ARTICLES

THE ANTHROPOLOGIST FILMMAKER AND THE NATIVE ACTOR/AUTHOR: TRANSFORMATIONS OF OUMAROU GANDA AND PETIT TOURÉ IN *MOI, UN NOIR*, BY JEAN ROUCH[1]

LUIS FELIPE KOJIMA HIRANO
Universidade Federal de Goiás, Goiânia, GO, Brazil, 74001-970
ppgasufg@yahoo.com.br

ABSTRACT
This article presents an analysis of the performatic and bodily dimension of Oumaru Ganda's and Petit Touré's characters in *Moi, un noir*, by Jean Rouch (1958). More than analyzing camera angles, character speeches and editing, it is proposed to emphasize the interpretation of the performatic dimension, looking at bodily gestures and facial expressions, as well as at Omarou Ganda's and Petit Touré's voice-off impostation. On the one hand, understanding how performatic and bodily dimensions of Ganda and Touré create a particular *mise-en-scène* enables us to view them as native actors/authors. On the other

____

hand, analyzing the spaces available for Ganda's and Touré's creative interventions in the filmmaking will bring new aspects to the considerations on the construction of anthropological knowledge, through the relation between Rouch and his interlocutors.

THE GESTURES AND LINES OF THE CINEMA ACTOR

This article proposes to discuss the possibilities of examining the performatic construction of Oumarou Ganda's and Petit Touré's characters in the film *Moi, un noir*, by Jean Rouch (1958). More than analyzing camera angles, character speeches and editing, it is proposed to emphasize the interpretation of the performatic dimension, looking at bodily gestures and facial expressions used by Omarou Ganda and Petit Touré to create their respective characters, Edward G. Robinson and Eddie Constantine, as well as at their voice-off impostation. In that sense, it is expected to understand how the dialogue between Jean Rouch, Ganda and Touré produces not only new forms of interpretation to cinema actors, but also a singular way of construction of anthropological knowledge.

By giving attention to performatic and bodily dimensions, I intend to show that Jean Rouch, insofar as he "subverted borders"[2] between the genres of documentary and fiction in his films, also diluted the borders between the native and the actor. Besides, he blurred the distinction between fictional and documentary actors, as well as that between cinema and theater. In other words, Jean Rouch not only provides a new dimension to the anthropologist/native relation in his films, making a sort of "*avant la lettre* symmetrical anthropology", as pointed out by Marco Antonio Gonçalves (2008, 20-21), but he also, by doing that, gives a different importance to cinema characters and actors. We could refer to this new importance as an *actor-author* status, since these actors are as capable of producing their own *mise-en-scène* within the film as the filmmaker-author is.

To go on with this hypothesis, we need to remember that, from the beginning of the 20th century to the 1940s, cinema theories would not consider the role of actors in determining the filmic narrative[3]. Examples are found in Lev Kuleshov's[4] experiments, as well as in

————

2. In that sense, nothing would be more apropriate than the title of the film by Ana Lúcia Ferraz, Edgar Teodoro da Cunha, Paula Morgado e Renato Stutzman – *Jean Rouch: Subverting borders* (2000).

3. A rare exception from that period is Sergei Eisenstein (1979), who profoundly discusses the modes of acting in cinema and theater, as well as the interpretation of Japanese Kabuki theater actors. In fact, his analysis is worthy of another article, since a further look is beyond the limits of the present text. I thank Sylvia Caiuby Novaes for having presented me Eisenstein's discussion on the cinema actor.

4. Lev Kuleshov himself would recognize that actors played a fundamental role to cinematographic

Luigi Pirandello's (1924), Rudolf Arnheim's (1957)[5] and Walter Benjamin's (1987) writings – which argued on the alienation of the actor in regards to his/her own image –, and they were based on the fact that takes shot in completelly different contexts from one another could be edited as part of the same cohesive narrative film sequence. In sum, the cinema actor would always represent him or herself, differently from the theater actor, requested to play different roles, showing a greater versatility.

There are more recent discussions on this topic. In cinema, as defined by Barry King (1985), there is a process of *personification* approximating the actor to his character, whereas in theater what takes place is a process of *impersonation*[6]. The former refers to the use of bodily and gestual characteristics of an actor to constitute his/her idiosyncratic type, to be shown in different characters. In contrast, *impersonation* refers to the actor who avoids his/her most evident characteristics to play his/her roles, to the point of not being recognized in his characters.

Finally, different kinds of attention are mobilized in each case: cinema edition would privilege the spectator's point of view (including close-up takes on details) on the characters, whereas in theater, voice impostation becomes more important than the points of view, many times distant, of whoever sits in the audience.

These differentiations, in spite of being fundamental at a time in which questions were made on the sigularity of the seventh art in relation to other arts, are somewhat limiting. Actually, they should be seen as more gradative than hermetic. What I intend to show, through the analysis of *Moi, un noir*, is how Jean Rouch's films open an authoral space for the native actor's creative interventions, giving a new reach to considerations on the actor in cinema and on the native in anthropology, which will resonate in both *Nouvelle Vague* and contemporary anthropology, as I briefly mention in the end of this article.

language. In a little-known experience carried out between 1916 and 1917 with two actors, one more experienced than the other, and alternating their scenes in the same image sequence, the semantic result was different. Kuleshov concluded that, through classical montage, it is not aways possible to modify the semantic work of an actor (KULESHOV 1974, 192).
5. Pirandello and Arnheim are authors cited by Walter Benjamin (1955) in his argument on the alienation of the film actor.
6. The notion of *impersonation*, according to Barry King, comes from the theater and establishes that: "in playing any character, the 'real' personality of the actor should disappear into the part or, conversely, that if the range of the actor is limited to parts consonant with his or her personality then this constitutes 'poor' acting. This latter, negatively value converse, I shall refer to, hearafter, as personification" (1985, 30). King does not intend to endorse such a hierarchy of modes of acting, but precisely to show, in his article, that personification in film and television does not necessarily mean poor acting, on the contrary it refers to these media typical feature of demanding that male and female actors use their physical and personal characteristics as constitutive elements in their roles.

