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Romance, Politics and Minor Art: A Nomadology of Inamoramento de Orlando and Star Wars

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Abstracts

English

While existing theories of romance (in particular, those formulated by Northrop Frye and Fredric Jameson) accurately characterize this literary mode as a highly politicized example of art, this thesis contends that the political nature of romance is broader and more complex than discussed so far. In order to offer a new and comprehensive political theory of romance, this work proposes a comparison between two historically and culturally diverse examples of romance, that is Matteo Maria Boiardo's chivalric poem *Inamoramento de Orlando* and George Lucas' space opera film *Star Wars*. By reading Boiardo and Lucas' texts via Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of mixed semiotics, this thesis proposes to define romance as a countersignifying regime of signs, or in other words as a semiotic environment that appropriates signs from other texts to deprive them of any meaning or function. Defining romance as a countersignifying semiotic system enables us to explore political uses of romance that have been ignored so far. On the one hand, *Star Wars* uses countersignification to create a Junkspace in Rem Koolhaas' sense of the term, or in other words a semiotic environment that contributes to accelerated commodification and consumption typical of modern capitalism. On the other hand, *Inamoramento de Orlando* uses the same semiotics to create a Thirdspace, that is a space of coincidence between different intellectual frameworks that wishes to encourage innovative heuristic practices. Moreover, the countersignifying semiotics of romance allows this literary form to function also as what Deleuze and Guattari call minor art, a politicized form of artistic expression that, by producing an unsettling experience, challenges hierarchical structures of power and majoritarian worldviews. While *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* cannot be defined as examples of minor art *per se*, performance adaptations of these two texts such as the *Maggio* folk theatre tradition and the role-playing videogame *Star Wars: Galaxies* push the countersignifying semiotics of the original texts towards

a process of becoming-minoritarian.

Keywords: Romance, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Minor art, Mixed Semiotics, Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Inamoramento de Orlando*, George Lucas, *Star Wars*, Junkspace, Thirdspace.

Italiano

Mentre le attuali teorie del romanzesco (soprattutto quelle formulate da Northrop Frye e Fredric Jameson) definiscono questo modo letterario come un esempio di arte altamente politicizzata, questa tesi sostiene che la natura politica del romanzesco sia più vasta e complessa di quanto discusso fino ad oggi. Allo scopo di proporre una nuova ed esauriente teoria del romanzesco, questo lavoro offre un confronto tra due esempi di romanzesco storicamente e culturalmente distanti, vale a dire il poema cavalleresco *Inamoramento de Orlando* di Matteo Maria Boiardo e l'epopea spaziale *Star Wars* (*Guerre stellari*) di George Lucas. Nell'affrontare i testi di Boiardo e Lucas attraverso il concetto di semiotica mista elaborato da Gilles Deleuze e Félix Guattari, questa tesi definisce il romanzesco come un esempio di regime dei segni controsignificante, o in altre parole come un ambiente semiotico che appropria segni provenienti da altri testi con lo scopo di spogliarli di ogni significato o funzione. Questa definizione di romanzesco come esempio di semiotica controsignificante ci permette di esplorare usi politici del romanzesco che fino ad ora sono stati ignorati. Da un lato, *Star Wars* usa la controsignificazione per creare quello che Rem Koolhaas chiama *Junkspace*, o in altre parole un ambiente semiotico che contribuisce ad accelerare mercificazione e consumi del capitalismo contemporaneo. Dall'altro lato, *Inamoramento de Orlando* usa lo stesso ambiente semiotico per creare un Terzo Spazio, vale a dire uno spazio di concidenza tra diverse prospettive intellettuali che sprona il lettore verso pratiche euristiche innovative. Inoltre, la semiotica controsignificante del romanzesco com-

porta che questa forma letteraria sia anche in grado di essere usata come arte minore. Seguendo la definizione di Deleuze e Guattari, un testo artistico minore è un esempio di arte politicizzata che sfida strutture di potere gerarchice e visioni del mondo maggioritarie. Anche se *Inamoramento de Orlando* e *Star Wars* non sono esempi di arte minore, adattamenti di questi due testi legati al concetto di *performance*, come la tradizione di teatro popolare del Maggio e il videogioco di ruolo *Star Wars: Galaxies*, spingono la semiotica controsignificante dei tesi di origine verso un processo di divenire-minoritario.

Parole chiave: *Romance*, Romanzesco, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, arte minore, semiotica mista, Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Inamoramento de Orlando*, George Lucas, *Star Wars*, *Guerre Stellari*, *Junkspace*, Thirdspace, terzo spazio.

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Seeing a toddler exploring the world for the first time is perhaps the most practical way of understanding Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-minoritarian. For this reason, I wish to dedicate this thesis to my little cousin Alessandro, in the hope that he will preserve his curiosity and courage in the years to come.

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Introduction: Romance and Politics

1.1 The Open Question of Romance

Even if the literary category of romance has been in the spotlight of scholarship for centuries, there is arguably still a great deal of confusion and ambiguity surrounding it. In a 2004 Routledge *New Critical Idiom* volume devoted to this term, Barbara Fuchs acknowledges this confusion by pointing out that romance is an extremely polysemic word even in its everyday usage. The definition of romance, as Fuchs points out, "ranges from the linguistic to the literary, and eventually escapes the realm of language altogether, to settle on what is perhaps the most frequent meaning of the word in common parlance: a love affair" (4). Restricting the definition of romance only to the arts does not help in better understanding the term, as even in this context its meaning remains unclear. Indeed, the nature and scope of romance as a literary form is quite uncertain, mainly because this category lacks precise chronological coordinates and codifications as a genre (Fuchs 1-2; Zanotti 6-8).

Christine S. Lee argues that, at least as far as literature is concerned, the confusion around the category of romance originated in a radical semantic shift this word was subjected to between the sixteenth- and the eighteenth-century. During these three centuries, the meaning of romance as a literary category changed from merely indicating stories about chivalric heroes to designating generally fictional and im-

plausible narrative texts (Lee 288-303). In its new connotation, romance has ended up describing a rather large body of works, which includes not only medieval and early modern chivalric poems, but also ancient Greek and Latin narrative prose of the Hellenistic and Imperial eras, eighteenth- to nineteenth-century Gothic novels and, later on, twentieth-century pulp narratives (Lee 304-05; Fuchs 128-29). Due to its association with inventive and fanciful storytelling, romance has been branded as an inferior example of literature which allegedly lacks in quality, structure and significance compared to more serious forms such as epic, drama and the novel. In the words of Margaret Doody, romance "is most often used in literary studies to allude to forms conveying literary pleasure the critic thinks readers would be better off without" (15).[1]

Of course, such a dismissive attitude towards romance leaves several questions about this literary category simply unanswered. For example, if romance is such an unimportant literary category, why do we find examples of it in almost every moment in the history of Western culture from ancient Greece to today? Does the persistence of romance in history imply that this literary form does hold importance and that we should pay more attention to texts that belong to this category? Does the historical recurrence of romance only mean that lowbrow art (in other words, the kind of art that readers and audiences are supposed to consume quickly and dispose of) inevitably exists in every historical context?

