. Uma parte considerável desse cinema apresenta-nos este presente como um tempo contínuo, onde as vidas fluem, numa incessante trepidação vertiginosa, acompanhando o ritmo das sociedades do capitalismo tardio. É um cinema que reflete o *ar do tempo*, a precariedade inerente das nossas comunidades. Estar *em fluxo* é, portanto, uma especificidade de muitos filmes recentes, um efeito de um mundo caracterizado, tal como Zygmunt Bauman (2000) o nomeou, como o da “modernidade líquida”: “Light modernity let one partner out of the cage. ‘Solid’ modernity was an era of mutual engagement. ‘Fluid’ modernity is the epoch of disengagement, elusiveness, facile escape and hopeless chase. In ‘liquid’ modernity, it is the most elusive, those free to move without notice, who rule” (Bauman, 2000, p.120). Neste contexto, a teorização feita por Lauren Berlant (2011) sobre as consequências “afetivas” das nossas comunidades, assim como dos filmes que dela se fazem, é de grande riqueza para dar conta dos fenômenos culturais. A sua concepção da fantasia da “vida boa” e as circunstâncias da instauração de um impasse são a condição para a existência daquilo que ela chama de “otimismo cruel”.

É neste contexto afetivo e político que vamos olhar para o cinema de Eduardo Williams. O realizador argentino, nascido no final da década de 1980, tem um corpo de trabalho muito sólido desde 2011, constituído por uma série de curtas-metragens e duas longas. Iniciando um percurso que começou na sua Argentina natal (as curtas), mas que depois migrou para outras geografias do Sul Global, Williams tem utilizado a máquina do cinema para dar conta de protagonistas particulares, cuja relação com o mundo é de uma certa indolência. Para além disso, os espaços em que estes personagens deambulam são lugares periféricos, que se assumem como espaços liminares e de transição, mostrando como o mundo do realizador dialoga com as inquietações mais profundas do pensamento contemporâneo.

Como assinala Leo Goldsmith (2014): “Williams’ cinema is one of vectors: across borders, networks, and states of being. (...) [The director’s] films follow a system of intersecting lines and pathways that carry us beyond the mundane surface of reality to other places entirely.” Parece-nos que a leitura dos filmes de Eduardo Williams — e, em especial, a sua primeira longa-metragem *El Auge del Humano* (2016) — cruzada com conceções de Berlant, assim como uma análise do nosso tempo —, é um ponto de partida interessante para também olhar para as tensões tanto do nosso mundo, como do cinema contemporâneo.

O APOCALIPSE

Desde *Pude Ver Un Puma* (2011), uma das suas primeiras curtas, os filmes de Williams pautam-se por estabelecer uma pequena comunidade, sobretudo constituída por rapazes, jovens adultos, que deambulam por espaços diversos. Em certo sentido, os seus protagonistas sugerem uma ideia de *futuro* da humanidade, especulando sobre um mundo presente que olha para um *devenir* próximo. Por vezes, estes filmes quase fazem tangentes ao género de ficção científica, embora ela pare mais pela narrativa do que constitua uma clara evidência da *mise-en-scène*. Em *Pude Ver Un Puma*, a estrutura divide-se em quatro partes, já demonstrando essa vertigem radial que os seus filmes viriam a assumir: as primeiras imagens são de um grupo de homens, jovens adultos, que passeiam na intrincada arquitetura das traseiras de uma cidade, atravessando pátios, descendo escadas ou saltando para terraços improvisados; na segunda, navegamos nas ruínas de uma cidade, totalmente destruída, onde três miúdos se encontram e deambulam, até chegarem a uma casa abandonada; na terceira, voltamos à paisagem apocalíptica, mas agora tudo está inundado de água; na quarta e última, outros caminham no meio de uma mata até desaparecer. Em todos estes contextos, as personagens *não fazem nada*, simplesmente estão juntas, praticando pequenas funções básicas de sociabilidade. Há, no entanto, um intenso lado lúdico nas suas interações, e a própria máquina do cinema introduz um certo divertimento (cortes abruptos, elipses, movimentos de câmara, manipulações da luz). E neste jogo

constante, estes jovens falam, conversam sobre pequenas minudências, dados científicos vulgares, ou sonhos que tiveram. A câmara segue-os, quase sempre de forma obsessiva.