Some questions may help us see certain difficulties to accept those definitions not only in regard to *Moi, un noir*, but also to *Jaguar* and *Cronique d'un été* [*Chronicle of a Summer*], among other films by the same director. Would Oumarou Ganda, in his performance as Edward G. Robinson in *Moi, un noir*, be representing himself? And what about Petit Touré, whose character named Eddie Constantine plays the role of the American Federal Agent Lemmy Caution? Would this be a process of impersonation in a character, or of personification? Would their ways of being shown be more important in the construction of these characters than their "post-synchronized" voices? Of course these are rethorical questions serving to illustrate how certain formulations, once canonical in cinema studies, are left with no simple answer in view of Jean Rouch's cinema production.

It is interesting to notice how the discussion on the role of actors in cinema gained importance by the time Rouch was filming. The possibility of shooting long takes, as perceived by the renowned critic from *Cahiers du Cinéma* André Bazin (2006; 2018), opened a space in which actors felt looser when performing their interpretations, without cuts to interrupt them. Examples, according to Bazin, would be found in Orson Welles' films, since this filmmaker shaped his directing instructions on the actors' interpretations. Rouch and the actors in his films also made use of this strategy.

If currently the contribution of actors to filmmaking is more recognized within film studies, there are not many analysis treating the performers bodily uses and techniques as being fundamental to cinematic narrative yet. Baron and Carnick (2008) provide an interesting methodology to analyze the performances of actors in films. They argue that the verisimilitude of an interpretation is constituted by the uses of body muscles and the voice according to a determined rhythm, frequency, flux and strenght that enables them to embody the conflicts on the script, even within the limits of the cinematic apparatus. In that sense, it is important to assess: 1) the use of the space by the actor within the scene; 2) the time: velocity and rhythm of gestures in a film sequence and 3) the weight and strenght in the uses of the body, in the contraction and relaxation of the muscles. Such bodily procedures adopted to manage time and space indicate the ways through which the actors embody their scripts, revealing the personal conflicts of the character through gesturing details, range and variations.

For an anthropologist, it is difficult to leave unnoticed, in Baron and Carnick's proposal, a possible dialogue with Marcel Mauss' classical essay *The Body Techniques* (1934/2003). The means of using the body, as taught by Mauss, are culturally acquired, and cinema would be a mean

of transmitting body techniques, as he explains through his famous example on how women actors in American films influenced the ways of walking of French young women at the beginning of the twentieth century. On his analysis, Baron and Carnick show how acting techniques are modified through time, as attested by the different cinema versions of *Romeo and Julliet*, or the visible differences that show in a comparison between Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (1954) and its American western version, *The Magnificent Seven* (John Sturges, 1960). The cultural differences between the Japanese and the American versions in regards to knowledge and meaning of expressions are noticeable – Kurosawa, for instance, works on the *Noh* theater expressions and on stage movements from the Kabuki, which is missing in the American western.

Gestures, ways of walking and body skills, as proposed by Tim Ingold, trace lines (2007 and 2015)[7]. In that sense, I consider possible to analyze films by looking at the lines the actors draw on each scene. Thus, classical Hollywood cinema would have prioritized a way of generating narrative continuity in which, from one shot to another, a continuous line was drawn, leading to an end[8], whereas cinema movements such as *Nouvelle Vague* and *Cinema Novo* would search for a narrative based on discontinuous lines, leading to different directions. Since, as Ingold states, lines tell stories, I consider that the lines drawn between takes in cinema mesh together in a plot, that is, the story inhabiting the ways in which the lines are woven. If lines that are sketched by the actors' movements are central elements for the edition of film sequences, in each sequence, the lines express the characters' feelings, drawn on their faces, hands, arms and legs, using an amount of body strenght, fluidity and contraction in close or distant shots.

I propose to focus on that dimension of *Moi, un noir*, in addition to the camera angles, the edition and the voice, in order to show how, in this film, Jean Rouch, Omaurou Ganda and Petit Touré create a new mode

_____

7. According to Ingold, lines "[...] give us life. Life began when lines began to emerge and to escape the monopoly of blobs. Where the blob attests to the principle of territorialisation, the lines bear out the contrary principle of deterritorialisation" (2015, p. 4). That is, in his view lines allow beings to mesh together with other beings, giving us life and creating life. Lines are traced in the movement of beings, whether their gestures, their wayfaring, their inscriptions, their sounds or other kinds of movement that leave traces: "ever since people have been speaking and gesturing, they have also been making and following lines" (2007, 3).

8. As Ismail Xavier teaches: in classical cinema "[i]t is necessary that this world is presented as being 'full of sense' and unified; it is necessary that representation offers to conscience the illusion that its synthesis operations, which establish a continuity and a purpose to things, are essencially objective. And narrative continuity in classical cinema is the great monument that was erected to satisfy these needs" (2005, p. 153). In this passage, Xavier comments Jean Louis Baudry's reading on classical cinema, featured on *Cinémathique* review, with which he disagrees, argumenting that the idea of a transparency of the image vis-à-vis reality would be part of a burgeois ideology. Baudry's and that review's proposal is that of a deconstruction cinema to counter classical cinema.

of acting in cinema, and then to make further notes on how these dialogues relate to knowledge production in anthropology.

