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Speaking in the *Breath* You Gave Me: Place Belonging and Creation through Kogonada's *Columbus* (2017)

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Resumen

¿Cómo pertenecemos a los *lugares* y cómo los creamos? Esta tesis es la respuesta a estas preguntas en un intento de hacer teoría. Es, a través de los prolongados planos de cámara fija, diálogos mínimos y silencio(s) de *Columbus* (2017) de Kogonada, la creación de un *mythos* del *lugar* (marco teórico) impregnado de la terminología espacial de de Certeau y Augé en el que definir las edades del ser (pertenecer al) del *lugar* y el lenguaje de su épica: cómo canta la creación del *lugar* en los código(s) del contexto cultural. Una epopeya de la existencia (del / en el *lugar*) y de la inexistencia: trazada en el aire con la punta de los dedos, grabada en la piel, tragada y escupida en silencio —en *no-lugar(es),* en *aliento(s)* entregado(s) a otros, al extranjero, al forastero, que los utilizará para escribir una mitología propia del *lugar* (códigos de creación de *(no)lugar*) para que resuene en la ausencia que hay detrás de su (no)pertenencia. *Columbus* (2017) es la respuesta audiovisual, como esta tesis es la textual, de que vivimos (pertenecemos a) y creamos *lugares* en el *aliento* que se nos da.

Palabras clave: Lugar, No-lugar, Espacio, De Certeau, Augé, Teoría espacial, Infancia del lugar, Ser del lugar, *Mythos* del lugar, *Columbus,* Kogonada

Abstract

How do we belong to *place(s),* and how do we create them? This thesis is the answering of those questions in an attempt of theory making. It is, through the lingering, still-camera shots, minimal dialogues and silence(s) of Kogonada's *Columbus* (2017), the creation of a *place mythos* (theoretical framework) permeated by de Certeau and Augé's spatial terminology in which to define the ages of *placer being (belonging)* and the language of its epic: how it sings *place creation* in the code(s) of cultural contextuality. An epic of *(place)* existence, and inexistence: fingertip-traced in air, stuck into skin, swallowed and spat out in silence —in *non-place(s)*, in *breath(es)* given to others, to the foreigner, to the stranger, who will use them to write a place self-mythology ((non)place creation codes) to echo in the absence behind their (non)belonging. *Columbus (2017)* is the audio-visual answer, as this thesis is the textual, that we live (belong) and create *places* in the *breath* that is given to us.

Keywords: Place, Non-place, Space, De Certeau, Augé, Space theory, Place childhood, Place being, Place *mythos*, *Columbus*, Kogonada

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1. Introduction

"You grow up around something, and it feels like nothing" (26:41-43, p. 16). That phrase stuck with me the first time I saw Kogonada's *Columbus* (2017). It made me feel a pang of sadness, as absurd as it was when nothing about the character who said it, how he said it or when served to explain why I was feeling like mourning. There was nothing of mine in that phrase, in that movie set in a town of Indiana. A movie traversing the monumental Columbus of Saarinen, Polshek, Eames, Meier, Berke and the "messily beautiful, everyday" Columbus unimpressed by what surrounds it. Between a quirky, "architecture nerd" young woman, Casey, working in a library, looking after her recovering meth addict mother, avoiding the question of when she's going to leave for college; a guarded and cynic middle-aged man, Jin, coming back from Korea to be with his ailing architect scholar father and yet never being by his bedside; and their walks around a city to which they are both tied: Casey in self-imposition by her loyalty (love) to her mother; Jin in inhibition by his coma-induced father's expectations (Cooper, Leigh-Phippard, Leahey, Kapodaco).

I did barely more than write down the phrase when that movie ended, as a kind of obituary to that unknown, and moved on. Whatever it was, it felt like a "knowledge that was going to remain silent", "a story held in reserve"[1] because whatever took to invoke it, I did not know. That 'whatever' turned out to be 'spaces', 'places' in the terminology of Michel de Certeau (*The Practice of Everyday Life,* 1984) and Marc Augé (*Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity,* 1995). Their books gave me a language to shape the 'nothing' —of the lingering, still-camera shots that had felt "distorted, seemingly meaningless (albeit [beautiful])"; of the "minimal dialogues" that were as fleeting and ephemeral as the cigarettes

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[1] De Certeau 108

fuelling them; of the "ambience, accompanied every so often by soft hums of technological echoes" (Kapodaco); of it all that seemed to hide what it spoke, the unknown I had to mourn, in 'silence'— and make it 'something'(see footnote[12], p. 23): how we belong to *place(s),* and how we create *(breathe/sing)* them.

1.1 Chapter overview

This subchapter acts as a guide to that place belonging and creation how. *Chapter 2* (Literature survey: De Certeau and Augé) is devoted to introducing the statements of the 'space/place forefathers' that so strongly resonate in this : *stories* marking, opening *places*, haunting them as they haunt us, as they live encysted in our bodies, in our gestures, in the names we give them (de Certeau); *contracts* possessing, conferring anonymity, marking places where one exists without the burden of past existence(s) (Augé).

Chapter 3 (Contesting Spaces & (Non)Places) is a contesting those statements and the first steps in my attempting of theory making. It is asking questions in/to *de Certeaunian* and *Augéan* terms and answering them in mine (that still are much of theirs). Answering that encysted knowledge (stories) does not authorize us; that what haunts places are not spirits but people; that not all place occupations are myth makers.

Chapter 4 ('Place childhood', placers and the edge of 'placer being') is *Columbus* (2017) permeating (to never stop doing so) my own 'place' *mythos*. It is about *place* creation *(breathing)* and belonging, and the ages that permit or cancel those states. It is about *placer being (placers)*, or its (n)ever existence*: non-placers.*

Chapter 5 ('Non-places', 'non-gods' and 'non-place initiation') is the continuation of the *non-placer(s) epic*, the (non)places where it is composed —temples that they have found, or rather that they have possessed, that they have carved in the absence they shape (see footnote [10], p. 20)— , and the language in which it is sang, in the 'breath' that it gives to those who want to sing it.