Com variações culturais ou geográficas, as curtas seguintes seguem modelos semelhantes, embora já se passem em lugares diversos: *El Ruido de las Estrellas Me Aturde* (2012, ainda Argentina), *Que Je Tombe Tout le Temps?* (2013, França), *J’Ai Oublié* (2014, Vietname). Em todos eles, vemos jovens, sobretudo homens, que esperam, conversam, caminham, sempre numa latência da existência e sem que do filme se obtenha um objetivo manifesto. Os fins são sempre misteriosos, opacos, sem uma evidente conclusão. A interação destas personagens é quase sempre com a natureza selvagem, desordenada, e com uma existência participante. Não por acaso, as personagens repetem informações científicas truncadas, pequenos pormenores que são dados menores numa conversa infundável. Williams monta as suas narrativas a partir de uma improvável aleatoriedade, a que acrescenta a vulgaridade da vida comum. É nela que as personagens suplantam aquilo que delas se espera: elas são testemunhas ativas de um mundo em transformação.

O MUNDO NO SEU AUGE

É, no entanto, com a sua primeira longa-metragem, *El Auge del Humano*, que Eduardo Williams cimeta a criação caótica e quântica do seu mundo fílmico. Partindo de um título que é já ele uma provocação — uma espécie de declaração de partida que consagra ao filme uma aura quase profética do universo do século XXI —, Williams desconstrói, na sua própria indolência, a ideia de progresso da humanidade, ao centrar este auge num conjunto de situações e personagens vulgares e corriqueiras, em três grandes blocos que pertencem a três espaços geográficos do Sul Global: Argentina, Moçambique e Filipinas.

Apesar da distensão temporal do filme — quando comparada com as curtas —, o realizador mantém a sua observação próxima dos protagonistas, utilizando longos planos-sequência que fazem também confundir o filme entre a ficção e o documentário (a displicência desta confusão leva a que outras pessoas olhem diretamente para a câmara, pondo em

causa a quarta parede). Esta indistinção é uma característica importante porque revela as possibilidades do cinema em fazer uma relação profunda entre a sua máquina e um *outro* que se aproxima dela. Isso é decisivo para entender a relação que Williams estabelece com estas pessoas que filma:

I don't think the actors of the film were absolutely sure of what they were doing, but felt they wanted to be a part of that moment we were passing by. (...) I feel this may sound like a very magical or strange method, but I remember it as a very ordinary natural unfolding of events. I never speak in this way during the filming, we talk about very simple and concrete things, creating at the same time some special energy surrounding us (Beck, 2016).

No entanto, as marcas que já observáramos nas curtas são trazidas para a longa de forma ainda mais obsessiva, permeando o filme de uma intensidade do fluxo, já que a câmara acompanha sempre alguém em marcha, que parece ter um objetivo determinado, mas que depois falha nessa relação entre causa-efeito — fica sempre algo *em falta*, seja um telemóvel que não funciona ou um cybercafé que nunca aparece. Não há efeitos nos filmes de Williams, e *El Auge del Humano* é, até pelo seu título, um filme anti-efeito, mesmo que provoque, à partida, uma sensação sobre o “estado do mundo” no momento em que foi filmado. Isso é totalmente minado pela lógica avulsa e aleatória com que o realizador opta por seguir as suas personagens, e só numa cuidada leitura das suas obsessões podemos pressentir que há uma sutileza poética na forma como Williams olha para os pequenos mundos que tem à sua frente.

Se a *mise-en-scène* é aqui fundamental — a cidade na Argentina; as ruas de terra em Moçambique; ou a selva nas Filipinas — ela também traduz um espaço sensorial sobre as vidas destas personagens. Nesse sentido, há, para nós, uma proposta de equivalência entre as disparidades culturais destes rapazes que tentam navegar no seu presente histórico. São sujeitos históricos do seu tempo, e o gesto de Williams é também o de lhes dar uma visibilidade no contexto do espaço audiovisual,

e de os estabelecer como heróis vulgares do Sul Global e, por contingência, de uma alternativa ao centro do mundo ocidental. Esse lugar político é, à partida, conquistado tanto pela “aleatoriedade” dos lugares filmados, como também pela forma como estas histórias destas pessoas são apresentadas em filme.