FILMING CONDITIONS AND ROUCH'S ANTI-DIRECTION OF ACTORS

It must be remembered that *Moi, un noir* was filmed with a 16mm Bell&Howell camera, so the shots would last no more than 25 seconds (Gonçalves 2008). This restricted the duration of the long takes showing Oumarou Ganda's and Petit Touré's movements. Nevertheless, faced with such a limitation and also in light of the impossibility of sychronized sound recording, Rouch transformed technical difficulties into strenghts, by giving Ganda and Touré the microphone, so they could interpret their own actings. In addition, he tried to shoot images with greater depth of focus and extended the long shots through editing.

According to Rose Hikiji, Sylvia Caiuby Novaes and Alexandrine Boudreault-Founier, Rouch teaches us that the director does not have total authority over the documentary, which "necessarily implies a space of acting freedom for those who are filmed and more: it implies the collaboration between who films and who is filmed" (2016, 40).

In Rouch's case, this statement could not be more accurate. According to Paul Henley (2009), that filmmaker had a more general idea of the film script, but it was never written down. This was a "script in the oral tradition", as it was called by Philo Bergstein (Bergstein *apud* Henley, 2009, 261), one of Rouch's collaborators. The orality of the script allowed the actors to improvise and re-create the general idea proposed by Rouch. In *Petit à Petit*, for example, Safi Faye remembers that Rouch refused to direct her in scene, even when she asked him to. Also according to Henley, the golden rule of ethnofiction was the chronological shooting of the scenes, one take and one angle per scene. Before the take, what actors did was to experiment the space and its possibilities. This was not properly a rehearsal and it was happening in order to allow of improvisation and the unexpected to eclode. In *Moi, un noir*, as Rouch explains at the beginning of the film, the script was restricted to instructions saying they should perform their own selves, it was a space "where they could do all sorts of things and say all sorts of things". Maybe this is the foundation of the ways through which Rouch intends to achieve something Ana Lúcia Ferraz (2013) identified as a pathetic dimension in his films: using improvisation and the unexpected as parts of a dramatization process to reach a different condition.

This filming method developed by Rouch shows, on the one hand, his adherence to the ethnographic fieldwork method of following what the natives do and say – and maybe this is why he insists on not directing the native actors. On the other hand, the anthropologist filmmaker

accepts the idea that ethnography is founded on a narrative, envisaging a chronological shooting, scene by scene, in which improvisation could make the unexpected eclode and adding drama to the narrative.

In *Moi, un noir*, collaboration and improvisation started with the choice of who would participate in the filming, mediated by Oumarou Ganda himself – who introduced Abidjan dwellers to Rouch – and they continued throughout the shootings and sound recordings. As remembered by Rouch: "We put together the narration in two days – for a film that was two hours long at that point. [Ganda] was enchanted and so was able to play so much in his narration" (Rouch *apud* Gonçalves, 120).

In his films, Rouch was trying to achieve a narrative based on improvisation and the unexpected, starting from a script in the oral tradition and avoiding assuming a position of authority as a filmmaker. This resulted in greater freedom for the actors, who could intervene in both the oral script and the audio post-production. In that sense, it is possible to consider these films as shared productions and to acknowledge the native-actors as authors as well. Nevertheless, this does not appear so explicitly in the opening credits of the film, it is rather shown in other ways: before the opening letterings starting with "A film by Jean Rouch" are shown, this filmmaker's voice-off is heard, presenting Oumarou Ganda and Petit Touré and saying, in plural form, "this is how we improvised this film". Omarou Ganda and Petit Touré are thus embodied in the making of *Moi, un noir.*

This shared authorship, as we will see, also shows in the splitted voice off space between Rouch, Oumarou Ganda and Petit Touré, as well as in their ways of narrating and interpreting the film sequences. It is interesting to notice that, from a strict anthropological point of view, Ganda's and Touré's narration of the images would be equivalent to adding the native's interpretation to an ethnographic text – something that only started to happen more systematically from the 1980s onwards, resulting from the post-modern and contemporary ethnographies search for a shared authorship, in which the idea of "giving voice" to the native appeared (Marcus, 1991)[9]. In that sense, the image, in Rouch's view, had the power of enabling the participation of natives who would not speak or read the academic language in which modern ethnographic monographies were written. Before entering this discussion on the making of anthropological knowledge, let us see more closely how the shared creation of *Moi, un noir* gains expression in their voices, gestures and bodies.

---

9. I will get back to this complex discussion by the end of this article.

OUMAROU GANDA'S AND PETIT TOURÉ'S LINES

In short, *Moi, un noir* narrates the daily life of young Nigerien immigrants, such as Edward Robinson and Eddie Constantine, who are looking for a job in Abidjan, on the Ivory Coast. During their hard labor routine as dockers and walking vendors and their weekend recreational moments, Ganda's and Touré's voices off introduce their subjective dimensions, that is, their frustrations and dreams: the desire of having cars, women and money, like Hollywood stars do.

Oumarou Ganda, by the time of his participation in this movie, was working as Rouch's research assistant. In *Moi, un noir*, he performs the role of himself – an immigrant who does side gigs and then starts to work for the anthopologist filmmaker. But that role as an immigrant, within the context of this film, is not similar to the life he had. Oumarou Ganda adds an oniric dimension to it, by impersonating Edward G. Robinson – the character of a successful Hollywood actor.

In turn, Eddie Constantine was himself an actor and singer who – according to Gonçalves (2008) – participated in more than 30 police comedy films in the 1950s, playing the role of the detective Lemmy Caution. In *Moi, un noir*, he plays Petit Touré, an immigrant: a walking vendor who, paradoxically, wants to be himself, that is, the actor who performs detective Caution. In sum, this is a sort of reversed dream of himself.