2. Literature survey: De Certeau and Augé

2.1 De Certeau. Walking Rethorics

The city is the blank pages we fill with our footsteps. Where we walk in a poem we will never be able to read. Our paths moving, intersecting writings that compose "a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator" (De Certeau 93), shaped out like a fragment of the trajectories and alterations of space that is made by us, blind walkers. Made as we would do language. And it is that "[t]he act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language" (97), making it possible to draw from language's theoretical apparatus concerning the speech act to start defining what the act of walking is to the urban system:

> At the most elementary level [the act of walking] has a triple "enunciative" function: it is a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the [walker] (just as the speaker appropriates [...] language); it is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech is an acoustic acting-out of language); and it implies *relations* among (...) differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic "contracts" in the form of movements (just as verbal enunciation is an "allocution," "posits another opposite" the speaker and puts contracts between interlocutors into action) (97-98).

Language might be able to exist in isolation, but it is not until the speaker speaks it that it comes alive. The same happens to the city. Unless the blind walker, the down-below philosopher decides to walk, it does not exist. It is all about making possibilities exist as well as emerge. As we affirm, suspect, try out, transgress, respect (99) the language we actualize in secret (98) so we cross, drift away, improvise (98) in constant conjunctive *loci* ellipsis (101) our blind city making poetry.

The city is a traffic pattern of self-mythology. It is mythos spelled out in disposed constellations that hierarchize and systematically order its surface (104), "operating chronological

arrangements and historical justifications" (104). "Meanings held in suspension" (104) —
the *believable*, the *memorable*, the *primitive*: legend, memory, dream (105)— authorizing spatial
appropriation from a silent and withdrawn memory. Its worn-like-coins star proper names
emptying themselves in their directing itinerary (104) classifying power to make habitable or
believable the place they word-clothe (105), recalling the phantoms concealed in gestures, in
bodies, in motion (105)*,* "creating in the place itself the nowhere that the law of the other carves
out within" (105).

"There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits" (108), "broken into pieces"
(108), not *speaking* any more than they *see* (105), their secrets embedded in the city places. Stories
held in reserve (108). Silent knowledge to our blind poetry. Or rather, our blind poetry turned into
unrevealed mysteries, "wordless stories" (106) that echo in our footsteps because we are walking
the paths of past walkers. We walk the pasts of others until we too become past ourselves, until
our city-making trajectories become breaths of *urban odyssey*.

We move in stories. Their narrative structures, spatial syntaxes producing action
geographies, making the journey before our feet perform it, creating the spaces about which we
would tell in our travel epics (123-125). And places. In de Certeau's walking mythos there is
distinction between them: space *(espace)* and place *(lieu)*:

> [P]lace is the order in accord with which elements are distributed in relationship of
> coexistence, […] thus exclud[ing] the possibility of two things being in the same
> location. […] [T]he elements taken into consideration are beside one another, each situated
> in its own "proper" and distinct location, a location it defines. A place is an instantaneous
> configuration of positions, […] [and] indication of stability […]
>
> Space exists in the "intersections of mobile elements". [It] occurs as the effect produced
> by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function. [...] [S]pace
> is like the word it is spoken, [...] when it is caught in the ambiguity of actualization,

transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated as the act of a present (or of a time), and modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts. [...] *Space is a practiced place"* (117).

2.2 Augé. From Places to Non-Places

And then it is not —they are not. 'Place' is not a stable configuration of positions: it is not the ultimate reduction to the being-there of the inert, of the tomb —the law of a "place". Neither is 'space' a constant by-context transformation: by far it is authorized into existence by the epics of heroes (historical subjects)[2] (De Certeau 118). Epics that are not sung in footsteps, or if they are, the 'no walker' —there are no walkers— can only sing them to themselves (Augé 103).

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[2] De Certeau played with two oppositions between "place" and "space". The first one, reliant on spatiality, had place and space being opposed by the presence or not of a "proper". Place had it, thus it provided a law, an order that its elements followed, enabling control, ensuring stability, univocity. Space did not. Given its definition as "a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs", space is at best ambiguous, convention dependent, a constant modification. It cannot ensure but instability (117). The second one —and it is possible that the dual opposition too— sparks from Merleau-Ponty's distinction between ""geometrical" space ("a homogeneous and isotropic spatiality," analogous to our "place") from another "spatiality" which he called an "anthropological space." and what De Certeau draws from his statement "there are as many spaces as there are distinct spatial experiences" (117): the perspective that shapes our " distinct spatial experiences" is determined by "two sorts of determinations in stories" (118), determinations which can come to define these other "place" and "space". Place determined "through objects that are ultimately reducible to the being-there of something dead, the law of a "place" (from the people to the cadaver, an inert body always seems, in the West, to found a place and give it the appearance of a tomb)". Space, "through operations which, when they are attributed to a stone, tree, or human

The *Augéan place* is "destinies, actions, thoughts and reminiscences" (Starobinski qtd. in Augé 75) —event, myth, history—; ancient rhythms; anthropology (Augé 82, 77-78). It "is formed by individual identities, through complicities of language, local references, (...) unformulated rules of living know-how": organical social creation (101, 94). It is "the possibility of the journeys made in it, the discourses uttered in it, and the language characterizing it" (81). It is *space eater*. If de Certeau's *space* emerged from *place* —from its traversing, from its practicing (De Certeau 84, 117)—, Augéan *space* is swallowed by it. *Space* are the unnamed, hard-to-name places (Augé 82). *Space* is the room made for place(s) — and non-place(s). And it all begins in the *de Certeaunian* 'space narratives':

> both the narratives that *'traverse' and 'organize' places* ('Every narrative is a journey narrative…', p. 171) and the place that is constituted by *the writing of the narrative* ('...reading is the space produced by frequentation of the place constituted by a system of signs —a narrative', p. 173) (Augé 84) (emphasis added)