É certo que o filme atravessa tópicos prementes das nossas sociedades líquidas: a transitoriedade do trabalho e a sua precariedade; a necessidade permanente de ligação (tecnológica) com um outro; a vertigem consumidora de uma sociedade da abundância; as ligações improváveis entre diferentes partes do mundo, agora intimamente conectadas pela omnipresença da ligação virtual. Mas Williams vai para além disso, sobretudo pela forma como se acerca das pessoas que filma. Ao estabelecer uma conexão — que podemos designar afetiva, pelos modos de filmar o outro — o realizador também se coloca *dentro* dos modos de habitar o mundo destas pessoas. É nesse *habitar* que estas personagens se tornam muito mais do que meros transmissores de uma visão de mundo do capitalismo tardio (apesar de também o serem).

A ÁGUA

El Auge del Humano é um filme firmemente colocado nas suas diferentes geografias. Por isso, os espaços urbanos e selvagens que formam a *mise-en-scène* são fundamentais para entender este lugar no mundo. E um dos elementos essenciais que o filme utiliza é a água. Elemento definidor da nossa vida (sem ela não existe), manipulado pela mão humana, a água é um reflexo das intensivas práticas de extração das forças da natureza. Por isso, não é de menos olhar a sua função neste filme (e que repete, de certa forma, cenas que se encontram já nas curtas-metragens).

Logo no início da narrativa, a personagem masculina que vemos dentro de uma casa hesita em sair à rua. Quando sai, é surpreendido por uma forte inundação daquela área urbana onde vive. A surpresa é apenas inicial porque, tal como os seus concidadãos, a sua relação com esta catástrofe natural é mundana e (aparentemente) habitual: ele caminha pela água, que lhe cobre o corpo até ao tronco e não deixa de fazer a sua

vida habitual. A relação humana com a catástrofe ambiental é, neste caso, perfeitamente vulgar e corriqueira. Não é de somenos que o filme comece com esta sequência, propondo um contraste impiedoso entre a vida ordinária das pessoas e as consequências das alterações climáticas (e da forma como a construção urbana vai contra a força indomável da água e da natureza).

Ao longo do filme, outras vezes se repetem “interações” entre as personagens do filme e a água, sobretudo fazendo parte deste fluxo interminável das personagens. Primeiro é o mar, que é dominado pelas personagens numa deambulação até a uma pequena ilha; depois é um pequeno lago, onde várias pessoas se divertem. Nesta última cena, são várias pessoas, de novo jovens, que estão dentro de água, num divertimento. A câmara aguenta, durante um longo tempo, olhando este breve compasso de indolência e de felicidade nestas águas calmas (em absoluto contraste com a tempestade inicial). São quase dez minutos de sequência — em três planos diferentes — em que o realizador se interessa pela ludicidade da água e da conversa entre duas raparigas e uma criança. Na conversa, há uma referência iconoclasta à barriga de uma grávida: aquele lago parece assim receber os seus humanos.

A VIDA BOA

Para Lauren Berlant (2011), a condição precária é uma condição do nosso presente histórico. Ela molda as nossas conceções de vida e a forma como nos vemos no nosso contexto e no nosso futuro. Segundo Berlant, é necessária à condição precária a ilusão futura de uma “boa vida”: “The internal tensions between capitalism and democracy seem resolved as long as a little voting, a little privacy, and unimpeded consumer privilege prevail to prop up the sense that the good-life fantasy is available to everyone.” (2011, p.194). Para a autora, é nos detalhes afetivos das nossas vidas comuns que mais se expressa a condição precária. E, para ela, a continuação dessa expressão é mantida pela ideia de “impasse”, um tempo esticado que nos tolhe os movimentos:

It might seem amiss to call a live situation where actors do things an impasse, since the world remains largely organized by dedramatized clusters of causes, consequences, and microtransformations. I offer impasse both as a formal term for encountering the duration of the present, and a specific term for tracking the circulation of precariousness through diverse locales and bodies. The concept of the present as impasse opens up different ways that the interruption of norms of the reproduction of life can be adapted to, felt out, and lived. The impasse is a space of time lived without a narrative genre. (Berlant, 2011, p.199)