It is interesting to notice that Oumarou Ganda – the amateur actor who was supposed to provide a greater documental reality coefficient to this film (since he was an immigrant himself) – gained more space in the edited version than Petit Touré, since the two of them are performers of themselves (immigrants, actors) and of others (actors, immigrants) in this production. Both are indexes of documental and fictional value. Their situation reveals a sense of composition that overcomes the strictest classifications of each type of film. Another important aspect of this configuration is that it brings the figures of the actor and the immigrant closer to each other. An image of the actor as an immigrant within the film is then created – the actor/immigrant being somebody who travels many ways, goes to many places, crosses borders. Would the actor, in a movie, be always a foreigner in another person's (a director's) territory, which he tries to shape in his own way – intervening, as the immigrant does, in his new homeland? And vice-versa: would not immigrants be – the film invites us to ask – performers of themselves in different contexts, foreigners looking for rock fissures or cracks they can pass through in order to increase their existences reach?[10]

_____
10. I thank Tatiana Lotierzo for these reflections, which also dialogue with questions from her thesis, *Erosion on a piece of paper* (Lotierzo, 2019). As suggested by her, that configuration may be implicated in another issue, that is, colonization: actually, the

A sense of verossimilitude is strongly expressed by Ganda's voice off narration, modulating his smile and joy for participating in a film, at the beginning of *Moi, un noir* (Fig. 1), as well as his sadness and anger, gaining more space in the course of the narrative (Fig. 2). Touré's Eddie Constantine, in spite of sharing Ganda's Edward Robinson's love for women and desire to have money, materializes his dreams differently from his friend: he lives a better daily life due to his walking vendor steady job and, thus, he gets to spend the night with Nathalie, to eat at a restaurant and to have a professional haircut (Fig. 3). However, as annouced at the beginning of the film, he takes his role as an American Federal Agent so seriously that he ends up being arrested for three months.
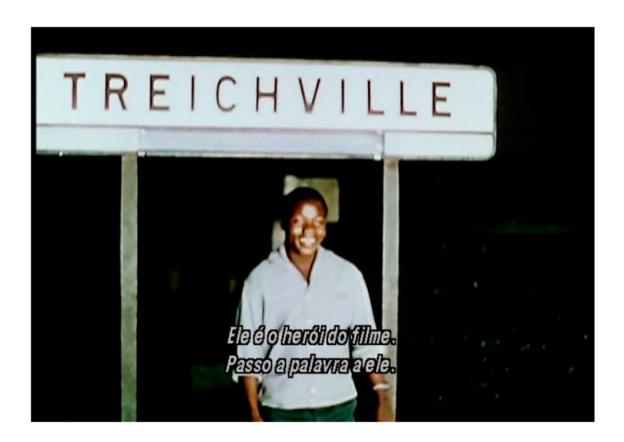

FIGURE 1
Oumarou Ganda's
first appearance
in the film.

white director is himself an outsider in Ivory Coast, stepping on one or many territories that are not his own (that country, the lives that are presentified there) and of which he claims his fair share through that film. If the land does not belong to him, he still can be in posession of "his own creation" of it – the film. In parallel, the actors are exhibited as immigrants, outcast from their homeland and, nevertheless, they reclaim their property over this new territory by intervening on the film plot. This analysis comes under the inspiration of the inga artist Benjamín Jacanamijoy, who also intervenes in territories from a *Time of Stolen Thoughts*, as he translates the word "colonization".

FIGURE 2
Eddie
Constantine's
presentation.

FIGURE 3
Eddie Constantine
goes to a
restaurant.

Eddie Constantine's misfortune is not central to the narrative; he builds his character as a calm vendor-cum-agent, whose facial expressions do not show wrinkles of pain. His face musculature is usually relaxed and he always keeps a sincere *bon vivant* smile (Fig. 4). His posture is also erect, forming a straight line and he strolls at a leisurely pace. His voice impostation, when speaking French with an American accent, is soft and almost unmodulated. Petit Touré builds, in Eddie Constantine, the figure of a seductive man who never loses his pose – or at least this is what is possible to see in the filmed sequences and what is expressed by his manner of speaking. The news on his incarceration, at the beginning and at the end of the film, is breaking expectations to some degree and thus the character Touré builds himself is kept at a certain distance from the public.

It is possible to say Edward G. Robinson is a symmetrical reverse of Eddie Constantine. To the former, everything goes wrong in the course of the narrative, his job does not bring satisfaction to his desires, women do not care about him and leisure moments remind him how fleeting happiness is. It is only at the level of daydreaming, when he becomes the boxing fighter Edward Ray Sugar Robinson and when he goes back to some fabled memories from the Indochina war that we see genuine smiles in Robinson's face. For him, daily life is tedious and dreaming does not allow him to become another person; for Constantine, daily life is like a dream and becoming so truly another person turns out to be a nightmare.
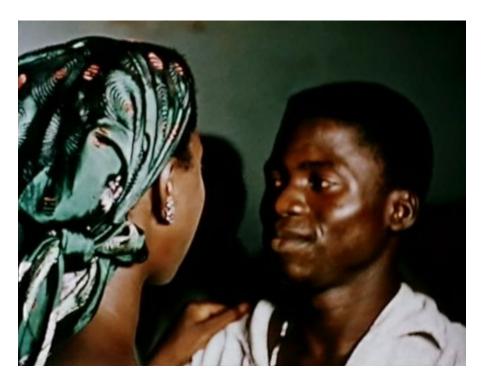
FIGURE 4
Eddie Constantine
dancing, with
serenity.

It is important to mention within brackets an understanding of Rouch's conception of dreams, for it allows of getting to grips with the character composition of this film. According to Gonçalves (2008), Rouch considers dreaming from the perspective of his own experience as an anthropologist and through his dialogue with the artistic *avant-garde*. Among the Dogon, Rouch learned that "'Make-believe' what we say is true... to make-believe puts us closer to reality" (Rouch *apud* Gonçalves, 2008, p. 111) – this is something he understood as a way of fabling stories, which was present in his films.