'Journey' means movement. Traversing several places ruled by the impossibility of being everything-seen, everything-said: "like the journey, the narrative that describes it traverses a number of places. This plurality […], the demands it makes on the powers of observation and description [births the] impossibility of *seeing everything* or *saying everything*" (84) (emphasis added). Because the *traveller* —the Augéan to de Certeaunian *walker*— moves but so do the places (the tomb antithesis) (De Certeau 118), which they, the traveller, can only catch in partial glimpses, in series of 'snapshots' piled hurriedly (Augé 85-86) so 'disorienting', so preventing of place perception (84). Preventing that turns into nowhere-creation by the name(s) used in attempting gap-filling (85): "[t]hese names create a nowhere in places" (De Certeau 104), "an absence of the place from itself" —a negation of it— (Augé 85) because places become

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being, specify "spaces" by the actions of historical subjects [heroes]" (118)

passages (De Certeau 104). Names (system of signs, narratives, Augé 84) operating as linkers of acts and footsteps, openers of meanings and directions, determination emptying-outs and wearing-aways —non-place(s) (De Certeau 105).

But if in those the *walker* can believe, remember, dream —*"the believable, the memorable, (...) the primitive"* (105) (emphasis in original)—, the *traveller* find themselves in "prophetic evocations of spaces in which neither identity, nor relations, nor history really make any sense". Spaces in which the *traveller* is alone in overburdening or emptying individuality (Augé 86-87), and becomes *passenger, customer, (Sunday) driver* in the relative anonymity of those temporary identities (101) —becomes no more than what they do or experience in those roles because "a person entering the space of non-place is relieved of [their] usual determinants". They are gently possessed in their more or less talented or convicted surrender to the non-place contract(s)[3], tasting for a while "the passive joys of identity loss, and the more active pleasure of role-playing" (103).

In the non-place, the *traveller* made passenger, customer, driver is confronted with an image of oneself: "[t]he only face to be seen, the only voice to be heard, in the silent dialogue [they hold] with the landscape-text addressed to [them] along with others, are [their] own" (103). And it might echo millions of others in the same code-obedience, message-receival, entreaty response (the *traveller* "obeys the same code as others, receives the same messages, responds to the same entreaties", 103) —in the same 'instructions for use' (prescriptive, prohibitive, informative)— when "driving down the motorway, wandering through the supermarket or sitting in an airport lounge" (96) but there are no *others*, just an individual in

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[3] "[T]he passenger *[traveller]* accedes to his anonymity only when he has given proof of his identity; when he has countersigned (so to speak) the contract" (102).

"a world (...) surrendered (...) to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral". In spaces that do not integrate earlier ones (78) —non-places—, in which they see an image of oneself (79, 103, 105) in a perpetual present (105) where "[t]here is no room for history" (103) —supermodernity (93, 109-111).

"[N]on-places are the space of supermodernity" (111), where the words to sing to the rhythms of 'ancient ritual', to the 'song and chatter' of workshops, to the "infinite interlacing destinies, actions, thought and reminiscences" do not exist (Staribinkski qtd. in Augé 75). The *traveller/passenger/costumer/driver* has exited their 'rhetorical' territory/country (Augé 77, 108) —they are not at home— and "[their] interlocutors no longer understand the reasons [they give] for [their] deeds and actions, the criticisms [they make] or the enthusiasms [they display]" (Descombes qtd. in Augé 108). Their "aphorisms, vocabulary and modes of thought" will not form a 'cosmology' (77, 108) —their epics will not breathe a (non-)place's *mythos*[4]. For in the non-places, one sings to oneself.

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[4] De Certeau (spaces) places were marked by *stories*. Not only were they in the core of his walking rethorics (walking was the writing of a fiction, of "allusive and fragmentary stor[ies]" 100, 102); but they were the shapers (see [2]) and inhabitants of his spatial terms. Stories enabled their very existence, by founding and articulating them (122); and by haunting them (they need to be *habitable* in order for any story-making to happen):

> It is through the opportunity they offer to store up rich silences and wordless stories, or rather through their capacity to create cellars and garrets everywhere, that [stories and] local legends (*legenda:* what is *to be read,* but also what *can be read*) permit exits, ways of going out and coming back in, and thus habitable spaces. (106)

My *places* are marked by *mythos*, because when it is sung, when it is put in the context of the Greek chorus, it encapsulates all the dimensions that, in my conception, define them. The *mythos* on his own is stories, mouth-to-mouth narratives (*Mythos – Wiktionary)* which do not much differ from De Certeau's *stories.* But enter the chorus —enter the *singing*— and it becomes "the embodiment of the city (…) the opinions,

3. Contesting Spaces & (Non)Places

But does not one also sing to oneself in places? The *place (footstep) poetry*, the *place past* —history, legend—, the *place storie*s are wordless, and silent, and blind, guarded by spirits that would never reveal them (De Certeau 93, 106-108). We would not even ourselves reveal them —because we cannot, because we do not even know we are making, marking, opening, signing them (106). It is all secret, allusive, lost, opaque *mythos* one is to echo in the words supposedly encysted in one's pain/pleasure —fleeting glimmers of well-being under-expressed in language ("I feel good here")—, in one's gestures, in one's body (105, 108). But there is *nothing* —no words— in them. There is only blood, wine-dark, curling its way through veins, staining fingers and mouth, capable at best of amounting to self-divination. The blood on one's tongue, on one's palms, would speak to no god, would be sacrifice to no "territorial "divinity": pray as you might in the *place/space altar*, your blood-covered skin will invoke no (old) spirit to teach you their (old) words.