O cinema de Eduardo Williams — e, em especial, o filme *El Auge del Humano* — encontra-se dentro desse impasse, ao colocar as suas personagens num quotidiano ordinário, em que a vida precária é exposta em todo o seu esplendor. No entanto, e aqui parece-nos que tocamos no nervo central do cinema de Williams, é também pela concretização do impasse, na sua evidência cinematográfica — o tempo distendido do plano-sequência, a ausência de estrutura dramática —, que o realizador como que propõe uma contradição no capitalismo em curso. Isto é, através do fluxo indolente das suas personagens há como que um gesto político de ousar viver de outras formas. É certo que estas vidas são ainda dominadas pelas estruturas globais do capitalismo, mas há na sua forma de vida elementos que ultrapassam esse domínio. Eles deambulam contra as estruturas rígidas das formas de trabalho e da sua condição precária. A indulgência contra o impasse, apesar de os dois se assemelharem.

Como Leo Goldsmith argumenta,

Rather than placing their subjects in a particular social space or critical framework, Williams' films instead tend to locate their subjects in a kind of atmosphere, even a kind of ecology — of relationships to other humans and other species, and to technologies and to landscapes (2014, p.18).

É, portanto, na sua relação entre as personagens sem destino e pelas contradições dos seus contextos geográficos — onde a natureza tem um papel decisivo — que estes filmes expõem uma improvável resistência ao impasse, resolvendo-o a partir do seu torpor.

DANIEL RIBAS

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The Design community's growing interest and involvement – both in theory and practice – in issues related to water ecology reflects concerns about water scarcity, access, and quality, alongside the increasing frequency of extreme weather events driven by the ongoing climate crisis. There is an urgent call to integrate water into design in transformative ways, recognising its intrinsic value and its potential to shape sustainable futures. This call is supported by a broad range of disciplines, including meteorology, hydrology, geology, and mechanical engineering. The convergence of these fields has fostered innovative solutions and promoted more efficient water resource management practices for future generations. In this context, the third edition of the Porto Design Biennale – *Being Water: How We Flow Together and Shape Each Other*, which took place from 19 October to 3 December 2023, sought to stimulate debate and the emergence of new solutions to pressing collective challenges.

In line with the Biennale's theme, *Dive-in: Design In Projection* explored the intersection of design, society, and water through a film exhibition and installation project. This initiative, part of the Biennale's Satellite Programme, provided a platform for critical reflection on the role of design in shaping our relationship with water. It was further enriched by cinema's contribution, which adds a unique dimension to understanding the complexities and significance of this vital resource in our lives.

Organised into five thematic and perspective-based sessions, *Dive-in* showcased eleven films, delving into the complex relationships between communities, waterways, and bodies of water. This exploration is not limited to the selected films, as many other works could have been included.

Dive-in occupied the three adjacent rooms to the Passos Manuel's cinema with a video installation featuring the films: *The World Part I – Mirage* (2019, 04:35 min.) by Michela de Mattei, *Tomorrow is a Water Palace* (2022, 15 min.) by Juanita Onzaga, and *Horizon* (2012, 18 min.) by John Smith. In *Horizon*, the artist portrays the imaginary relationship between the United Kingdom and Europe in the post-Brexit era from Margate, on England's southeast coast. In the cinema, the following films were showcased: *Sueños de Hielo* (1993, 58 min.) by Ignacio

Agüero, *Pumzi* (2009, 22 min.) by Wanuri Kahi, and *Shower* (1999, 92 min.) by Zhang Yang. The latter depicts the introduction of the shower cabin and its impact on daily life in modern China, leading to the closure of traditional public baths.

The programme also featured *Kareem's Pool* (2012, 17 min.) by Ahmad Bargouthi and *A Minha Aldeia Já Não Mora Aqui* (2005, 60 min.) by Catarina Mourão, a documentary about the relocation of the residents of Luz Village, submerged by the Alqueva Dam, to a “twin” village built as a close replica of the original at the time of the dam’s construction. Additionally, the selection included *Aral. Fishing in an Invisible Sea* (2004, 52 min.) by Carlos Casas, a film about the survival of three generations of fishermen in the Aral Sea, located north of Kazakhstan and south of Uzbekistan, and *Wutharr Saltwater Dreams* (2016, 29 min.) by the Karrabing Film Collective, which evokes the relationship between the past and future, between the colonial past and the future of the climate crisis, and calls upon design to seek solutions and advocate for the right to life, equality, and justice. The programme concluded with *The Forgotten Space* (2010, 112 min.) by Allan Sekula and Noël Burch.