In addition, there is a surrealistic inspiration to this filmmaker, "[...] Rouch's idea on dreaming is even combined to the definition of a 'surrealistic philosophy' in which, as Élouard writes down, '...it is the hope or hopelessness that will determine, on the dreamer, (...) the action of his imagination" (Élouard, 1939:81 *apud* Gonçalves, 2008 p. 122). Luis Buñuel's film *Los Olvidados* [*The Young and the Damned*] (1950) would become a reference to Rouch, who saw the surrealist filmmaker as someone who knew "how to cross the borders between dream and reality... the dream is just as real, maybe more so than reality. This is what I tried to do in *Moi, un noir*, ... jumping between the two" (Rouch *apud* Gonçalves, 2008, 122).

Modulation between dream and reality is visible in the expressive construction of Robinson. Oumarou Ganda and Rouch create a complex character who expresses, most of the film, a shade of sadness and anger against the surrounding world. The first image of *Moi, un noir* is a medium shot in which he appears smiling and welcoming the espectators. His second appearance, in close-up, shows him with a hardened expression on his face, with a wrinkled forehead and disgusted eyebrows (Fig. 5, 6 e 7). We get to follow his hesitant steps through the town while he looks for work, in his curved way of walking with the knees slightly turned inwards. His arms move awkwardly sometimes, as well as his head, occasionally turning in both directions, impatiently. These movements are emphasized by the edition, exploring sequences of takes showing him going from the left to the right of the screen, from the bottom to the top and taking the opposite directions as well. His expressions and body movements are not a contrast to what we hear from his *voice off*: "Life is complicated! Life is sad! Some live well, eat well... But I... I live on the other side; I live in Treichville. Our houses are cabins... Our lives are different...", he says. This speech is modulated from maximized to minimized vocal intensity, with hesitations and exclamations. Many times, Robinson lets out an ironic laugh, when he tells how expensive things are for him.

Differences in the composition of Oumarou Ganda's character, that is, Robinson, and Petit Touré's character, that is, Constantine, created by themselves and by Rouch, result in a diversified portrait of Nigerien migrants,

what is extremely innovative in what refers to the construction of black characters in Brazilian, European and the American cinemas (Hall, 1997; Stam and Shohat, 2006; Hirano, 2013 and 2019). By showing immigrants with different desires and occupations, Rouch, Ganda and Touré individualize their characters, providing them complex subjectivities. It is true that other portraits are possible – and filmmakers from the the African continent currently demand this from Rouch's films (Sztutman, 2004). As Bhabha (2007) discusses, there will be no point of complete identification between the black spectatorship and their representations, rather, signification process is unstable, ambivalent and variable, opening a gap between the new and infinite forms of representation given to white people and the forms given to racial or ethnically stigmatized groups. The problem of the stereotype is precisely to set a limited number of representations of race and ethnic groups in constant transformation. Rouch, Ganda, Touré and their other selves express a multiplicity through the modulation of desires, dreams and temperaments and explore the contraposition of different subjects. The name of the film is interesting, in such regard: on the one hand, it highlights the race marker, on the other hand, it singularizes it. Ganda and Touré are "*un noir* [a black man]" among many possible ways of being black[11].

FIGURE 5
Close-up at
Oumarou
Ganda's face.

11. The impact of colonization in Rouch's films is as a complex issue to be addressed and it still deserves another article. Rouch searched to go beyond boundaries, through the relation between anthropologist and native, as well as through the relation between filmmaker and actor, but it is still necessary to note he is the one being credited as the author of that film, even though its construction process was shared. If crediting himself the authorship of the film reveals how power relations might have taken place, it is important to notice that, by attributing the authorship to himself, he also would be taking responsibility for its consequences, either the posivite or the negative ones.

FIGURE 6
The hesitant
walking of
Oumarou Ganda.

FIGURE 7
Buying lunch.

On his way home after a day of work, rigidity opens space for a more re-laxed side of Robinson's. Instead of going to the ball, he practices boxing. The dimension of seriousness of this character is seen at that moment, when he focuses on warming up and again on each punch. Against the dark background, the glowing sweat on Robinson's black skin becomes the stage for a play of the flashing light, shining in the darkness. This sequence, acclaimed by Jean-Luc Godard for its aesthetic beauty, ex-presses the Rouchian romantic project in regards to the acquisition of knowledge. As stated by Anna Grinshaw, Rouch's project "is inspired by the notion of happiness, [and the filmmaker] thrives in the shadows between darkness and light [...]" (2001, p. 122). No wonder Robinson, in that sequence, talks about his dreams, and not his misfortunes (fig. 8).

Under the blazing Saturday sun, Rouch presents the Nigerien immigrants weekend. Robinson is having fun in the sea, but when he gets out to rest he says: "everybody is happy, but I am sad" (fig. 9). Straight after, a subjective camera takes us to a boxing fight. Robinson punches his opponent and, af-ter a few rounds, he wins. This is the sequence in which Robinson appears smiling for the longest time in the film (fig. 10). His smile, however, brings an air of sadness, either because of what we heard from him before, or be-cause he says, superimposing his voice to the image: "Unhappy! I am not a boxer fighter. This is just a dream". His expression works as an added tone to that explanation. The wrinkle of tension on his forehead and the depth of his gaze contradict his open smile, revealing the presence of ambivalent feelings in both image and voice, what summarizes the tension in the plot. According to Rouch, the documentary should express the heaven and the hell of these youths who were at once capable of facing hard labor and dreaming happily (Gonçalves, 2008).