Because it was never about taking the vow to become (place) prophets, to swallow and spit out the place words, to ask for permission —*to sing, to spatially be, to walk.* We walk the pasts of others —our footsteps echo their footsteps— but it is not those pasts ("meanings" held in suspension", 104) that authorize us. How could they when they are to be lost for the real authorizers —(proper) names— to *authorize*? (104-105) They are to be lost, detached, emptied-out, worn-away (105) to create the *nowheres* to whose names we, "passers-by", can give our meaning(s): "[d]isposed in constellations (...) these words [names] (...) slowly lose, like worn

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hopes, fears, and sorrows of the collective" (Guy) —what I have named the '(elders') *place passwords'*—, and initiatory ritual (Calame) —my 'edge of *place childhood*'. *Mythos* enabled me to articulate what means belonging (or not) to *places* (see Chapter 4. 'Place childhood', placers and the edge of 'placer being').

coins, the value engraved on them (...) [making] themselves available to the diverse meanings given them by passers-by". And it is never a condition for us to know their reasons, their past — "their original value (...) may be recognized or not" (104). Names have ceased to be "proper" (105): the past is not needed.

What haunts the places[5] are not the silent whispers of some deaf spirits — "the dead who are supposed to have disappeared" (105)—, but those noisy ones of living, breathing people. The

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[5] For de Certeau 'place' is the *space-bringer*, and for Augé, it is the *space-killer.* But for both, the two terms had this possibility of intertwining and tangling together (Augé 107), constantly transforming (De Certeau 118) into the other: the potential of being *the other* never absent from neither. "[L]ike opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed" (Augé 78). Augé was talking about places/non-places here, but I believe his point is still valid even when changing the polarities of the spectrum: if one needs the other to be born or the other needs to kill the one in order of being, their existences are not understood without each other: there cannot be *place* without *space* and vice versa.

That is for them —for their shaping of their 'rhetorical' territories (77, 108). For me, having to name any spatial existence, having to choose between 'place' or 'space' (in either their *de Certeaunian, Augéan* or any other defining possibility) feels like those *de Certeaunian* totalitarianism attacks on "supererogatory semantic overlays that insert themselves 'over and above' and 'in excess'"; attacks that erase all the markings, openings made by memories or stories, signed by something or someone else —"superstitions"— (106): me being the 'totalitarianism' and the overlays, the markings, the openings being what people have made of the spatial voids that had for them being emptied (105). Naming would mean destroying their *nowheres* by whichever name they go by —by whichever name (or no name) they have been given. "[T]here are as many spaces as there are distinct spatial experiences" (118).

But my name choosing reticence would not be practical on academic terms: I need names to *name*. The decision to settle for 'place' (though times might require using 'space' and in all cases they could

second geography that is not based on history —this sort of not-driven-by–intellectual-facts, mouth-to-mouth knowledge— is built in the present. In the "local legends", in today's "superstitions", in what people tell other people (106): in fingers and mouth stained of raspberries in the secret meadow; in wet hair in the lake where someone almost drowned; in bloody knees in the euphoria after a test of courage; in swollen lips in the empty class(es) that smells of chalk and lemons; in the places where the most remarkable unremarkable things happened. "I exist(ed) here" someone says, and they are corporeal, *there*, your best friend covered in sweat and dirt; your older sister smelling of forbidden cigarettes and defiance; a stranger drunk on cheap wine and love. They tell you, and they become minor gods and you their priest(est): they confide to you their stories[6] so they can become myths. And there is this sort of 'critical period', whose duration I would not be able to truly define, when those people's voices leave the places and it is all built anew. And sometimes it all defies that 'critical period'. We keep echoing them, because we are stubborn, because we refuse to let them become silent —let them become *ghosts*. Ghosts we all carry the potentiality of becoming.

As we can become priest(es)s of legends and superstitions, so can we become their birthing gods —because not all places have someone to initiate us. They stand there, empty (105), open for us to leave behind an epic with a built-in ending, a never-promised-to-be-followed

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be interchangeable) was due to the already existent Augéan place/non-place dichotomy, and the importance it has in my theoretical framework development.

[6] Stories that can be left behind in more than voices: in handprints —*hand stencils*— and crimson dots in cave walls; in graffities in (Roman) wall plaster; in carvings of initials in tree bark; in writings in book margins. But the fact still remains that it is about living, breathing people. They are entitled to their present, and it will pass, and when it does, they will fade. Because they will cease to be understood, and when that is to happen, those carvings, those offerings left behind, will become ghosts —pasts that others are not capable of reading (108).

mythology. We can breathe our entire existence in *place odysseys* —suspecting, trying out, transgressing (99). But so can we breathe it in *nothing givings* —in keeping in line, going where we are told, checking our appearance (Augé 101). Not all place occupations are myth makers. Not when you do not want to play or threaten, challenge places (De Certeau 130). Not when you do not want to be *place poet, down-below philosopher, blind walker*.

There are times when you want to be unimportant —to actualize in secret or not at all (98). To be subjected to a gentle form of possession, loose identity, role-play (Augé 103-105) as failure of a *Wandersmänner* (walker) rebel (De Certeau 93) —how can my walking be a revolution if my footsteps carry no defiance? If they are happy to follow the places' 'instructions for use'? (Augé 96) To not run in the hallways, to not stay after dark, to not astray from the path, to wait, to listen: to be told what to do when nothing else seems to. It is those instructions, those make-up-for-narratives that have told me more on how to use *places* than my supposed encysted knowledge —than my supposed shared language/rethorics with my *home people* (Augé 77, 108)— has ever had (De Certeau 108)

4. 'Place childhood', placers and the edge of 'placer being'

I never felt my encysted knowledge passing on its hints "just between [it] and me" (108); my *home people* engendering a social where I was present (Augé 111). It is easy to ignore —to hide— when you are a 'non-initiated', when it is okay for you to move as a mother's child (De Certeau 109), a *place child*: gambolling, on all four, dancing, walking about, with a light or heavy step, like a series of "hellos" in an echoing labyrinth, anterior or parallel to *place singing* (99). *Place children* are not expected to sing places, they are sung to/for them: in familiar hands guiding tiny ones in the right one(s) of the thousand *place possibilities*; in paternal

arms picking up bleeding-in-dirt-and-blood knees from wrong *place usage*s; in motherly digits brushing sand, and saltwater and sunscreen to write *place codes* in tanned skin; in palm reprimands to *place instruct* blushing cheeks and painting-from-running bodies; in freckled fingers peppering *place cues* in lips that would speak them with no air —no *place child* air.