This book arose in response to this programme. The collection of contributions gathered here provides a comprehensive and multidisciplinary exploration of the interaction between water, cinema, and design, enhancing the visibility, mapping, articulation, and appreciation of experiences, agents, and places. These texts primarily address the films from the Dive-in programme.

Shahd Wadi engages with Ahmad Bargouthi’s film *Kareem's Pool* (2012) by situating it within the context of the ongoing Israeli occupation, looting, and control over Palestinian water resources. She reimagines Kareem’s pool as a symbolic substitute river and sea that remain inaccessible. Wadi also highlights that, before 7 October 2023 — the date that intensified the genocide — over 90% of the water in Gaza was already undrinkable, and at the time of this text’s publication, the daily per capita water allocation had been significantly reduced.

Mariana Cunha examines how Juanita Onzaga, in *Tomorrow is a Water Palace* (2022), employs the theme of proph-

ecy to convey a narrative that intertwines desertification and migration, thereby addressing both contemporary ecological and geopolitical crises. What distinguishes the artist's approach, according to Cunha, is her reworking of worldviews and the incorporation of alternative epistemologies, challenging dominant Western perspectives. Through her essay, Cunha explores the anti-colonial fabulation proposed by Onzaga as a form of resistance, reshaping narratives of environmental degradation and envisioning decolonised futures.

Vanessa Fernandes argues that Wanuri Kahiu's *Pumzi* (2009) is a significant example of the Afro-futurist narratives emerging in African cinema. According to Fernandes, *Pumzi* portrays the human experience in a world shaped by colonisation, technoscience, and climate change. The film proposes a dystopian future set 35 years after the Third World War, known as "The Water War", and also acts as a catalyst for discussions on the concept of Negritude.

Daniel Ribas offers an analysis of the film *El Auge del Humano* (2016) by Eduardo Williams, which was not included in the programme. According to Ribas, Williams launches with a provocative title and goes on to deconstruct the idea of human progress by centring this 'surge' on a series of situations and characters across three distinct geographical regions of the Global South: Argentina, Mozambique, and the Philippines. This essay also highlights the crucial role of water in the film, illustrating how it reflects the consequences of climate change and how the characters' interactions with water represent resistance to rigid structures of capitalist.

In an inner monologue employing the literary technique of stream of consciousness, Virginia Valente connects Chile's colonial and dictatorial history with the contemporary urgency of fighting climate change in her analysis of the film *El Botón de Nácar* (2015) by Patricio Guzmán. Focusing on the film's water symbolism, Valente highlights the colonial exploitation, imposition of cultural norms, and the maritime dispossession of Indigenous communities, which led to their disappearance.

73 *Patricia Sequeira Brás examines the films *Sueños de Hielo* (1993) by Ignacio Agüero and *The Forgotten Space* (2010),*

co-directed by Allan Sekula and Noël Burch. She argues that, despite their differing historical contexts, both films highlight the disruptive effects of globalisation and maritime trade. By juxtaposing images and narratives, the films interrogate the impact of global capitalism on human lives and the environment.

Joana Rafael describes the urban expansion in the Persian Gulf, specifically in Dubai, where Michela de Mattei filmed *The World Part I – Mirage* (2019). She highlights the ethical and environmental implications of this expansion by examining the contrast between human narratives of luxury and the preservation of the natural environment, as depicted in juxtaposition in Mattei's film, and explores the relationship between accelerated and extravagant architectural development, capitalism, and the exploitation of natural resources, with a particular focus on marine resources.

Delfina Fantini van Ditmar, James Pockson, and Katherine Waters present a literary essay that doubles as a film script. They explore the “traps” of modernisation in a Victorian house in London, highlighting the importance of understanding the intrinsic nature of a building. The narrative emphasizes a balance between architectural innovation and the enduring essence of structures, encouraging a re-evaluation of construction practices in harmony with life cycles and the environment.