In fact, since the category of romance comprises a heterogeneous number of texts, genres and media, is it still meaningful as a scholarly term? Instead, is it a residual and ineffective literary category which we can safely ignore? Indeed, this last argument has been taken even to its most extreme consequences, to the point of

[1]For example, in the 1957 study *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt argued that romances "are to be comprehended without any great labour of the mind, or the exercise of our rational faculty, and where a strong fancy will be sufficient, with little or no burthen to the memory" (49).

even questioning whether romance has ever existed at all.[2] However, despite these doubts and concerns, romance arguably exists as a literary category in its own right, mainly because it proves useful for separating narratives that rely on the formulas of mimetic and realistic representation from those that do not. In its current use by literary criticism, romance is indeed a confusing and imprecise notion; but this term is still the most appropriate label for chivalric narratives, adventure tales, space operas and other imaginative or fictitious texts.[3] Hence, instead of questioning the very existence of romance, an arguably more productive way of discussing this literary term is to understand the shortcomings of scholarship on the topic, and consequently to provide a more effective theory of this mode.

To be more precise, what is our current scholarly understanding of romance? How do we describe today texts in this category other than by saying that they are fictitious and imaginative? As Fuchs further explains, romance is "a literary and textual strategy" which "describes a concatenation of both narratological elements and literary topoi, including idealization, the marvelous, narrative delay, wandering, and obscured identity" (9). This definition stems from the mid-to-late twentieth-century debate on romance: this debate reached its critical phase between the 1970s and the 1980s, when romance was discussed via scholarly perspectives as different as archetypal criticism, post-structuralism and Marxist literary theory. Specifically, Fuchs grounds her definition in the studies of Northrop Frye and Patricia Parker, and so the strengths and limits of this vision of romance are the same as the works of

[2] In *The True Story of the Novel*, Doody posits that 'romance' does not exist as a category in its own right, since she understands this term as merely a synonym of 'novel.' Doody argues this point by explaining that in Neo-Latin languages the concepts of 'romance' and 'novel' coexist in the same word. While in English these two words are separate entities, the French word *roman*, the Spanish *novela*, and the Italian *romanzo* all mean 'romance' and 'novel' at the same time (Doody xvii, 1-4, 16). However, Doody's core argument can be refuted by looking at romance languages themselves, as for example French, Spanish and Italian use noun adjectivization of the words for novel—that is, *romanesque*, *novelesco*, and *romanzesco*—to describe implausible and fanciful narratives (Fuchs 9-10; Zanotti 6-7).

[3] Space opera is a sub-genre of science fiction which uses scientific concepts a implausible or outright fantastic way. According to Andy Sawyer's definition of the term, space opera features "minimal characterization and vast settings of interstellar conflicts between clearly defined 'good' and 'bad' sides" (505). As Sawyer further explains, space opera "is committed to action and adventure, focused upon the heroic, and frequently takes a series or serial form" (505). Moreover, Andrew Pringle points out that "space opera, along with other [science fiction] subgenres . . . are most definitely forms of romance" (42).

these two scholars.

The starting point for understanding the twentieth-century debate on romance (as well as its limits) is inevitably Frye's archetypal theory of this form, which can be found in his two studies *Anatomy of Criticism* and *The Secular Scripture*. Frye mainly focuses on describing the formal aspects of romance, and thus aims at discussing it as a genre that follows precise and easily identifiable rules. Indeed, Frye argues that romance adheres to the same narrative conventions in all of its incarnations, which include a "mysterious birth, oracular prophecies . . . , foster parents, . . . capture by pirates, narrow escapes from death, recognition of the true identity of the hero and his eventual marriage with the heroine" (*Secular* 4).

Frye also posits that there are two different kinds of romance, one naive and one sentimental (*Secular* 3-4). Naive romance comprises primitive and proletarian forms of storytelling such as oral fables, folktales and also contemporary pulp fiction. "At its most naive," Frye explains, "[romance] is an endless form in which a central character who never develops or ages goes through one adventure after another until the author himself collapses" (*Anatomy* 186). Since naive romance can be found in every human culture, Frye claims that this form constitutes an archetypal narrative for humankind, and thus he calls it "the structural core of all fiction" (*Secular* 15). Sentimental romance, on the contrary, describes the presence of this archetype in more sophisticated literature. According to Frye, in this form the themes and conventions of naive romance are re-elaborated in a more precise structure: for example, Frye claims that every sentimental romance features a narrative based not on adventure but rather on a completed quest, in which a hero undertakes a journey to defeat an antagonist (*Anatomy* 187).

Unfortunately, in his attempt at codifying the tropes and conventions of romance, Frye relies upon terms that are arguably too restricting and arbitrary to provide a convincing definition of this category: in fact, it is quite easy to spot exceptions

to the rules Frye establishes in his framework. For example, as Fuchs points out, the definition of romance as a story about a hero superior in degree to other men does not contemplate the existence of romances with a main female protagonist (5). Frye was undoubtedly a key figure in starting the modern scholarly debate on the literary category of romance and, as I show later in this introduction, some aspects of his foundational theory on romance can still help us in understanding this form. However, as far as a general theorization of romance is concerned, the uncompromising definition of romance that results from Frye's works is extremely limiting, and we arguably need a different framework than archetypal criticism in order to understand romance in more appropriate terms.

Patricia Parker's *Inescapable Romance* echoes a similar sentiment; this 1979 volume is indeed a clear attempt at providing a less restricting definition of romance than the one formulated in Frye's archetypal criticism. In the introduction to her study, Parker candidly distances herself from Frye by explaining that her intent is not to discuss romance as a "generic prescription" or as a "fixed transhistorical category" (5). On the contrary, Parker envisions romance as a mode associated with the postponement of meaning, an idea that was first formulated in post-structuralist theories of language, and specifically in Jacques Derrida's concept of *differànce* (9-10).[4] According to Parker, romance is a literary mode that "simultaneously quests for and postpones a particular end, objective or object," the latter being usually connected with "naming, identity, and closure or ending" (4). Parker indeed points out that the delay of these four elements is "a persistent romance phenomenon" and, as such, it can be observed in authors as historically and culturally distant as Ariosto, Spenser, Milton and Keats (5). At the same time, however, Parker does not mean to say that all of these authors adhere to the strategy of romance in the same way: on the contrary, Parker argues that each of them makes use of romance in different ways and,

[4]In Derrida's thought, the term *differànce* does not merely describe a diversity between cultures and people but also denotes how writing postpones in time meanings and definitions. See Derrida 1-29.

above all, with varying agendas in mind (6-8).