4.1 The edge of 'place childhood'

And then there is the edge of *place childhood,* when those arms, those hands, those digits stop leaving marks on the *place child's* body in a rite of passage[7] —"the inscription of the body in the order's text" (De Certeau 130). One from which the *place child* is to come out wiser, knowing their elders' *place passwords*: they will breathe, they will sing 'place(s)' in their "symbolic outlets and expectations of [places]" —they have been inscribed in the *place codes* and those codes have been inscribed on them (130). They will leave behind their *place child* existence and become *placers*. And *placers* know that at fourteen their world are the shortcuts from home to school, the back of cars, the seats of public buses; that at fifteen words taste like smuggled cigarettes, dark coffee, messy kisses; that at sixteen bodies move in pleasure (130), loud and unapologetic, in parties and one-night runaways; that at seventeen existence is in unfinished

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[7] "According to [Van Gennep's] system, any rite of passage has three basic moments: first, separation (from the old state), next, a marginal phase during which the individual's status hangs between the old and new, finally, a period of admission (to the new status) and of reintegration" (Calame 33). The "old state" finds its analogous in that of *place childhood,* of *place child,* but the marginal phase and "new status" overlap, if not reverse order, in *placer* initiation. There is no 'marginal phase' after the rite of passage: the individual wholly joins the new order of its elders, already holder of their "sacred gestures and words" (35) —already holder of *place breathing* (creation) and understanding. It is the fully fledged *placer* that undergoes their "uprooting" from "life within the family", their being pushed "outside the home" (33) that defines the 'marginal phase' (see *4.2 The edge of 'place being').*

assignments, in 24/7 open markets, in energy drinks; that at eighteen, the "expectations of [places]" (130) is leaving (Fig. 1)

4.2 The edge of 'place being'

Eighteen is the edge of *placer being*. Is the age of packing boxes, of leaving home(towns), of going to college[8]. Of feeling 'nothing' about everything you have grown up around because there is 'nothing' in the (home) order's text for *placers* at the edge of eighteen (130). The elders' *place passwords* stop working and all that can be gotten from the *place song(s)* is static: the symbolic outlets and expectation(s) become a "suspended symbolic order" (106). And it pushes, pushes *placers* out ("I mean, I can't imagine coming back *here*", 20:20-22, emphasis added). *Placers* that cannot breathe *places* 'here', 'home' anymore —no more than the short stays windows, only-for-a-week-time beings (19:45) in which they are allowed the *place children's* indulgence(s): to exist in the not-by-them created places, to pretend *placeness*. *Placers* breathed places are 'out there' ("I'll probably end up staying *out there*", 20:17-19, emphasis added) (Fig. 1).

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[8] This speaks in an American (United States) context. The edge of *placer being*, or its (n)ever existence, originates in cultural contextuality.

[EMMA]
Hi. I was hoping to see you.

[CASEY]
Yeah, when did you get back?

[EMMA]
Oh, just a few days ago. **I'm only here for a week.** (...) My roommates and I, we're getting an apartment this year. It's gonna be so fun. We're all flying in early to set it up.

[CASEY]
Wow, it sounds great.

[EMMA]
Yeah, I can't wait. (...)

[CASEY]
Yeah. Um, and school, how is that going?

[EMMA]
I love it. Sophomore year was even better. **LA is amazing. It already feels like home. I'll probably end up staying out there.**

[CASEY]
Yeah.

[EMMA]
I mean, I can't imagine coming back here. Maybe Chicago. What about you? **When are you leaving?**

[CASEY]
Uh, **to where?**

[EMMA]
To school. To anywhere.

[CASEY]
Oh, I like Columbus.

[EMMA]
C'mon, Casey.

[CASEY]
No, I do.

Fig. 1· *Columbus (2017) · 19:28 - 20:37*
script's pp. 10-11 [emphasis added]

4.3 Non-placers: failure of 'place becoming'

But there are *placers* who have never been able to breathe *places* 'here', 'home': because instead of coming out wiser of the edge of *place childhood* —their body inscripted in the order's text (De Certeau 130)— they come out 'deaf', 'broken': they cannot *place hear* nor *sing* anything. They are a "failure of presence" (of place becoming): they are nothing when they should be something (Fisher 27) —*non placers: placers* who come out of the edge of *place childhood* already at the edge of *place being*. And they turn fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, but they never stop *knowing* anything more than they did at two, at five, twelve, fourteen years old —and the thing about *places* is that they are tied to 'age' (acting one's *place age*), and *physically* they never stop existing but in *placeness*, in *placeness* they do: there is no longer *place* for them (see Ponto).

So, the *non-placers* go to *placers'* places and they drink and dance and party and kiss and smoke to be breathed their (right) *place possibilities,* their *placing usages,* their *place codes,* their *place cues*; to carry them in bruised knuckles, in smudged eyeliner, in love bites, in bloody noses, in cigarette burns, in swollen lips, in cheap piercings, in nasty tattoos. In *memorized facts* (Fig. 2, Fig. 3).

Non-placers sing in a language they do not understand: they carry the codes, and might be able to 'speak' in *places*, but those places are lost in translation —they are conceived by it— and they will never be *places*. But without *place words* of their own (*non-placers* speak in *non-words*) all they have is repeating, memorizing the words of *placers.* They become arbiters of titbit facts, verbal performers of impressively long inventories of self-same language, place mythologists, story keepers, applied historians (Cooper). Because if they cannot sing place(s), they will (mindlessly) echo them, familiar spiel practiced and/or given to the point of it background-noise-becoming (Fig. 2, Fig. 3).