The team behind *Dive-In* is grateful for these contributions,

Joana Rafael
Patrícia Sequeira Brás

IMPASSE AND INDULGENCE IN EDUARDO WILLIAMS

DANIEL RIBAS

Contemporary cinema has persistently sought to examine the present historical moment in diverse ways. A significant portion of this cinema presents the present as a continuous time, where lives flow in a relentless, dizzying tremor, mirroring the rhythm of late capitalist societies. It is a cinema that reflects the *spirit of the times*, the inherent precariousness of our communities. Being *in flux* is, therefore, distinctive of many recent films, an effect of a world defined, as Zygmunt Bauman (2000) termed it, by “liquid modernity”: “Light modernity let one partner out of the cage. ‘Solid’ modernity was an era of mutual engagement. ‘Fluid’ modernity is the epoch of disengagement, elusiveness, facile escape and hopeless chase. In ‘liquid’ modernity, it is the most elusive, those free to move without notice, who rule” (Bauman, 2000, p.120). In this context, Lauren Berlant’s (2011) theorisation of the “affective” consequences of our communities and the films that emerge from them is highly valuable for understanding cultural phenomena. Her concept of the ‘good life’ fantasy and the circumstances that lead to an impasse provide the basis for what she calls “cruel optimism.”

It is within this affective and political context that we turn our attention to the cinema of Eduardo Williams. The Argentine director, born in the late 1980s, has built a substantial body of work since 2011, comprising a series of short films and two feature films. Beginning his career in his native Argentina (with the shorts), and later expanding to other regions of the Global South, Williams has used cinema to portray particular protagonists whose relationship with the world is marked by a certain languor. Moreover, the spaces these characters inhabit are peripheral, conceived as liminal and transitional, illustrating how the director’s world engages with the deeper concerns of contemporary thought. As Leo Goldsmith (2014) notes: “Williams’ cinema is one of vectors: across borders, networks, and states of being. (...) [The director’s] films follow a system of intersecting lines and pathways that carry us beyond the mundane surface

of reality to other places entirely.” It seems that analysing Eduardo Williams’ films — particularly his first feature film, *El Auge del Humano* (2016) —, in conjunction with Berlant’s concepts and an analysis of our time, offers an intriguing starting point for examining both the tensions within our world and contemporary cinema.

THE APOCALYPSE

Since *Pude Ver Un Puma* (2011), one of his first short films, Williams’ work has focused on establishing a small community, mainly consisting of boys and young adults, who move through various spaces. In a sense, these protagonists suggest an idea of humanity’s *future*, speculating on a present world that looks towards a future yet to come. Sometimes these films verge on the science fiction genre, although this is more apparent in the narrative than in the *mise-en-scène*. In *Pude Ver Un Puma*, the structure is divided into four parts, already demonstrating the radial vertigo that his films would later adopt: the first part features a group of young men wandering through the intricate backstreets of a city, moving through courtyards, descending stairs, or leaping onto makeshift terraces; the second part explores the ruins of a completely destroyed city, where three children meet and wander until they find an abandoned house; the third part returns to the apocalyptic landscape, but now everything is flooded; and in the fourth and final part, others walk through a forest until they disappear. In all these contexts, the characters *do nothing* but simply exist together, engaging in basic social interactions. However, there is an intense playful aspect to their interactions, with the cinematic apparatus itself introducing a sense of amusement through abrupt cuts, ellipses, camera movements, and light manipulations. In this constant play, these young people talk about trivial matters, scientific trivia, or dreams they have had. The camera follows them, often in an obsessive manner.

With cultural or geographical variations, the subsequent shorts follow similar models, though set in different locations: *El Ruido de las Estrellas Me Aturde* (2012, Argentine), *Que Je Tombe Tout le Temps?* (2013, France), and *J’Ai Oublié*

(2014, Vietnam). In all of them, we see young people, primarily men, who wait, talk, and walk, always in a state of existential latency without the film presenting a clear objective. The endings are always mysterious, opaque, and lacking an evident conclusion. The interaction of these characters is almost always with untamed, disordered nature and a participatory existence. Not surprisingly, the characters repeat fragmented scientific information, small details that contribute to an endless conversation. Williams constructs his narratives from an unlikely randomness, adding the ordinariness of everyday life. It is within this context that the characters surpass expectations: they are active witnesses of a world in transformation.