Parker's contribution to the theory of romance is paramount: in *Inescapable Romance*, she convincingly illustrates how the delay of endings, meanings and definitions is not an exclusive feature of folk and pop romance as Frye suggested. On the contrary, postponement is a crucial aspect of all examples of romance, including those that Frye would have called sentimental. Even if Parker expands upon Frye's archetypal theory of romance in a fundamental way, her work regrettably does not represent a fully-fledged theory of romance. By her own admission, Parker is not interested in proposing "an exhaustive survey of romance itself" from the perspective of post-structuralist theory; instead, she simply uses romance as an "organizing principle" for interpreting only the authors discussed in her volume (4). Hence, even if Parker's post-structuralist vision of romance is a step towards a better understanding of this form, her theory mainly works within the limits of her scholarship, and thus cannot function on its own as an effective alternative to Frye's archetypal theory of romance.

Frye and Parker do not provide viable definitions of romance for quite different reasons. The former scholar focuses only on the formal rules of this literary mode, thus ignoring how such rules may change in different historical contexts. The latter discusses romance as a strategy of delay in a limited number of texts (most of which belong to modern British literature) and thus she does not provide a holistic definition of this literary mode. I argue that a first step towards overcoming the current confusion surrounding the term 'romance' is to address the specific problems that originate from Frye and Parker's scholarships. On the one hand, in this work I propose to take into more attentive consideration the semantic broadness of romance. Since romance is a literary form that spans over several centuries of history, has been adopted by very distinct cultural groups, and even encompasses different forms of artistic expression, then a significant study on romance should not simply acknowledge the persistence of this literary form in passing, but fully embrace it. On the other hand, in doing so,

we should not forget that individual romances do belong to a specific historical and cultural moment.

This pursuit for a more adequate theory of romance than the ones currently in use is what drove me to discuss two profoundly different examples of this literary form, that is Matteo Maria Boiardo's chivalric poem *Inamoramento de Orlando* (also known as *Orlando innamorato*)[5] and George Lucas' *Star Wars* (renamed as *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope* in later re-releases).[6] I am aware that my proposal to compare two texts as diverse as Boiardo's poem and Lucas' film may strike some of my readers as confusing or arbitrary. However, with this unusual choice of texts I hope to provide a genuinely useful definition of romance, one that will be broad enough to encompass both a fifteenth-century Italian chivalric poem and a twentieth-century American space opera movie, but also precise enough to encourage strong readings of each of these texts.

Offering a more effective scholarly approach to romance compared to Frye's comprehensive yet generic framework and Parker's compelling but restricting approach to this form is one of the goals that this thesis hopes to achieve. Yet, in order to overcome these limited perspectives on romance and further our understanding of this mode, we also need to challenge a critical flaw that is present in the scholarship of both Frye and Parker: in my view, what these two scholars respectively downplay or outright ignore is the fact that romance is an inherently political literary form. As I explain in the following sections, we should understand romance in political terms for

[5]Boiardo's poem was called both *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Orlando innamorato* between the fifteenth- and the sixteenth-century (Harris 2:11, 199-202). While the latter title became more popular arguably due to its similarity with Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, between the 1950s and the 1990s scholars such as Roberto Ridolfi (100) and Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti ("Mondo" 32-33) have argued that the former title is more philologically correct. Today, scholarly essays on Boiardo use either of the two titles. On the one hand, scholars such as Andrea Canova (10-12) and Roberto Galbiati (11n1) refer to the poem as *Inamoramento de Orlando*. On the other hand, Jo Ann Cavallo justifies her choice to use only *Orlando innamorato* due to this title's greater popularity (*World* 267n1). In this thesis, I use the denomination *Inamoramento de Orlando* both for philological reasons and to mark a more explicit separation between Boiardo's work and Ariosto's poem.

[6]As Marcus Hearn points out, the subtitle *Episode IV - A New Hope* was added to *Star Wars* theatrical re-releases as early as in 1978 in preparation for *The Empire Strikes Back* (124). Following the same logic I adopt with Boiardo's poem, I choose to use the title *Star Wars* when discussing this movie in order to distance its 1977 theatrical version from how this movie has been approached after the release of *Empire*.

two key reasons. Firstly, this literary form prospers in periods marked by profound social and political changes. Secondly, and perhaps above all, romance tropes and conventions readily lend themselves to political appropriations and uses.

1.2 Jameson's Political Theory of Romance

The most effective political theory of romance developed so far originates in the works of Marxian literary critic Fredric Jameson, who sees this mode as a tool for discerning the unfolding of history in terms of class struggle. As such, Jameson's theory of romance is a fundamental starting point for understanding the political nature of romance. In the second chapter of the seminal 1981 volume *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson puts in motion his theory of romance starting from a critical question: if, as Frye argues, romance is a trans-historical literary form, how can we contextualize it in the unfolding of human events? Does romance reappear and disappear in specific periods of history? Can one trace the reappearance of romance via the tools of Marxian historicism?[7]

As already explained, Frye's work mostly focuses on describing romance as a rigid literary form, whose most common traits include a quest-based narrative and a fight between good and evil. One of the elements that, according to Frye, recurs in each incarnation of romance is the sense of wish-fulfillment produced by this form (*Anatomy* 186). According to Frye, romance's wish-fulfillment "has socially a curiously paradoxical role," as it can be appropriated politically in two opposite ways, that is as either an instrument of propaganda for those who hold power or as a tool that favours social and political upheaval against power (186). On the one hand, romance's sense of wish-fulfillment comes from the fact that the protagonist is presented as superior to other men: in other words, by seeing the world through the eyes of such exceptional individuals, readers and viewers of a romance are subjected to a power fantasy

[7]See Fuchs 6-8 on Frye's influence over Jameson's theory of romance. See Jameson, "Narratives" for a previous formulation of the theory of romance offered in *The Political Unconscious*.

(33, 186). Because of his superior qualities, the hero of romance can be associated with the ruling class so as to justify its prominence and prestige, thus producing an idealized portrayal of it. In some cases, the hero of romance even belongs to the actual ruling class of his historical context, thus making the lower classes sympathize with their own masters. This instance happens most notably in chivalric romances, whose protagonists are members of the same aristocracy that ruled Europe during the middle ages and the early modern period. In Frye's own words, romance can be "kidnapped" by the elites in power so to reflect the "ascendant religious or social ideals" of a specific historical context (*Secular* 24).