FIGURE 8
Oumarou Ganda
training boxe.
The play of light
and shadow.

FIGURE 9
On the beach,
feeling sad.

FIGURE 10
Through the
subjective camera,
dreaming he
wins at boxing.

Saturday night comes. Diferently from Constantine, who seduces Nath-
alie, Robinson ends up alone (fig. 11). On Sunday morning both of them
go to the church: Constantine, to the Catholic; Robinson, to the Mosque.
In the afternoon, they both go to Goubé, to see young people dancing
and singing. At night, Robinson tries his luck with Dorothy Lamour,

but he is ignored while she feels attracted to an Italian man (fig. 12). He goes to a different bar, gets drunk and is finally expelled without paying the bill. On Monday, at down, he knocks on Dorothy Lamour's door and is surprised to see the same Italian man. They fight each other and Robinson is given a beating. In real life, he is far from being a champion fighter. He then gets back to work and meets his friends Elite and Facteur, who tell him Constantine was arrested. Elite and Facteur go look for help in order to get Constantine out of jail. Robinson meets Petit Jules – a younger friend – and they look at a group of kids playing on the beach, while they remember their childhood in Nigeria.

FIGURE 11
In the ballroom,
Saturday night.

FIGURE 12
Seducing Dorothy
Lamour..

The final sequences of this film are a series of long takes in which Robinson tells Petit Jules some fabled memories of his war experience in Indochina. With arm gestures, he throws himself on the ground and says he killed many enemies in that war. A smile comes back to his face. His enthusiasm shows again in the voice off, ending the film (Figs. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 e 18).

FIGURES 14-18
Oumarou Ganda
staging his
memories from
the Indochina war.

FIGURE 14
Oumarou Ganda
encenando sua
rememoração
da Guerra da
Indochina. Fonte:
Eu, um negro,
de Jean Rouch
(1958/2006).

E eu vi o sangue correr.

Vi o sangue correr.

Meu nome é lorde Batio Batioum.
Meus amigos me chamavam de...

CODA: THE NATIVE ACTOR/AUTHOR

It is possible to say Oumarou Ganda plays three kinds of interpretation in his construction of Edward G. Robinson: firstly, there is everyday life; secondly, the dream, mediated by the subjective camera, of being the boxing champion Edward Ray Sugar Robinson and of being with Dorothy Lamour. In both cases, we find ourselves seeing the actor's imagination of his role. The last dimension is that of the fabled memory, when he plays the Indochina war soldier, within the context of daily life. There is no subjective camera, we just see him jumping around, wondering what he might be imagining by looking at his body movements.

Amidst these three kinds of interpretation, in a tension between reality and fiction, daily life and dream, memory and daydreaming, being himself and being other, Oumarou Ganda modulates his expressions. In turn, the professional actor Petit Touré/Constantine spends most of the film in the daily life dimension, to end up in an extra-daily dimension, in which his character is arrested. He goes from one extreme to the other, without preserving an unstable balance between them, as Oumarou Ganda/Edward Robinson does. Both actors, given their differences, re-create characters in search of themselves. *Moi, un noir* performs a transition from the classical documentary character illustrating a social situation to the modern character, a figure in crisis, in search for him/herself. In that sense, Oumarou Ganda's performance, between a smile full of tension and an ironic kind of sadness, expresses this transition as well as the camera that provides images with greater depth of focus and longer takes.

Moi, un noir had strong impacts on Nouvelle Vague. The series of long takes in which Ganda remembers the Indochina war inspired François Truffaut's composition of the final take of *Les quatre cents coups* [*The four hundred blows*] (1959), in which Antoine Doinel runs away from the orphanage (Cf. Henley, 2009). Jean-Luc Godard dedicates no less than three pages of his critique of *Moi, un noir*, featured in *Cahiers du Cinema*, to exalt Rouch's mastership in using the camera, but also his direction of actors. Rouch, through improvisation and amateur actors would have achieved, according to Godard, a similar result as the Italian Neorealism, Pirandello and Stanislavsky had after dedicating a long time to planning (Henley, 2009).

As mentioned at the beginning, André Bazin, in *The Evolution of the Language of Cinema* (2018), analyzes how the advent of sound in cinema opened space for disseminating the use of long takes and depth of focus, reintroducing "ambiguity into the structure of the image, if not as a necessity, at least as a possibility" (Bazin, 2018, 117), but it also opened a greater space for the actors to move within the take, so that they could intervene with

greater ownership in film direction. These would be the manners used by Nouvelle Vague to narrate the crises of the modern character[12].

It does not sound exaggerated to say that, in terms of the development of the language of the cinema, the ethnographic experience and the proposal of a shared anthropology made by Rouch were no less important, resulting in a method of filming that was capable of embodying knowledge from his interlocutors, either on the script, written in the oral tradition, or in the manner of adopting the Dogon way of fabling stories to shooting, or even through the act of giving the actors a space of free improvisation and creation. In other words, the epistemological proposal of a shared anthropology through the cinema might have made possible a shared cinema through the anthropology.

In terms of anthropological innovation, the question about Oumarou Ganda's and Petit Touré's spaces of creation on the film is equally fruitful. Marc Piault analyses that, within the social context of Nigerien immigration to Ivory Coast in search of a job, *Moi, un noir* shows a kind of existence that is "little by little perceived as a possible choice, as an autonomous and original construction, a field of invention, of creation, not only as a simple stage on the order of a general determinism" (1997, 191). Oumarou Ganda, according to Piault, "assumes the status of the subject" (1997, 191) who lead the espectator him/herself, breaking cinema's invisible fourth wall. In that sense, Rouch's shared anthropology

> is not a simple method of effective participation, it addressses the unsurmountable paradox of alterity that anthropology has, precisely, to assume as a function: how to show and understand difference without neither turning it irreducible, nor reducing it to the identical. The question is equally that of making what is strange to one and the Other accesible and even that of making accesible to one, as well to the Other what is still incomprehensible (Piault, 1997, 190).