Fig. 2 "First Christian is considered… one of the first modernist churches in America… … In the United States. Designed by Eliel Saarinen, and Christians consider… Notice how the cross and the doors… and the clock are all off-center. This design, Saarinen's design, is asy… Saarinen's design is asymmetrical… yet still remains balanced"
Columbus (2017) · 02:25 - 03:18 · script p. 1

Fig. 3 Placer (Eleanor) speaking place words | Non-placer (Casey) speaking memorized facts
Columbus (2017) · 1:10:53-59 (p.39) | 1:31:29-36 (p.51) [emphasis added]

[ELEANOR]
The table that mimics the one outside.

[JIN]
Where's **the fountain**...

[ELEANOR]
Inside.

[JIN]
On the table…

[CASEY]
And there's a fountain that shoots up... in the middle of the **dining table**... and it sort of **mimics the fountain out** in the backyard.

[JIN]
Oh, yeah.

[CASEY]
Yeah.

5. 'Non-places', 'non-gods' and 'non-place initiation'

Background noise they too end up becoming. In their impossibility of *place breathing*, in being repeating their only *place creating* capacity, there is so much they can sing before their voices become unimportant, forgettable. After all they are just lost-in-translation imitations that would not make up for the *places* they cannot create, in whose singer would choke on before they give them *placer being*. *Non-placers* pray in altars dedicated to gods that would never

answer them —they might call on the *mythos* to the point of screaming, and there would be nothing but silence. *Non-placers* inhabit in temples *(places)* that will never be theirs (but of their elders, of those initiated that would extend their possession/creation as done to *place children*), as would never be *placeness. Non-placers* live borrowed *placer existences* made from the echoes of others. Echoes that fill the silence where their place(s) are, their god(s) are: the *non-places.*

5.1 Non-places: finding/founding forbidden gods' temples

Fig. 4 *"In the middle of all the mess, in this fucking strip mall... there was this…"*
Columbus (2017) · 50:03 - 50:09 · script p. 29

"I want to show you something" (43:40-43, p. 26). I want to show you the glow of fluorescents at not-even-midnight; the straight lines of channel glass perpendicular to brick (Benson); the thing that made me jump back in the car and drive up here; the number 3 on my list; my Deborah Berke (and architecture)'s obsession igniter; the building that "was the beginning for me" (44:12-13, p. 26).

This scene, right in the middle of the film, is vulnerability shivering around cigarette smoke (Ingman). It is a girl wanting to show someone the building where, "[i]n the middle of all the mess" (50:03, p. 29), she found her secret, forbidden god(s): her non-place(s), her "this…" (Fig. 4). And they speak in feel; in lines traced with burning cigarettes; in shaping the air (Benson, Ingman); in silence. Silence that is the emptying of the 'rhetorical' territory (Augé 77):

(44:22) [JIN]
And you didn't know anything about it?
(44:24) [CASEY]
Nothing.

(45:07) [JIN]
What was it?
(45:11) [CASEY]
Not sure.

All Casey can give Jin is diffuseness. She does not really want to talk about it, she just wanted him to see (46:25-28, p. 26) —I want to 'show' you, because I cannot 'tell' you: telling needs words, and words are of place(s). The place would ask for the "lost stories and opaque acts" (De Certeau 107), for the "suspended symbolic" (106) of the fleeting glimmers of its silent knowledge and "pasts that others are not allowed to read" (108). The non-place asks for "nothing" (44:24). Because it is so fleetingly, temporarily and ephemerally unconcerned with the precedential (78): with "story-spirit[s]", with buried-founding fragments[9] (125), with completing language/word(s), with conniving passwords (Augé 77). Those mean nothing in the *nothing* of the non-place "prophetic" abyss (87). The *mythos*, the space narratives, the "ancient rhythms" (77) pushed so there is only *you*. As if the non-place(s) (gods) eerily cooed "[t]he only face to be seen,

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[9] Stories found —authorize— spaces/places. Like in reverse, they paint, in the invisible, mystic word, the echoes of footsteps that would follow in the world of man. "[A] (...) repetition before the actual representation" (De Certeau 124), an ancient ritual (125) that creates the walking (rethorics) fields. But I reject this. How can stories that would forever be "silent", "that others are not allowed to read" be the stage directions "encysted" in the bodies of knowledge-blind walkers? (97, 93) How can I be authorized when I would never be told what I am 'authorized to'?

the only voice to be heard, in [our] silent dialogue" (90) is *yours*. And it is so "weirdly comforting" (49:58-9, p. 29).

The non-place becomes this baring emptiness, raw and unassuming; this "gentle form of possession" to exist, "somewhere else", "in the silence of form and moment of structure" (Ingman), without "determinants" (Augé 103) —"[s]uddenly the place I'd lived my whole life felt different... like I had been transported *somewhere else*" (50:47-52, p. 30) [emphasis added] (Fig. 5) —; this space to talk to your god(s) in hands, in gestures (Ingman). It becomes these (invisible, modern-architecture) temples that you find, or rather that you possess, that you carve in the absence they shape[10].

5.2 In-(non)place possession vs Carried-temple transportation

Casey carries the temples she possesses. As she carved their lines in air (Benson, Ingman), they transferred their existence into her fingertips, into her hands, sticking to her skin like the smell of nicotine. Her temples will follow her. Ready to, "[w]hen the world becomes too much — when words become too much" (Benson), when she brings them *back home* (Goldberg), imprint themselves in the emptiness, and transport her back to her forbidden god(s), to her non-place(s) (Fig. 5)

> The messiness of her relationship with her mother (...) [informs her response] to architecture. And this particular kind of architecture, which is minimal and which is about *empty spaces*, resonates with her in a way that she doesn't [understand]. (...) She knows she's responding to it in many ways, that it's *creating a space for her to process*. [And in]

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[10] "If you deal with presence and absence, the thing about architecture is it shapes absence," says Kogonada. "It shapes space. Without it, those spaces are invisible. They're always there, but we can't feel them." (Feldberg)

bringing it back home I think she's trying to control her environment a little bit and to *create sort of the same lines at home*, and so it's deeply related to her relationship, the brokenness of it. (Kogonada qtd. in Goldberg) [emphasis added]