On the other hand, Frye argues that romance also produces a sense of wish-fulfillment in that its narrative takes place partly in an idyllic world (often an archaic and nostalgic one) which is "associated with happiness, security, and peace" (*Secular* 53). According to Frye, most romances start in this idyllic world only to have the protagonist depart from it so as to descend into a "demonic or night world," or a space "of exciting adventures, but adventures which involve separation, loneliness, humiliation, pain and the threat of more pain" (53). Indeed, Frye further argues that the narrative of most romances "exhibits a cyclical movement of descent into a night world and a return to the idyllic world" (54).[8] In sum, the narrative of romance involves a "search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time and space" (Frye, *Anatomy* 186). It is because of this very narrative structure that romance can encourage social upheaval: Frye does not read the nostalgic and idyllic setting of romance as reactionary, but on the contrary as the premise for the "inherently revolutionary quality" in this form (*Secular* 178). "To recreate the past and bring it into the present," Frye explains "is only half the operation [enacted by romance]. The other half consists of bringing something of the present which is potential or possible,

[8] As Frye further explains, the cyclical movement of ascent and descent in romance narratives mirrors the cycle of seasons: "the opposite poles of the cycles of nature are assimilated to the opposition of the hero and his enemy. The enemy is associated with winter, darkness, confusion, sterility, moribund life, and old age, and the hero with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigor, and youth" (*Anatomy* 187-88).

and in that sense belongs to the future" (*Secular* 179).[9]

Unfortunately, Frye does not devote much time to the political aspects of romance, and so he does not reconcile the contradiction between the 'kidnapping' of romance by the ruling classes and its yearning for idyllic and Utopian times, hence leaving several aspects of this theory quite unclear. For example, does Frye mean to say that each romance can have only a single and explicit meaning? That is, should we consider a specific romance as either inherently conservative or progressive? Jameson's scholarship on romance, which expands upon Frye's attempt at reading romance politically, chooses not to answer these very questions. Instead, Jameson prefers to read the contradictory politics of romance as proof that this literary form is a site of historical and political struggle and that, as such, it should be approached via the tools of Marxian historicism.

In his scholarship on romance, Jameson argues that romance's contradictory political message signals the occurrence of radical historical changes in economic and social formations in a specific historical context. In Marxian theory terms, economic and social formations are known as "modes of production," a formula that describes the combination of productive forces and relations of production which come to represent distinct stages of human history (Jameson, *Unconscious* 74). Modes of production play a key role in the Marxian philosophy of history, primarily because changes on the level of modes of production lead to considerable socio-historical changes, which in turn produce new modes of production. As such, modes of production should form an evolutionary sequence from tribal society to capitalism and, eventually, socialism and communism (74-5).[10] The driving force that puts modes of production in conflict with each other is historical materialism, or the idea that humankind's history

[9]For example, as Barbara Fuchs clarifies, the idealization of the past effectuated by nineteenth-century Romantic literature posed "a significant challenge to [its] present," as it evoked a nostalgic past in order to resist the "cultural ravages of industrialization" (7).

[10]See Marx, *Formations* 67-120 for the original formulation of the concept of modes of production, as well as for a description of their sequence.

is determined by material conditions (86).[11]

In reality, however, the interactions between modes of production are neither linear nor are they always antagonistic. Ernst Bloch, another Marxian scholar, points out that different modes of production may coexist in the same space and time: this phenomenon is known as uneven development, or the non-synchronicity of the synchronous (22-38).[12] In *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson openly embraces Bloch's idea of non-synchronicity, so much so that he sees it as a guiding principle for the literary theory he sets up in his volume:

> [e]very social formation or historically existing society has ... consisted in the overlay and structural coexistence of several modes of production all at once, including vestiges and survivals of older modes of production, now relegated to structurally dependent positions within the new, as well as anticipatory tendencies which are potentially inconsistent with the existing system but have not yet generated an autonomous space of their own. ... The temptation to classify texts according to the appropriate mode of production is thereby removed, since the texts emerge in a space in which we may expect them to be crisscrossed and intersected by a variety of impulses from contradictory modes of cultural production all at once (Jameson, *Unconscious* 80-1).

As Jameson seeks to understand non-synchronicity from the point of view of literature, a narrative form that presents contradictory political messages such as romance assumes vital importance in his investigation.

Given his historicist background, Jameson clearly distances himself from Frye on one specific issue, that is the latter critic's "'positive' hermeneutic," or in other words the vision of romance as a self-identical and ahistorical entity. According to Jameson, Frye's hermeneutics is ineffective because it "tends to filter out historical

[11]Marx describes his materialist conception of history as follows: "[i]n the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or—this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms—with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure" (*Contribution* 20-21).

[12]See Althusser and Balibar 119-44, 199-309 for a similar formulation of uneven development.

difference and the radical discontinuity of modes of production and of their cultural expressions" (Jameson, *Unconscious* 117). In order to overcome the abstract idea of history that results from Frye's archetypal criticism, Jameson proposes a "negative hermeneutic," which should use the archetypal elements of romance so as to "sharpen our sense of historical difference" (117). Hence, Jameson's main focus is discussing how the archetypal elements of romance detailed by Frye are substituted, adapted and appropriated in different historical contexts, and above all what the meaning of these practices is in terms of Marxian historicism.

For example, Jameson observes that the good-evil dualism of romance is especially subject to political appropriation. In Frye's vision of romance as a fight between forces of good and evil, the protagonist's adversaries do not belong to a different human social formation, but they are rather inhabitants of the "night world," or in other words magical, fantastic or otherwise idealized entities (Frye, *Secular* 53). According to Jameson, this feature of romance enables a shift in the category of Otherness that exist in specific periods of history from a human entity to the realm of magic, and such a shift signals a change in social formations in a certain historical period.

This phenomenon happens most notably in the evolution of chivalric literature from the epic form of the *matière de France* to the romance narratives of the *matière de Bretagne*. The *matière de France* is a cycle of poems that originated in the eleventh-century Old French epics known as *chansons de geste*. Stories in this cycle of poems involve figures from ninth- to tenth-century Frankish history like Emperor Charlemagne and his military leader Roland as well as fictional yet plausible characters like Renaud de Montauban. These stories mainly recount episodes from the conflicts between the Franks and their real-life adversaries, such as the Saxons or the Saracens from Spain and Northern Africa, and so the most important values in this cycle of poems are collective duty, sacrifice and loyalty towards the sovereign and the realm.

On the contrary, poems that belong to the *matière de Bretagne* were mainly

written in the twelfth century, and they focus on the tales of the legendary King Arthur's court, which include outright fictional characters such as the knights Lancelot and Tristan, and Merlin the wizard. Stories from the *matière de Bretagne* usually involve implausible elements, such as enchanted artifacts or magical creatures like dwarves and giants. While Charlemagne's paladins from the *chansons de geste* follow the collective duty of fighting for their lord and their religion, the Knights of the Round Table strive for more individual goals—such as seducing a lady or going on solitary adventures—through which they can prove their individual worth.[13]

As Jameson argues, the fact that the romance narratives of the *matière de Bretagne* eventually superseded the epic ones of the *matière de France* in the collective consciousness signals a profound social and political change between the tenth and the twelfth century. In the European early middle ages (which lasted from the fifth to the tenth century) society was divided into orders and classes, which also included high aristocracy (that is, the landed nobility) and low aristocracy, or the knights (Duby 13-66). The knightly class played a key role during this age, in which external enemies like the Vikings or the Saracens were perceived as a danger to civilization itself. Indeed, in this period the category of Otherness took the human form of these "barbarian incursors" (Jameson, *Unconscious* 105). European history between the eleventh and the thirteenth century (a period known as the late middle ages) saw changes in the social order of the previous period: wars became less frequent during these centuries, and so the landless knightly class shifted its core values from a warrior ethos into one based on courtesy, personal virtues and nobility of the soul. In turn, once the landed aristocracy also lost prominence due to a rise of the urban patriciate, this class also adopted the same courtly values, thus leading to a new unity of the two ranks of the aristocracy (M. Bloch 2:42-53).