THE WORLD AT ITS PEAK

It is, however, with his first feature film, *The Human Surge*, that Eduardo Williams firmly establishes the chaotic and quantum nature of his cinematic world. From the outset, the title itself serves as a provocation — a kind of opening statement that bestows the film with an almost prophetic aura of the 21st century universe. Williams deconstructs, with his characteristic indolence, the notion of human progress by focusing this “surge” on a series of mundane and ordinary situations and characters, set across three major sections, each located in a different geographical region of the Global South: Argentina, Mozambique, and the Philippines.

Despite the film’s extended runtime — when compared to his short films — the director maintains a close focus on the protagonists, using long takes that blur the line between fiction and documentary. This nonchalant blending even results in moments where people look directly at the camera, breaking the fourth wall. This indistinction is important, as it reveals the potential of cinema to establish a deep connection between its apparatus and *another* that comes close to it. This is crucial for understanding the relationship Williams establishes with the people he films:

I don’t think the actors of the film were absolutely sure of what they were doing, but felt they wanted to be part

of that moment we were passing by. (...) I feel this may sound like a very magical or strange method, but I remember it as a very ordinary, natural unfolding of events. I never speak in this way during filming, we talk about very simple and concrete things, creating at the same time some special energy surrounding us. (Beck, 2016).

However, the characteristics already observed in his short films are brought into the feature film with even more obsessive focus, imbuing it with a sense of intense flow, as the camera always follows someone in motion, seemingly with a clear objective. Yet this cause-and-effect relationship repeatedly falters — something is always *missing*, whether it's a mobile phone that doesn't work or an internet café that never appears. There are no effects in Williams' films, and *El Auge del Humano* is, as its title suggests, an “anti-effect” film, even though it initially evokes a reflection on the “state of the world” at the time of filming. This is completely undermined by the haphazard, random logic with which the director chooses to follow his characters, and only through a careful reading of his obsessions can one sense the poetic subtlety in how Williams views the small worlds before him.

If the *mise-en-scène* is essential here — whether it's the city in Argentina, the dirt roads in Mozambique, or the jungle in the Philippines —, it also conveys a sensory space that reflects the lives of these characters. We perceive a proposition of equivalence between the cultural disparities of these young men as they attempt to navigate their historical present. They are historical subjects of their time, and Williams' gesture is to give them visibility within the audiovisual space, establishing them as ordinary heroes of the Global South and, by extension, as an alternative to the centre of the Western world. This political positioning is achieved not only through the “randomness” of the filmed locations but also through the way these people's stories are presented on screen.

The film undoubtedly addresses pressing issues of our liquid societies: the transience and precariousness of work, the constant need for (technological) connection with others, the consumerist frenzy of an abundance-driven society, and

the improbable links between different parts of the world now closely connected by the omnipresence of virtual connections. However, Williams goes beyond these themes, particularly in how he approaches the people he films. By establishing a connection — which we might describe as affective, through his methods of filming others — the director also *immerses* himself in the ways these people inhabit their world. It is through this that these characters become much more than mere conveyors of a late capitalist worldview (although they are also that).

WATER

El Auge del Humano is a film firmly rooted in its various geographies. The urban and wild spaces that constitute the *mise-en-scène* are crucial for understanding its depiction of the world. One of the key elements used in the film is water. A defining element of our existence (without it, there is none), manipulated by human hands, water reflects the intensive practices of extracting forces from nature. Therefore, it is significant to consider its role in the film (which, in a way, echoes scenes from the short films).

At the very beginning of the narrative, the male character we see inside a house hesitates to go outside. When he does, he is met with a severe flood in the urban area where he lives. The initial surprise quickly fades because, like his fellow citizens, his response to this natural disaster is mundane and (apparently) routine: he walks through the water, which reaches his torso, and continues with his daily life. In this case, the human response to environmental catastrophe is perfectly ordinary and commonplace. It is not insignificant that the film begins with this sequence, proposing a stark contrast between the ordinary lives of people and the consequences of climate change (and how urban development opposes the untamed force of water and nature).