Fig. 5 *In-(non)place possession* vs *Carried-temple transportation*
Columbus (2017) · 06:52 - 07:02

"There were nights that my mom just wouldn't come home at all. I had no clue where she was. That's when I started coming *here*" (49:46-56, p. 29). It is these lines where we are told, *in words,* what we already knew *in space(s)*: in "Ozu's interiors, Anderson's symmetry, Kubrick's one-point perspectives" (Ingman), Antonioni's *dead time* (Rohdie 51; Laird) —*if time is dead, then there is only space.* We knew in a still-shot encased in straight lines, and emptiness —and the glow of 'fluorescents'. We had already been shown Casey's carried-temple(s) (06:31). In the blues and the whites. In the doors and the frames of her in-between(s). In her clothes[11]. In her recreating them in the abyss. Abyss that in a cut, as straight as the sound of the car door shutting, is filled by the forms that were in it traced (Fig. 6). And we see Casey traversing those two shots (spaces), as if they were but a continuum where she can wander. They are. "[O]ne-and-the-same" (Dunham). The *here* she comes to (49:55-6, p. 29). Both in its *carried* and *in-(non)place* existence.

Casey exists in that *here* continuum. She walks her no-place-temples in their shaping of space —in their architectural existence— (Feldberg) and she wanders them in their abyss possession: the diegetic world appearing as a *mise-en-abyme* of world-immersion in which the diegetic is also a no place gods (no-gods) universe; "the poetics of the landscape are as much a [non-godscape] that [fills] [her] any-space-whatever" (Elsaesser and Buckland qtd. in Mercer, Mercer) like the smoke of her nicotine breath. Breath, she takes in the non-place(s) and breathes into the place world. Like a wordless prayer.

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[11] There is this detail about her clothes in how the colour of her shirt and its stripe pattern seem to mimic those of the channel glass of the building, the First Financial Bank (Fig. 5). The carried-temple actually worn on skin.

Fig. 6 Graphic match cut · *Columbus* (2017) · 06:39-40

The *abyss-filling* in this transition is what in cinema is known as a graphic match cut. This editing technique is about planned similarity that makes two different shots a visual continuum that eases the "spatial discontinuity" (Fandor 02:38-9). It is them existing in the same lines, in the same shapes. I traced them in the two shots. First drawing what I could not see, but felt was there: I was "shap[ing] absence" (shot 1). Then seeing how architecture made the *nothing* become *something*[12] (shot 2) (Kogonada qtd. in Feldberg)

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[12] "There is something so powerful about negative space. It fundamentally is about being able to see this thing that is always in front of us. You know if you put a glass around it, then, suddenly, it becomes something, right? There's nothing that's become something" (Kogonada)

There is always this smoking in her non-place(s) talks (03:22, 21:53, 25:56, 46:42-8, 01:05:13, 01:11:13-23, 01:33:17-40), like it all was carried in lighters and cigarettes, and Casey's god(s) spoke in drags. Or rather she spoke in drags her part of their "silent dialogues" (Augé 103), as a deep, primal need to leave an imprint of them. She will stand in front of her temples, striped tops and light-blue jeans and curly hair (Leigh-Phippard), trying, in hushed, hesitant mumbles to put words to the silence, clicking her tongue in so brutal acceptance when she finds none to — my gods do not do words. And then she would bring a cigarette to her lips, prophet girl, staining the smoke with deviation, ecstasy, revolt, flight of that which, within her body, escapes the law of the named (De Certeau 149) (02:41 - 03:00): "I just need a cigarette" (46:38, p. 27), to show you what I cannot tell. Let me fingertip-trace it in your air, let me stick it into your skin, your lungs, with second-hand smoke. Swallow it, spit it out, the breath I gave you, and show it to me.

5.3 Speaking in the breath you gave me: (non-)places initiation

Jin speaks in the *breath* she gave him —in the capacity of breathing (non-place creation) she gave him when they first met (21:48). She is in the midst of one of her dragging prayers when she sees him, wordlessly staining the space he walks engrossed in a phone call, like hoping to stick some of what she cannot tell in his skin. And she offers him a cigarette, still wordlessly, shaking the box (22:25), as if to bless him —and herself— somehow with temporary understanding: as if his lips are stained with her nicotine, his foreign *place words* would be more familiar —easier to echo— *(I know the reek of cigarette smoke, it is something I can carry it),* and that familiarity could be carried to hers *(see, my words taste like yours)* when she has to speak them —the words she knows *placers* have for her town's *places*, for her temples *(non-places).*

So, she starts with them ("See, it's asymmetrical... but it's also still… balanced", 25:30-35, Fig. 2) when she takes him to one —Eliel Saarinen's First Christian Church—, with the

place words she still chokes in (02:25 - 03:18) (Fig. 2), but she does not get far —Jin does not let her. He astrays from the facts, from her spiel, and says what conveys her whole *non-placer* existence: "You grow up around something, and it feels like nothing" (26:41-43, p. 16). And Casey would like to believe he said those words because he has accepted her second-hand-smoke (her attempt at making the *non-words* something, at making a 'voice' out of silence); because he is willing to swallow and spit it out to her. But she has had it before, opening up to only be met with gentle and almost imperceptible retreat (Bowen), to be told at the end that it was all pretending: "I don't really smoke" (1:33:26-28, p. 52) —*I don't really understand you, I would never have. Nothing you breathed stuck, would have stuck to me, to my skin, to my lungs.*

But it stuck to Jin. It stuck when she broke out of tour guide mode ("Okay, stop with the tour-guide mode for a second", 34:43, p. 19), out of her role as "arbiter of titbit facts" and showed him in hands, in gestures how she spoke to her god(s) (Cooper) (Fig. 8). *"Do you like this building intellectually, because of all the facts?'"* —he is calling on her that all those facts are not her words, they are *placer words*; and that he has accepted swallowing her second-hand smoke, but that he cannot swallow it, spit it out, show it to her if she does not give it to him first. She hesitates, because her mind had not conceived Jin doing that. "No. I'm also moved by it" (No. I also have my 'words'). "Yes, yes", he exclaims. *Tell me about that* (Tell me about your 'words'). *What moves you?* (Initiate me in your *mythos*) (Leigh-Phippard) (34:55-35:08, p. 20) (emphasis added). And she does, her eyes lighting up as she speaks in the silence of her *no-gods*; as she answers him in hers and his silence[13]. Because one founds their own temples; finds their

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[13] In Kogonada's. The director sensory deprives us in this scene, the background non-diegetic score (Eliel by Hammock) swelling, drowning out the dialogue (Cooper, Chen), because he too wants us to found our temples, find our gods. This lesson is not just for Jin. It is also for us.

own gods. What Casey gives Jin behind the glass of Eero Saarinen's Irwin Union Bank (now Conference Center) are not temples/gods, but the silence to found/find them (Fig. 7).