As Jameson points out, the chivalric romances of the *matière de Bretagne* were

[13]See Auerbach 96-142 on the difference between *matière de France* and *matière de Bretagne*.

indeed instrumental in this societal shift.

> When, in the twelfth century . . . the feudal nobility became conscious of itself as a universal class or 'subject of history,' newly endowed with a codified ideology, there must arise what can only be called a contradiction between the older positional notion of good and evil, perpetuated by the *chanson de geste*, and this emergent class solidarity. Romance . . . may then be understood as an imaginary 'solution' to this real contradiction . . . . The 'experience' . . . of evil can no longer be permanently assigned or attached to this or that human agent, it must find itself expelled from the realm of interpersonal or inner-worldly relations . . . and thereby be projectively reconstructed into . . . that 'realm' of sorcery and magical forces which constitutes the semic organization of the 'world' of romance (*Unconscious* 105-06).[14]

Hence, Jameson claims that substitutions and adaptations of the archetypal elements of romance such the good-evil dichotomy allow us to trace "a history of romance as a mode" (*Unconscious* 117). More precisely, Jameson locates romance in a moment of coexistence between conflicting modes of production: in other words, the shifting of otherness in romance signals that a conflict between two modes of production has either happened recently or is about to happen soon. To quote Jameson directly once again,

> [romance's] ultimate condition of figuration . . . is to be found in a transitional moment in which two distinct modes of production, or moments of socioeconomic development, coexist. Their antagonism is not yet articulated in terms of struggle of social classes, so that its resolution can be projected in the form of a nostalgic (or less often, a Utopian) harmony (*Unconscious* 135).[15]

In sum, Jameson expands upon Frye's limited political reading of romance by proposing a hermeneutics of this mode that is grounded upon the more solid theoretical basis of the Marxian philosophy of history. As a result, Jameson's work is a convincing analysis of the political elements of romance, whose outcome is an accurate explanation of why romance recurs in apparently dissimilar periods of history. According

[14]Similar elaborations on the aristocratic class solidarity in the 12th century have been proposed also by Franco Cardini (83-123) Ernst Köhler (3-54, 93-105) and Cesare Segre (28-36).

[15]In fact, Frye similarly argues that romance resurges in periods of transition between different ages of literary history. "As a rule, popular literature" (such as what Frye calls naive romance) "indicates where the next literary developments are most likely to come from" (*Secular* 28).

to Jameson, the presence of romance in a specific historical period signals that this period is undergoing profound social, economic and cultural changes: in plain terms, romance happens when old social orders are slowly fading away as new ones are emerging.

Proof of the effectiveness of Jameson's perspective is that it can be applied easily to other examples in this literary category. Indeed, if we look at examples of romance other than those discussed by Jameson, we can notice that all the historical eras in which these texts were written were characterized by the decline of one power structure and the emergence of a new one. In other words, romance did not only signal a period of class solidarity between low and high aristocracy in the Middle Ages. In the form of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic fiction, romance also accompanied the radical social and economic changes that invested British society during the Industrial revolution (Hogle 5-6). In its incarnation as the ancient Greek and Roman narrative prose, romance similarly marked the crisis of oligarchic city-state governments and the rise of the multicultural and imperialistic society of the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Fuchs 23). Finally, if we consider the historical context in which *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* were conceived, we notice that both texts are also the product of two epochs marked by profound social, cultural and political transformations.

1.3 The Political Context of *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars*

In the introduction to his translation of *Inamoramento de Orlando*, Charles Ross points out that the specific socio-historical context in which Boiardo lived (that is, fifteenth-century Ferrara under the rule of the House of Este) was politically conservative while also being innovative from a cultural point of view (xxxv). Estense Ferrara was indeed based on the archaic, aristocratic and decentralized political system of feudalism, as the ruling family largely delegated control over its territory to the lower

aristocracy. This form of power was in contrast with more innovative systems adopted by other political entities in the rest of Europe such as the centralized nation-states of France and Spain, the success of which eventually led to the emergence of the modern bourgeoisie and the slow demise of the aristocracy in Europe (xxxvii). At the same time, however, humanist culture blossomed at the Este court in the second half of the fifteenth century thanks to the teachings of renowned intellectuals such as Guarino da Verona (Looney, Studies 2-4).

A peculiar aspect of Ferrarese literary culture was its focus on chivalric romance: authors at the Este court like Boiardo or Francesco Cieco da Ferrara wrote chivalric narratives in the style of Medieval poems from France not only for entertainment purpose but also to promote the Este's archaic ruling system.[16] Poems that originated in Ferrara, however, did not belong strictly to the setting and themes of either the *matière de France* or the *matière de Bretagne*; on the contrary, these texts blended the two cycles of medieval narratives in a rather seamless way. As Ross points out, *Inamoramento* borrows numerous historically plausible elements from the *matière de France* (namely, characters like Roland and Renaud, Italianized respectively as Orlando and Rinaldo or Ranaldo) so as to merge them with the outright implausible ones of the *matière de Bretagne* (lx-lxi).

Boiardo's poem is indeed full of magical weapons, fantastic creatures and imaginary locations: for example, the protagonist Orlando wields a magic sword named Durindana (*Orlando* 3.1.29-31) rides an intelligent horse named Baiardo (1.8.25-26) and visits completely unrealistic places such as the magical garden of Falerina (2.3-4). Throughout the poem, Boiardo's paladins behave very differently than their counterparts from the Carolingian cycle, in that their actions and attitudes resemble those of the knights from the *matière de Bretagne* such as Lancelot or Calogrenant. Not unlike the Arthurian knights, Boiardo's French paladins are animated by the more

[16]See Anselmi et al. 531-36 on the role of the arts as an instrument of power at the Este court.

personal goals of fame, wanderlust and, above all, love. After all, Orlando's main priority in *Inamoramento* is not to fight the pagan armies of Gradasso or Agramante as he would have done in a *chanson de geste*, but rather to search for the beloved Angelica.[17]

Boiardo's seamless blending of *matière de France* and *matière de Bretagne* is consistent with Jameson's political reading of romance: indeed, this blending results in a substitution of the realistic category of Otherness of the latter cycle of poems with the magical ones of the former (Ross lx-lxi). While the transformation of chivalric narratives from the realistic tone of the Carolingian cycle into the whimsical Breton one signalled a moment of class solidarity between the low and high aristocracy, Boiardo's mingling of these two different literary traditions marks a different historical phase. Imposing the themes of *matière de Bretagne* over characters of the *matière de France* furthers the shifting of Otherness that Jameson notices in twelfth-century literature. Indeed, in the case of Boiardo, this shift is an attempt at postponing the demise of feudal society and late middle ages' aristocratic culture as a whole. *Inamoramento de Orlando* effectively perpetuates the culture of feudalism in a largely changed historical context, and as such poems like Boiardo's made Ferrara a liminal territory between the surviving culture and social structures of the middle ages and the emerging ones of the early modern period.[18]

This liminality indeed endured for most of the fifteenth century and came to an end only when the conditions for the coexistence of small feudal courts and large nation-states became impossible. In the last octave of the poem, written in September of 1494, Boiardo explains to his readers that he is suspending the composition of *Inamoramento de Orlando* because the troops of Charles VIII, King of France, have

[17]The mingling of characters from the *matière de France* with themes from the *matière de Bretagne* has also been attempted in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century poems written before Boiardo's, such as the anonymous *Inamoramento de Carlo Mano* (Villoresi 159).