Throughout the film, there are repeated “interactions” between the characters and water, primarily as part of the characters’ continuous flow. First, the sea is controlled by the characters as they wander to a small island; then a small lake, where several people are having fun. In this latter scene,

numerous young people are once again in the water, enjoying themselves. The camera lingers for a long time, capturing this brief moment of indolence and happiness in the calm water (a stark contrast to the initial storm). The sequence lasts nearly ten minutes — in three different shots — during which the director focuses on the playfulness of water and the conversation between two girls and a child. In their conversation, there is an iconoclastic reference to a pregnant woman's belly: the way the lake seems to embrace its human inhabitants.

THE GOOD LIFE

According to Lauren Berlant (2011), precariousness is a defining condition of our historical present. It shapes our conceptions of life and how we perceive ourselves within our context and future. As Berlant states, the illusion of a “good life” is essential to precariousness: “The internal tensions between capitalism and democracy seem resolved as long as a little voting, a little privacy, and unimpeded consumer privilege prevail to prop up the sense that the good-life fantasy is available to everyone” (2011, p.194). For Berlant, it is in the affective details of our everyday lives that precariousness is most vividly expressed. Furthermore, she argues that this expression is sustained by the notion of “impasse,” a prolonged state that constrains our movements.

It might seem amiss to call a live situation where actors do things an impasse, since the world remains largely organized by dedramatized clusters of causes, consequences, and microtransformations. I offer impasse both as a formal term for encountering the duration of the present, and a specific term for tracking the circulation of precariousness through diverse locales and bodies. The concept of the present as impasse opens up different ways that the interruption of norms of the reproduction of life can be adapted to, felt out, and lived. The impasse is a space of time lived without a narrative genre. (Berlant, 2011, p.199)

Eduardo Williams' cinema — particularly in *El Auge del Humano* — exists within this impasse, presenting his characters in an ordinary daily life where precarious existence is laid bare in all its splendour. However, and here we touch upon

the core of Williams' cinema, it is also through the manifestation of the impasse in its cinematic form — the stretched time of the long take, the absence of dramatic structure — that the director seems to propose a contradiction within the ongoing capitalism. That is, through the languid flow of his characters, there is a political gesture of daring to live differently. While these lives are still governed by the global structures of capitalism, their way of life contains elements that transcend this dominance. They wander in defiance of the rigid structures of work and their precarious condition, embodying a form of indulgence against the impasse, despite their similarities.

As Leo Goldsmith argues,

Rather than placing their subjects in a particular social space or critical framework, Williams' films instead tend to locate their subjects in a kind of atmosphere, even a kind of ecology — of relationships to other humans and other species, and to technologies and to landscapes. (2014, p.18)

Therefore, it is in the relationship between aimless characters and the contradictions of their geographical contexts — where nature plays a decisive role — that these films reveal an improbable resistance to the impasse, resolving it through their own torpor.

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DIVE-IN: DESIGN EM PROJEÇÃO
DIVE-IN: IN PROJECTION

Publicado por / *Published by*
esad—idea, Investigação em Design e Arte

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Tradução / *Translation*
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Impressão e Encadernação / *Printed and Bound*
ORGAL Impressores

ISBN
978-989-35355-6-1

Depósito Legal / *Legal Deposit*
X

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Este trabalho é financiado por fundos nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., no âmbito do financiamento Base, referência UIDB/05237/2020. *This work is financed by national funds through FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., under the Base funding, reference UIDB/05237/2020.*

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Inserido no Programa Satélite da Porto Design Bien-nale — *Ser Água: Como Fluímos e nos Moldamos Coletivamente*, o projeto de exibição e instalação de filmes *Dive-in: Design em Projeção* explorou a interseção entre design, sociedade e água.

As contribuições aqui reunidas oferecem uma exploração abrangente e multidisciplinar do tema, mergulhando na relação multifacetada entre comunidades, cursos e corpos de água.

As part of the Porto Design Biennale Satellite Program — *Being Water: How We Flow Together and Shape Each Other*, the film exhibition and installation project *Dive-in: Design in Projection* explored the inter-section between design, society and water.

The contributions gathered here offer a comprehensive and multidisciplinary exploration of the topic, delving into the multifaceted relationship between communities, courses and bodies of water.

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