The status of subject assumed by Oumarou Ganda and Petit Touré is made possible precisely because of their narration of film sequences, but also because of their performances as Robinson and Constantine. They are not only immigrants, a sociological category, but subjects with their dreams and crises in the face of a tedious daily life. In that sense, their acting is neither a personalization, nor an impersonation but rather, following Gonçalves (2008) Deleuze-inspired interpretation, they both are becoming-other:

---

12. The points of connection between Jean Rouch's cinema and the Nouvelle Vague would deserve to be treated in a new article. Here I bring these informations in order to suggest how the relation he built with his interlocutors, coming from an epistemological basis from anthropology, may have introduced a new kind of relation between director and actor, especially in French cinema.

Becoming is never imitating, acting like or conforming to a model, whether of fairness or truth. There is no term from which one departs, nor one to which one arrives or should arrive. Nor are there two terms which are interchangeable. The question "what's become of you" is particularly stupid. For as someone transforms him/herself, what he transforms changes as much as he/she does (Deleuze, 1998, 3, free translation).

Ethnographic becomings, the constant processes of transformation of subjects and beings combined with an egalitarian dialogue between the anthropologist and the native have been challenging to contemporary anthropology. As Renato Sztutman (2004) noticed, Jean Rouch was already a well-known figure to 2000's cinema Brazilian investigative documentary filmmakers. In turn, his contributions to Brazilian anthropology were yet to be revealed. If currently that director became a reference for anthropologists from Brazil as well, it is possible that it happened because – as shown by Sztutman –, Rouchian project for anthropology envisaged "the possibility of creation of a dialogue with the researched society, now enhanced by cinema" (2004, 52) – something that is increasingly more present. It is interesting, from the point of view of anthropology, that theory, for Rouch, is "included in the praxis of cinema, which is the real condition of producing a kind of knowledge that is possible to share, one that is built as a two-way process between observers and the observed" (p. 52).

More than conclusions to be drawn, however, what remains are questions. To what extent would it be possible to say the film *Moi, un noir* is a manner of betraying our own language in favor of other language, or of evidencing moments when "the form intrinsic to the content of the first [native] modifies the content implicit in the form of the second [anthropologist] (…)", in Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's (2015, 44) words?

Even if these proposals from anthropology may at times sound distant from Rouch, bringing them close to his work seems possible, considering *Moi, un noir* actually meant to "betray" the canons of what cinema defined back then as documentary and fiction, and anthropology, as science and art[13]. This translation/betrayal, by the way, while pursuing a way of accessing what really mattered for the actors and not only something the director chose as an ethnographic problem[14], also put in

___

13. According to Renato Sztutman, to Rouch "it would be possible to consider the convergence of interests between the scientist and the artist, and, from their engagement, a new anthropology might reveal itself". In regards to art, Sztutman highlights: "With Rouch […] art can find satisfaction in chance, mise-en-scène opens itself to the contingent and turns itself into something between fiction and documentary film" (2004, p. 52).
14. "The 'art of anthropology' (Gell, 1999), I think, is the art of determining the problems of each culture, not of finding solutions for the problems posed by our own" (Viveiros de

jeopardy the anthropological project itself: neither the modernist premise that it is possible to know the other scientifically (or artistically), nor the post-modern one, proposing to "give voice to the native" without necessarily asking about the natives' own ways of knowing (Strathern 1982; 2013) and fabling fit properly in that kind of cinema. Still, this is a bewildering co-creation that questions both formally and conceptually its own condition of existence. Rouch's *voice off* is aimed at contextualizing, to the European spectatorship, these immigrants' situation, with no intention of surpassing Oumarou Ganda's and Petit Touré's performances and narrations.

Documentary truth – an issue that is always present in the discussions about non-fiction motion pictures – becomes, through Rouch's encounter with Ganda, Touré and others, a fabled concept in itself. As proposed by Sztutman, it is not about "the naked truth, but about filmic truth, the truth in cinema. It is not about the visible truth, but about the truth to be unveiled, inaccesible to the eye, except when it is mediated by the camera. That truth is reached, it is worthy to stress, through the imaginary and the imagination" (2005, 122).

If it is possible to consider *Moi, un noir* truth as being collectively authored by Rouch, Oumarou Ganda and Petit Touré – a truth tailored by each of them to fit their own views –, and if it is possible that Ganda and Touré are considered actors-authors in that film, a last question remains: would it be equally possible to transform the formula "native-actor/author", referred in the title of this article, into "native-anthropologist"? If in fact Rouch, Oumarou Ganda and Petit Touré twist our language and the cinema language in *Moi, un noir*, it seems that this ethnofiction reaches, both ethnographically and cinematographically, such a transformation – what would be impossible if all three of them were not present.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arnheim, Rudolf. 1957.Film as art. Los Angeles, University of California Press.

Baron, Cynthia e Carnicke, Sharon Marie. Reframing screen performance. Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 2008.

Bazin, André. 2006. *Orson Welles*. Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar Editores.

Bazin, André. 2018. *O que é o cinema?*. São Paulo, Ubu.

Benjamin, Walter. 1987. A obra de arte na época de sua reprodutibilidade técnica. In:___. Magia, técnica, arte e política. São Paulo, Ed. Brasiliense.

Bhabha, Homi. O local da cultura, Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2007.

――――

Castro 2002, 117). Rouch, in *Moi, un noir*, by sharing the film narration with Oumarou Ganda and Petit Touré, allows the problems of Nigerien migrants in Abijdan to appear.