[18]Italian scholars such as Giuseppe Anceschi (xiv) and Giovanni Ponte (66-9) also stress that fifteenth-century Ferrara is located both geographically and historically between the Late Gothic that thrived in Central Europe and the Renaissance in Florence.

recently entered Italy.[19] Boiardo never resumed the composition of his poem, as he died in December of the same year.

> (Mentre che io canto, o Dio redemptore,
> Vedo la Italia tutta a fiama e a foco
> Per questi Galli, che con gran valore
> Vengon per disertar non sciò che loco:
> Però vi lascio in questo vano amore
> Di Fiordespina ardente a poco a poco.
> Un'altra fiata, se mi fia concesso,
> Raconterovi el tutto per espresso) (Boiardo, *Orlando* 3.9.26).
>
> but while I sing, o my redeemer,
> I see all Italy on fire,
> because these French—so valiant!—
> come to lay waste who knows what land.
> So, I will leave this hopeless love
> of simmering Fiordespina.
> some other time, if God permits,
> I'll tell you all there is to this (Ross 570).

In retrospect, the 1494 French invasion of Italy is an emblematic occurrence, since it is seen today as the first out of several conflicts between the small political entities of the Italian peninsula—such as Ferrara, Venice, Milan and Florence—and the dominant European powers of France and Spain (Everson and Zancani 1-13). These conflicts, known as the Italian Wars, lasted up until the second half of the sixteenth-century, and they eventually led to the decadence of the small Italian courts that still relied on feudalism as a political and economic model. Thus, the persistence of feudalism within early modernity that *Inamoramento de Orlando* perpetuated effectively died at the beginning of the Italian Wars.

Not unlike *Inamoramento*, *Star Wars* also signals the overlapping of different modes of production in the mid-twentieth century, especially from a history of cinema point of view. Indeed, we may read the film's release in 1977 as a shift in film-making practice from the styles (as well as from the economic model) of the classical

[19]Before this last and definitive interruption, Boiardo also halted the composition of *Inamoramento de Orlando* due to the 1482-84 war between Ferrara and Venice (*Orlando* 2.31.48-50). I address the compositional history of Boiardo's poem later in section 4.3 of this thesis.

Hollywood era to the one known as New Hollywood. Between the 1920s and the 1950s, the American film industry relied upon a vertically integrated studio system in which a few major financial entities held control over the entire market. Film production, distribution and exhibition were all aspects that major studios such as Fox, MGM, Warner and RKO managed directly, as these companies owned both the film departments which produced the movies and the theatres in which the same movies were screened. This system, and its historical context, also explains why genre films, B-movies and film serials gained prominence in this era.[20] On the one hand, standardized narrative genres were a perfect fit for the assembly-line production model of the studio system, which released annually about six hundred films. On the other hand, the rise of the double feature billings during the Great Depression (which served the purpose of attracting audiences despite the hardships of the period) pushed the studios to produce much cheaper B-movies and serials.[21]

When several major studios eventually went bankrupt, the studio system began to crumble by the 1950s. Over time, this decline led to the rise of the New Hollywood era (1970s-present) which eventually reversed many of the trends and production methods established by the previous system. The main change, of course, involved the process of distributing and promoting movies, as the New Hollywood studios had to compete in a market in which US theatres distribution constitutes only one among several other sources of income. On the one hand, the studio system focused on releasing as many films as possible for the domestic market, since the vertically-integrated marketplace gave studios absolute control over theatre billings. On the other hand, in the film industry from the 1970s onward a blockbuster's financial success has depended upon worldwide distribution, television broadcasting rights, the renting and home video market, and the sales of licensed merchandise such as video games or soundtrack

[20]Film serials were narratives made up of twelve to fifteen episodes of around twenty or thirty minutes each, which were screened in movie theatres just before the feature film of the week. In contrast with the more serious full-length movies, film serials would tell pulp fiction narratives such as westerns, adventure tales, superhero stories or detective tales. See Canjels 9-38 for a more in-depth description of film serials.

[21]See Hayward 366-78 for a more in-depth analysis of the Hollywood studio system.

albums (Schatz 15-7).

The evolution of Hollywood from the assembly-line studio system into the globalized and multimedia-oriented New Hollywood is a consequence of a much broader historical and cultural phenomenon. In Marxian economics terms, this phenomenon is known as the shift of capitalism from its classical form into its latest stage, while from a cultural perspective it is known as the demise of the modern era and the rise of the postmodern one (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 3). As pointed out earlier, the studio system embodied the essence of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century capitalism due to its focus on industrial production and standardized labour division. In contrast, New Hollywood was a direct consequence of what Jameson defines as "the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order" in the form of "post-industrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capitalism" (*Turn* 3). To compete in a post-industrial market, Hollywood has shifted its focus from the mass production of movies to a hit-driven model, since only a handful of blockbusters per year can handle the demands of worldwide distribution and a fragmented media environment (Schatz 17).

In fact, one of the first successful examples of the New Hollywood blockbuster was *Star Wars*, which paved the way for the blockbuster model especially due to its lucrative use of merchandising and broadcasting rights (Schatz 26-31). However, even if the business practices that made *Star Wars* a commercial success were profoundly innovative in the 1970s, the movie's narrative and tropes are founded upon the typical formats of classical Hollywood. As Andrew Gordon points out, Lucas' film constantly references genres that were popular in the 1930s-1950s, such as swashbuckler films or western movies (76-77). Of course, the most obvious source of inspiration for *Star Wars* is the space opera film serial, whose look and feel Lucas' film openly borrows.[22]

[22]Indeed, *Star Wars* resembles a space opera not only because of its use of stock characters and imaginative setting but also because of paratextual elements that are taken directly from popular space opera serials. For example, the use of an opening crawl to summarize events from previous episodes and the use of screen wipes as editing transitions in Lucas' film echoes the ones from *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe*.

Jameson himself argues that *Star Wars* is a postmodern pastiche in that it recaptures the feeling of the 1930s-1950s movie-going experience in a different social and historical context. By stressing *Star Wars*' similarities with pulp serials from classical Hollywood, Jameson defines this movie as "*metonymically* a historical or nostalgia film" as it reinvents "the feel and shape of characteristic art objects of an older period" in order to "reawaken a sense of the past associated with those objects" (*Turn* 8). In other words, *Star Wars* clearly marks the shift from one socio-economical system to the other, since it is as much grounded in New Hollywood filmmaking as it is a profoundly nostalgic look back at the aesthetics of classical Hollywood. From the perspective of *The Political Unconscious*, *Star Wars* comes to represent the decline of early twentieth-century capitalism and the rise of the postmodern consumer society, just like *Inamoramento* signals a shift from the feudal society to the more centralized structures of power of the early modern period.

