

LIVE LIKE AN EAGLE. A SENSITIVE APPROACH TO THE TRAJECTORY OF A CUBAN IMMIGRANT IN CANADA

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Short Film *The Eagle*, Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier & Rose Satiko Gitirana Hikiji, 2015. <https://lisa.fflch.usp.br/node/159>

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The Eagle (2015), the short film directed by Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier and Rose Satiko Gitirana Hikiji, translates some of the textures present in social life. At first, the filmed image of the eagle invites to reflect on the power of the senses. The panoramic vision, the attentive and focused gaze, the power of capturing noises, the flight dancing with the wind, the caution in each movement... Everything reveals a set of bodily and sensorial perceptions.

By informing that the narrative will tell the story of Miguel Aguila, the scenes lead the senses to associate this name with the eagle, the one that appears at the beginning, tracing its routes accurately in the blue sky, emitting its noises in communication with the world through all its opulence. However, we have to deal with an elderly subject, with a clumsy gait, a Cuban immigrant in Canada, and 'strangely' outsider in terms of social conventions. This apparent contradiction reveals in fact the complexity of a character. It also deconstructs our preconceptions about walking through life, by calling for reflection that to be sure and to falter is part of the process of the human condition itself.

The short film results from an interview with the singularities of the experience of a former prisoner who, after fighting many struggles in his life, faces the challenge of cancer. Both his nature and his last name are compared to the characteristics of the eagle. The interlocution seeks a 'framing' that locates the interviewee in the environment present in his routine. Images of the streets, the stores, the traffic, the coffee shop, demonstrate a place of tranquility and movement.

The dialogue takes place in a coffee shop, and before a narrative of life is conducted, film cameras register the gaze, the detours, sighs, laughs, silences, the reflections, restlessness, non-verbal exchanges, details that escape in the physiognomy. The eagle reveals itself through all these elements, seconds before the interpellations of the anthropologist. In the relaxed atmosphere, live music and a drink invite to relaxation and satisfaction. As he recounts the trajectory that led him there, the environment goes on its way, with people working, sometimes attentive to the ongoing dialogue. He speaks with the nuances of a navigator, who has known several places in the world aboard a cruise ship, and therefore has the wisdom of who travels the seas and the land with the same self-confidence. Miguel Aguila shows an ability to choose the important facts of his life narrative, interweaving and articulating the past with the present.

He introduces himself, names and qualifies without any kind of shame, informing the production team where he came from, what he has done and is doing wrong, and where he wants to go. Because of this, the team



includes itself in the film and does not foster an illusion of neutrality. Despite the large number of vicissitudes in his life, he seems to have mastery over it, through choices, not always planned, but conscious. Substance trafficking, the escape from Cuba, the illegal immigration, generated a number of arrests, deportations, disease that are, in spite of everything, narrated with naturalness and even a 'what' of haughtiness. Thus, he shows in his language how firm and decisive he is, and how he is not afraid of the official structures and systems, building up an image of a 'bully boy' for the listener, able to stand up to everything and everyone that turns against him. On the way to his residence, the steps reveal tastes, pleasures, restlessness, conflicts, and the sagacity of who always sees himself in the condition of a good observer.

However, when entering his home, we can see a cozy, organized, and colorful house, with berets, panels, and pictures of Cuba, bears, puppies, among other things that would not be 'expected' in the home of a man with such trajectory and way of presenting himself. He announces, «Welcome to my paradise!» The coziness of his home can be seen in the eyes of the research team. The feeling is captured and the record is shared. In other words, Miguel Aguila declares his condition as a worker, the paths he walked until he was exposed to the labor of the mines and the oil industry. The contamination was already circulating around him, affecting men and women, until the pains also reached his body to reveal the existence of a tumor. The challenges and costs of treatment, the surgery, all these elements follow in a narrative flow of tension, trust, and overcoming. Despite all the difficulties, he reaffirms that he will not give up his pleasures.

In this moment it is possible to see how affectionate he is with the anthropologist and the whole team, giving them gifts, smiles, and showing how much he considers himself loved by the people he cares for in his work. If on the streets, the encounter with the local culture prevails, the domestic environment reveals the symbols of his country of origin and his attachment to them. At home, the dialogue invites to think about the different perceptions of comfort, well-being, satisfaction, and happiness.

The man, permeated by the contradictions of his own existence, works in a support service for homeless people and shows himself very respected, helpful, and affectionate to everyone with whom he relates. At times, the plot leads to rationalize the contradiction of what one thinks about his history and memories, what one sees and feels when watching it, because the filmic frame moves one closer to his realities, awakens affection, a graciousness and tenderness with his existence. Seeing him dancing, smiling and having fun in the last scene of the short film makes the eyes light up, arouses laugh, and his behavior enchants.

Undoubtedly, each image, each cut of the camera and the movements point to the potency of the senses, of how these elements that are sometimes secondary or invisible in scientific research are important as tools for understanding social life (Simmel 1907/2015, Laplantine 2005, Gélard 2016). The microactivities of everyday life, therefore, produce details that can help in the knowledge of a certain social context, practices, beliefs, values, as well as a singularity of perception in relation to the external observer. Audiovisual tools can broaden the field of observation and capture elements or details unreachable to the senses of an observer/interviewer. It constitutes a contribution that qualifies the obtaining of information and nuances that escape immediate attention.

Finally, it is possible to return to that initial questioning of «Who are we talking about? A man or a bird? ». As a response, «a bird-man » emerges, full of contradictions, strength, beauty, movement... but also a friend, a spirit who flies without limits to everywhere and nowhere and, simply, LIVE.

Beyond the eagle as a posture, a way of being in the world marked by the experience of migration, we can finally ask ourselves if it could not also be associated with the place and attributes of the researcher, as well as with all the subjects of a research in their dynamic of being in the world.

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a review of the film *The Eagle*, directed by anthropologists Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier & Rose Satiko Gitirana Hikiji. It focuses on the contributions of the sensitive approach of the trajectory of a Cuban immigrant in Canada, Miguel Aguila, provided by the use of audiovisual tools. It aims to reflect on the potential of the senses and sensitive perception in the exercise of analyzing social life, and more specifically the issues related to migration, illness and other lived difficulties. It highlights how, by relying on the associative, sensitive and imagetic dimensions around the figure of an eagle, the audiovisual tools can help to expand the field of observation but also the forms of writing the research. They constitute an important contribution in obtaining elements and nuances that escape immediate attention. The sounds and images also allowing a fine reconstitution of these nuances.

KEYWORDS

Senses;
Perception;
Sensory Approach;
Sensorial
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