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/ Oblika upora

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To Resist: Between Hubris and Compassion

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Agostino De Rosa

- 1 Cfr. François Ozon, *Sous le sable* (Paris: L'Arche, 2011). More generally, on Ozon's cinematographic work see: Loïc Bourdeau, ed., *The Films of François Ozon* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

Maybe some of you will remember *Sous le sable*¹ (France 2000), a beautiful and poignant film by director François Ozon (1967) from several years ago. For those who haven't seen it, the film tells the story of Marie (played by Charlotte Rampling, 1946) and Jean Drillon (Bruno Cremer, 1929–2010), a middle-aged couple who have been married for many years. He is French and she is English; they live in Paris and have no children. One day, during a summer vacation, Marie falls asleep on the beach while Jean goes swimming. The man, however, disappears into thin air, perhaps drowned. Having completed the formalities with the local authorities, Marie, returned to Paris, tries to start living again, while the police continue the investigation into the disappearance of her husband. However, her life develops daily as if Jean had never disappeared: in fact, she talks to him, makes love with him and astonishingly refers to him, with her friends, if he were present, there with her. And in the film he really 'is' with her: we see him undressing Marie, eating with her ... But the truth, evident to all, is opaque only in her eyes, even when the police of seaside village recover her husband's body drowned. In the movie's final scene, Marie returns to the beach that has seen them happy together, for the last time, and suddenly she sees, in the distance, the silhouette of Jean on the shore, walking away. Marie starts running to reach him: the scene, on which the credits fade with the beautiful score of Philippe Rombi (1968), is destined to never end. In fact, Marie's race towards Jean's ghost is not concluded, nor could it ever be. It seems that she approaches him, but in reality he remains unreachable: the image thus continues *ad infinitum* in a moving loop.

I believe that this scene explains perfectly, better than a thousand arid projective and mathematical demonstrations, in a poetic way, what a 'vanishing point' is: a fake image of something so far away (infinitely distant) that is never reached. The same phantasmic essence of Jean in the background, never reached by Marie, seals the failure of the human vision in trapping (and reaching) what is no longer among us and which, perhaps, never was. After all, the perspective, and the representation in general, is in some ways precisely this: the death of the object, its hypostatization. Yet this deadly scene from Ozon's movie also visually explains to us what the term 'resistance' means: opposing the inevitability of nature, destiny, the known and unknown forces that surround and condition us, of our ego and oppose our desire to it, our will and also our unreasonableness. The scene therefore seems to allude to a form of resistance to the impossibility of representing the infinite, in this specific case, from a merely human position and therefore eternally condemned to failure. The etymology in this case comes to our aid: the term derives from the late Latin

resistentia, derivative of *resistere*, "resisting", to indicate the action and the fact of opposing something or someone, but also the way and the means themselves with which such actions take place. It has various semantic nuances, for example in the military field (defense action against the enemy or the adversary), but also legal (the right to oppose, even by force, any attack or threat affecting the fundamental and inviolable rights of man by the established power). But I would like to dwell on its mechanical meaning where the verb 'resist' alludes to any force that opposes the motion of the body to which it is applied: this definition therefore seems to fit perfectly, in its double articulation, to the conventional domains of the architect, that of the representation and of building. The first involves a process of objectification of the real, through the aid of a mechanism external to the observer, which in the specific case consists of a projection. Projection, in the cultural status of an architect, is a transformative action that allows objects belonging to domains characterized by three dimensions to be brought back to their flat representation with the inevitable loss of one of them: a process therefore of *reductio* and *translatio* that makes clear a strong mechanical action de-anthropomorphizing resistance.

Any architectural projection constitutes a form of profound abstraction with respect to reality and therefore implies a form of logical-rhetorical construction that eliminates the object and which, through the projective vehicle, transforms it into an archetype, or a model. *Descriptive Geometry*—like all other forms of representation, even ethnographically distant from that which dwell in Western culture—therefore arises from constructions of thought and from an observer-independent projective process, even in its most optical application, that of the monocular perspective. However, today the context in which the architect works has violently changed. With the advent of the digital, representation seems to have lost memory of its projective origin: entire universes that, in the past, have been narrated to us as born from the projective act of biblical *fiat lux* or of primeval *Om* whose acoustic echo reached everywhere to organize matter and spirit, today in the horizon of the eidomatics seem to lose more and more sense. On the other hand, the architect's resistance is expressed in his or her desire to contrast the laws of gravity that dominate the phenomenal world; resistances that seem to me to be historically well-summarized in the *stereotomic* configuration procedures that today have a natural *analogue* in the tools of some digital modeling software, to the point of appearing to be created specifically for this purpose—impression corroborated by the close ties that can be established, at that placement, with rapid prototyping, imaginable as a sort of a digital *Maitre Maçon*.

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