1.4 How Does Romance Act Politically?

Jameson's theory of romance as a sign of non-synchronicity proves correct also when applied to *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars*: indeed, despite the immense cultural differences between 1970s America and the Italian fifteenth-century, both historical periods were characterized by radical changes in political, cultural, social and economic paradigms. In Marxian terms, neither of these two periods hosted only a single mode of production; rather, they both overlapped two contrasting ones. As such, both *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars*, each in its own way, should be read as embodiments of these very overlappings. In the case of Boiardo's poem, the mingling of the Carolingian and the Breton cycles signals an attempt at preserving feudal culture during the rise of the early modern period by shifting the more realistic elements of the Carolingian cycle into the realm of magic of the Breton one. In the case of *Star Wars*, Lucas makes use of the genres of classical Hollywood such as the western or the

swashbuckler film (which were conceived as products of twentieth-century industrial capitalism) in the vastly different context of consumer society in today's capitalism, thus indicating a transformation of modern society into its postmodern phase.

In sum, if the politics of romance is a contradictory one, as Frye points out, it is because romance is often the product of contradictory times from a political point of view. Jameson's study on romance outlines an accurate history of this mode, whose surge to prominence in transitional historical periods signals that social, political and cultural changes are about to happen. While the theory of non-synchronicity succeeds in providing a convincing historicist perspective on romance, the primary limitation of this approach is that it fails to go beyond this strictly hermeneutical perspective into a more functionalist or pragmatical one. In plain terms, while Jameson's theory of romance allows us to understand what does romance mean from a historical point of view, this same perspective fails to explain *what does romance do* in the highly politicized historical contexts in which it appears.

Indeed, since the presence of romance in a particular historical context signals an age of deep political ferment, it seems highly unlikely that romance does not have any active role in these agitations. Hence, in light of Jameson's theory of romance, the questions about romance's politics raised by Frye become even more cogent. In other words, how does romance act politically? Other than signalling a period of imminent social upheaval, does romance also engage in this social upheaval in any relevant way? Moreover, does romance take any side in the political conflicts it announces? For example, does romance merely reinforce old structures of power by evoking a sense of nostalgia for dying social orders and obsolete cultural artifacts? Alternatively, does it somehow accelerate the demise of these very structures of power by siding with emerging social groups?

Romance does lend itself quite easily to political appropriations, although for more prosaic reasons than the ones listed by Frye. For example, romance holds a

proletarian quality not because its narrative is a quest for an idyllic world; rather, as a form of secondary literature, romance constitutes a means of communication for marginalized communities. Indeed, examples of romance's use by subaltern groups abound throughout literary history: for instance, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic novel was considered at first synonymous with feminine literature because texts in this category were mostly read, written and discussed by women, who at the time could not participate in the mainstream literary and scholarly debate.[23] Similarly, in 1930s America the superhero comic book serials became a means of expression for working-class immigrants, who also did not have access to upper-class culture.[24] Since these two social groups were excluded from the sphere of official culture in their historical context, romance became a tool for both of these groups to express themselves and to shape alternative communities of readers and writers.

Arguably, the prejudice that romance only provides gratuitous and mindless entertainment to its readers mainly stems from the fact that this literary form belongs first and foremost to oppressed social categories, and as such it is alien to the culture of those who hold power.[25] This negative assessment of romance is present also when hegemonic culture borrows elements of romance and includes them in works that belong to the literary canon. Indeed, while Frye is right in pointing out that romance is often appropriated by those who hold power in order to further their own political goals, hegemonic culture relies on the tropes and conventions of romance mainly to associate them negatively with subaltern social and cultural groups. In other words, when these tropes and conventions are adapted (or, in many instances, when they are

[23]This feminist perspective on Gothic literature was proposed initially in 1976 by Ellen Moers in the essay "Female Gothic" (90-98). See Smith and Wallace for a more recent study on the female Gothic.

[24]For example, Superman co-creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster were both second-generation Jewish immigrants who were born to working-class families (Ricca 27).

[25]Indeed, another limit of Frye and Parker's studies is that they both focus almost exclusively on the presence of romance's tropes and conventions in the Western literary canon. In doing so, they give little to no attention to so-called lowbrow forms of romance, or in other words to forms of romance produced by subaltern categories. Frye devotes only the first chapter of *The Secular Scripture* to naive romance (*Secular* 3-31) while in the rest of the volume he discusses sentimental examples of this form. In her volume, Parker outright omits any discussion of the presence of romance in folk, pop or pulp culture, and instead focuses on a selection of canonical authors.

parodied) in major literary works, they are used to mark failure, inadequacy or even just a deviation from acceptable norms. To borrow a cogent formulation from David Quint's *Epic and Empire*,

> [t]o the victor belongs epic, with its linear teleology; to the losers belongs romance, with its random or circular wandering. Put another way, the victors experience history as a coherent, end-directed story told by their own power; the losers experience a contingency that they are powerless to shape to their own ends (9).

For example, in epic poems such as Virgil's *Aeneid* or Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, the romance trope of aimless wandering is used when the protagonists are being distracted from achieving their goal or fulfilling their heroic destiny.[26]

This political use of romance theorized by Quint can be extended quite easily also to other historical examples of this form. In other re-elaborations of romance in the Western canon, this form is used parodically for other yet germane goals: for example, when in a text we are told that characters indulge themselves in reading any kind of romance, we are encouraged to see these individuals as unbalanced, as misfits or, even worse, as entirely deranged. Examples of this kind of characterization include Paolo and Francesca's sinful passion for Arthurian romances in Dante's *Commedia* (6.73-142) Catherine Morland's naive indulgence in Gothic novels in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (17-18) and, of course, the titular character's obsession with chivalric adventures in Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1.6). In light of Quint's political approach to romance, it is evident that all these apparently innocuous or affectionate references to popular romance tropes in canon literature are, in fact, inherently political. To be more precise, the association of elements borrowed from romance with disastrous events or irrational personality traits betrays how those who hold power politicize romance for self-promotion: as romance tropes are used to portray

[26]The first half of *Aeneid* (Books 1-6) is similar thematically and structurally to Homer's *Odyssey* in that it recounts the peregrinations of Aeneas before reaching the shores of Latium. In Tasso's *Liberata*, the romance episode of the Fortunate Isles (cantos 14-16) is a digression from the main plot involving the siege of Jerusalem. Quint himself discusses Tasso's use of romance tropes in *Liberata* (248-68).

the oppressed as failing and insane, the oppressors can easily present themselves as sane and successful. The use of romance elements in canon literature is, in the final analysis, a political appropriation of this form, one so egregious that we should never ignore that when approaching these texts.