Boudreault-Founier, Alexandrine; Hikiji, Rose Satiko Gitirana e Caiuby Novaes. 2016. Etnoficção: uma ponte entre fronteiras. In: Barbosa, Andrea; Cunha, Edgar Teodoro da; Hikiji, Rose Satiko Gitirana e Caiuby Novaes, Sylvia. 2016. *A experiência da imagem na etnografia*. São Paulo, Terceiro Nome.

Deleuze, Gilles e Guattari, Félix. 1997. *Mil Platôs: Capitalismo e esquizofrenia*. Vol. 4. São Paulo, Editora 34.

Deleuze, Gilles e Parnet, Claire.1998. Diálogos. São Paulo. Ed. Escuta.

Ferraz, Ana Lúcia M. C. 2013. Dramaturgia da vida social e a dimensão patética da pesquisa antropológica. O cinema de Jean Rouch e a prática de realização de filmes etnográficos. In: Dawsey, John Cowart; Hikiji, Rose Satiko; Monteiro, Marianna; Muller, Regina Polo. (Org.). *Antropologia e Performance* - Ensaios Napedra. 1ed.São Paulo: Terceiro Nome, p. 323-338.

Gonçalves, Marco Antonio. 2008. *O real imaginado: etnografia, cinema e surrealismo em Jean Rouch*. Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks.

Grimshaw, Anna. 2001. The Ethnographer's Eye: Ways of Seeing in Anthropology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Hall, Stuart (org.). 1997. *Representation: cultural representation and signifying practices*. Londres: Sage.

Henley, Paul. 2009. *The adventure of the Real: Jean Rouch and the Craft of Ethnographic Cinema*. Chicago e London: The University of Chicago Press.

Hirano, Luis Felipe Kojima. 2019. Grande Otelo um intérprete do cinema e do racismo no Brasil (1917-1993). Belo Horizonte, Editora UFMG.

Hirano, Luis Felipe Kojima. O imaginário da branquitude à luz da trajetória de Grande Otelo: raça, persona e estereótipo em sua perfomance artística. *Afro-Ásia* [online]. 2013, n.48, pp.77-125. ISSN 0002-0591. http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0002-05912013000200003.

Ingold, Tim. 2007. Lines. Londres, Routledge.

Ingold, Tim. 2015. The life of lines. Londres, Routledge.

King, Barry. Articulating Stardom. In: Screen 26/5: 27-50, 1985.

Kuleshov, Lev. *Kuleshov on film: writings of Lev Kuleshov*. Los Angeles, University of California Press,1974.

Lotierzo, Tatiana. 2019. Erosão num pedaço de papel. Tese de doutorado, Universidade de Brasília.

Marcus, George.1991. Identidades passadas, presentes e emergentes: requisitos para etnografias sobre a modernidade no final do século XX ao nível mundial. Revista De Antropologia, 34, 197-221. https://doi.org/10.11606/2179-0892.ra.1991.111301

Pirandello, Luigi.1925. On turnê. Paris, Ed. Sagittaire.

Stam, Robert e Shohat, Ella. 2006. *Crítica da Imagem Eurocêntrica*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify.

Strathern, Marilyn. Fora de contexto. São Paulo, Terceiro Nome, 2013.

Strathern, Marilyn. The limits of autoanthropology. In: Jackson, Anthony. Anthropology at home. London, Tavistock Publications, 1982.

Sztutman, Renato. 2004.Jean Rouch: um antropólogo-cineasta. In: *Escrituras da imagem*. Ed. Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, Andréa Barbosa, Edgar Teodoro da Cunha, Florencia Ferrari, Renato Sztutman e Rose Satiko Gitirana Hikiji. São Paulo: Edusp.

Sztutman, Renato.2005. Imagens perigosas: a possessão e a gênese do cinema de Jean Rouch. Cadernos De Campo (São Paulo 1991), 13(13), 115-124. https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2316-9133.v13i13p115-124

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo.2002. O nativo relativo. *Mana*, 8(1), 113-148. https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-93132002000100005

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 2015. The relative native: essays on indigenous conceptual worlds. Chicago, Hau Books.

Xavier, Ismail. O discurso cinematográfico. São Paulo, Paz e Terra, 2005.

FILMOGRAPHY

Ferraz, Ana Lúcia, Edgar Teodoro da Cunha, Paula Morgado e Renato Sztutman. 2000. Jean Rouch: subvertendo fronteiras. São Paulo, Brasil, NTSC, cor, 41', DVD.

Rouch, Jean.1958 (2006). Eu, um negro. Rio de Janeiro, Video Filmes, cor, 78', DVD.

Truffaut, François.(1959/2003). Os incompreendidos. São Paulo, MK2, P&B100', DVD.

Kurosawa, Akira. (1954/2004). Os sete samurais. São Paulo, Silverscreen, P&B, 207', DVD.

Sturges, John (1960/2007). The Magnificent Seven. Los Angeles, United Artists, P&B, 128', DVD.

LUIS FELIPE KOJIMA HIRANO is Professor of Anthropology at the Universidade Federal de Goiás. Bachelor of Social Sciences and PhD from the Universidade de São Paulo, USP (2007). He was a FAS Fellow at Harvard University (USA). Currently, postdoctoral fellowship in Anthropology at Universidade de São Paulo on visual anthropology and anthropology of perception. He is author of the book *Grande Otelo: um intérprete do cinema e do racismo no Brasil* (UFMG Publisher), organized the collection *Marcadores sociais das diferenças: fluxos, trânsitos e intersecções* (Cegraf-UFG Publisher) and published articles that articulate the theme of intersection between race, gender, body and sexuality in the trajectories and performances of cinema actors and actresses. E-mail: lfhirano@ufg.br