Fig. 7 Casey and Jin enact the non-place(s) silent dialogues: she becomes the non-god of their silence, where the only face to be seen, the only voice to be heard is Jin's.
Columbus (2017) · 35:19 - 36:05

He founds/finds them: Thompson's Veteran's Memorial; Bassett's Columbus City Hall; Saarinen's Miller House and Gardens; Polshek's Quinco Regional Mental Health Center — his beginning ("I like this building", 36:38-9), his Casey's Berke's First Financial Bank. They arrive to it shortly after the bank scene —the no-gods initiation—, the last notes of the dialogue drowning score lingering before being swallowed by the sound(s) of water (Cooper). Because we are entering Jin's temple, and with it the carving(s) he would do in the absence it shapes, but he is Casey's acolyte (initiated): he carries the notes of her silence[14] as he carries her gestures (Fig. 9, Fig. 8).

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[14] The dialogue drowning score *(Eliel)* that represents Casey('s silence) lingers too in the next appearance of Polshek's building (1:26:09 - 1:27:40) when Jin is using it to exist somewhere else — when he is calling his non-gods in it.

Fig. 9 Casey speaks in her god(s)'s silence in hands, in gestures, "tracing in the air the lines of the form of the building, caressing the imaginary slopes" (Ingman); "miming the [shapes] of the structure in front of her" (Leigh-Phippard); "replicat[ing] the feel of the form in the imaginary space" (Ingman)

Fig. 8 Jin carrying Casey's non-god(s) talking signature

Jin stands in the front of the building, and he asks Casey's permission ("Can I tell you something?", 36:47-8, p. 21) to show her what she has shown him: "this is what your "silent dialogues" *look* like, Casey. This is how they *sound* like". He is so eager to prove himself

to her, to speak right in the breath she gave him. She lets him. She lets him tentatively carve/possess his first temple, shape his own breath, choose the sound of his silence (water) — talk to/about one of her *non-gods/non-places* in a *voice* that is not hers:

> "He had this idea, Polshek did, of architecture being this sort of healing art," Jin comments. Polshek believed that architecture "had the power to restore. And that architects should be responsible." "All the details of this building are mindful of that responsibility," he continues, "especially since it was a structure for mental health. This building was meant to be both a literal and metaphoric bridge." (Cooper)

In a *self-mythology* different to the one she wrote to echo in the absence (behind their *non-placer* becoming that) her architecture (her temples) shape. Hers is of a loyal daughter who cannot save her mother; of a young woman who drives in the middle of the night to cry in strip malls; of a girl who could never be sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen that is so angry and so lonely. His, of an architecture scholar's son expected to stay until his father dies; of a man who convinces himself he hates the buildings that move him; of a boy whose father never paused his life for him.

The (non)place is handed over to the foreigner, the stranger, to Jin (De Certeau 129). He who was never guided by familiar hands, picked up by paternal arms, written passwords on by maternal digits, palm reprimanded, clue peppered in fingers in the *place codes* of Columbus. *Codes* in which he would never be inscribed, which he would never have in him inscribed — there would never be a *place* rite of passage for him (see Chapter 4). And yet he would breathe *places* because Columbus is his *placer* 'out there'. But those *places* will taste of the cigarettes, of the words spoken to non-gods, of the silence of his place elders substitute, of the priestess of his initiation: they will carry the *breath* Casey gave him —as she will carry his. Casey was not the only one dragging cigarette smoke *(breath)* to be swallowed, leaving imprints in skin. Jin was too, giving her the *place words* of the 'out there' (where he comes from) through all their

conversations: if we could hear Casey, if her talking had 'words' as opposed to the no(n) words when she was alone in her non-places, the silence in the bank scene was because she had started speaking in 'out there' *places* —in Jin's. Like they were trading existences. They do. Casey leaves and Jin stays. She, occupying the space he leaves outside Columbus; him, taking possession of hers inside it.

6. Conclusion

We start with borrowed *(place)* existences, *(place) children,* with belonging in *places* and creating them being done for us, arms, hands, digits leaving marks in our bodies as we gambol, on all four, dance, walk about the *places* of our elders. *Places* we will fully understand and *breathe* (create) at the edge of our *place childhood,* as we exist as *placers* in the back of cars, in parties, in the *places* we can act our *place age* until we run out of them. Because we will stop being able to *breathe* them, our *place mythos* useless, at the edge of 'place being': we will stop belonging 'home', in 'here'; and start belonging 'out there' —we trade *place(r) existences.* But sometimes there is no *place(r) existence* to trade. Sometimes there are *placers* who have never been so, that the only *place creating* capacity they have ever had is repeating. Repeating the *place words,* the words of *placers,* in lost-in-translation imitations that would not make up for the *places* they-cannot create, in whose singer would choke on before they give them *placer being*. Their *place existence* is in the echoes of others, echoes that fill the silence where their *place(s)* are: the *non-places*. Places where they speak their own *(non)words* (silences, gestures), where they *breathe* (create). They breathe a *breath* that can be given to others, to the foreigner, to the stranger. To those they will initiate where *placers* would not, to those with whom they would trade existences to occupy their places in their respective 'out theres'.

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