1.5 How *Can* Romance Act Politically? A Nomadology

In sum, romance is a literary form for whose control hegemonic and subaltern groups of people compete, as this form allows them to express their vision of the world and shape their politics. The former group mainly uses romance in parodic terms, so as to dismiss the latter as unreliable and prone to failure, whereas the latter relies upon this same form in order to find an alternative voice to official culture. I do not propose this rigid division between hegemonic and subaltern romance as the only way (or, in fact, as the most effective way) of approaching romance from a political point of view. Rather, what I merely wish to illustrate is that romance is indeed a site of political struggle and that whoever adopts romance for its own ends does so potentially in a very effective way.

The fact that both hegemonic and subaltern categories successfully appropriate and use romance for their own ambitions led me to question whether this literary mode can perform also different kinds of political action. The first goal of this work is to explore the political uses of romance outside of those listed in the previous section. As I will illustrate by discussing *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars*, the political uses of romance can be quite assorted even in the limited context of hegemonic politics. In other words, official culture can use romance for different reasons other than portraying subaltern groups as failing and insane. On the one hand, *Star Wars* uses the conventions of romance as a vehicle for numbing the intellectual faculties of its audience and, consequently, for promoting and selling its own merchandise in the context of postmodern capitalist society. On the other hand, *Inamoramento* relies

upon the very same conventions to create an environment that encourages dialogue among different worldviews, in accordance to the fifteenth-century vision of the arts as a pedagogical tool to educate those who hold power.

The divergent politics of Boiardo's poem and Lucas' film prove that a political approach to romance can be quite productive even if one merely wishes to employ more traditional frameworks in the study of this mode. In fact, I believe that investigating these text from a historical point of view is key to further our understanding of romance, and indeed this thesis wishes in part to contribute to this endeavour. At the same time, however, the fact that romance is the product of politically volatile historical periods (that is, periods in which established institutions and norms are overthrown) begs the question of whether romance can be the source of a more innovative kind of politics, perhaps even a politics that is yet to come. In other words, can romance be a means for conceiving and cultivating a decidedly radical kind of political action? Can romance be a useful tool for challenging repressive norms and institutions on a more fundamental level? In sum, can romance be employed not only in the narrow context of hegemonic or subaltern identity politics, but rather as a tool that can encourage us to put into question the very concepts of hegemony and subalternity altogether?

The second and more important objective of this work stems from a wholly alternative intellectual perspective to the ones discussed in this introductory chapter. Indeed, my main preoccupation in this thesis is to move romance beyond the realm of political analyses and actions as we commonly understand them, and into the arguably more compelling context of politics as defined in the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In other words, the militant philosophy that Deleuze and Guattari developed throughout their collaboration will guide my study on romance, as this framework is, in my opinion, the most appropriate tool for understanding the untapped political potentials of romance.

Throughout their writings, Deleuze and Guattari recurrently claim that minor culture (which also includes lowbrow, pulp and pop literary forms such as romance) offers innovative opportunities not only of perceiving reality but also of interacting and reshaping it. In particular, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor art will be the primary focus in my inquiry on the political uses of romance. While I discuss this concept in more detail in section 2.1.4, I wish to offer here a basic definition of the term. In brief, a minor artistic work is a politicized text that employs a major language (or, more in general, an established semiotic system) in a creative and unsettling way so as to encourage its readers to dispute the repressive structures of thought that restrain them. Deleuze and Guattari famously elaborate this concept by discussing the writings of Franz Kafka; yet, minoritarian artistic practices are of course not limited either to the Modernist period or the art form of literature. For example, Deleuze discusses both Henry Melville's 1853 short story *Bartleby the Scrivener* and Carmelo Bene's 1977 theatre piece *Riccardo III* as examples of politically antagonistic art, or in other words of art that uses its own language or semiotic system against coercive power structures (Deleuze, "Manifesto" 239-58; *Essays* 68-91). As Deleuze himself looks at different examples of literature from the perspective of minor art, it seems only appropriate to include a politically relevant artistic form such as romance in the conversation. Hence, the central question I will try to answer in this thesis is the following: can romance be considered an example of minor art in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the concept? Can romance be used as a politicized art form that leads its readers or audiences to question the reality that surrounds them? If romance can indeed be considered a minor art form, does it succeed in this goal?

In order to provide this reading of romance, we first need to move away from Frye and Jameson's political theories of romance. As already explained, Frye's scholarship is today quite limiting *per se*. For example, in the context of this thesis, the naive-sentimental dualism employed by Frye fails to describe a text like *Inamoramento de*

Orlando, which is both a sentimental romance in Frye's sense of the word but also presents a blatantly incomplete narrative. Moreover, this framework also proves to be particularly detrimental for understanding romance as a potentially minoritarian art form. Indeed, as Frye treats romance as the basis for all fiction, he thus reinforces existing structures of power instead of questioning them.

Even Jameson's Marxian and historicist perspective is not very helpful for understanding the minoritarian capabilities of romance. On the one hand, Jameson's theory of romance relies excessively upon the problematic categories of Frye's archetypal criticism. Even if Jameson openly rejects Frye's positive hermeneutics so as to discuss romance from the perspective of Marxian historicism, the former critic nonetheless maintains the framework of the latter for the most part untouched. For example, Jameson does not question Frye's claim that romance features the same unchangeable characteristics such as a conflict between unambiguously good and evil forces, a hero superior in degree to other men, a quest-based narrative and an idealized setting (*Unconscious* 96-9). In fact, Jameson even agrees with Frye that romance is "the ultimate source and paradigm of all storytelling," and thus the Marxist critic implicitly maintains the arbitrary division between naive and sentimental romance (91). On the other hand, perhaps the most significant limit to understanding romance as a minor art form is the very historicist framework Jameson uses to discuss romance. History is indeed a quintessential example of the repressive structures of thought that Deleuze and Guattari seek to challenge. After all, the primary goal of history is that of classifying phenomena in terms of cause and consequence so to justify existing power structures as unquestionable and unavoidable.

In their works, Deleuze and Guattari contrast this method of knowledge with what they call nomadology, or in other words "the opposite of history" (*Plateaus* 23). How does nomadology work, and how does it differ from history? While history encourages us to see events in a linear and teleological way, nomadology avoids giving

a final meaning to all phenomena that it encounters; instead, it gives relevance to the contingency in which phenomena happen, and it sees their development in an erratic fashion, that is through cuts and jumps between individual contingent moments (393). For example, in writing a nomadology of Western philosophy (or, in their own words, a "geophilosophy") Deleuze and Guattari argue that philosophical thought comes to be in ancient Greek city-states and, later on, in capitalist Europe because both moments present favorable and yet unrelated conditions for the rise of this phenomenon (*Philosophy* 95-7).[27] In sum, nomadology is a creative yet rigorous intellectual framework, whose primary goal is not to reinforce the order of the world, but rather to understand and question it in more effective and significant ways.

Hence, how should a nomadology of romance unfold? Studying romance from a nomadological perspective means first and foremost to contextualize a work in the contingent moments in which it was conceived, such as the early modern Italian court of Ferrara in the case of *Inamoramento de Orlando* or the postmodern Western society in the case of *Star Wars*. Of course these contingent moments must be discussed in precise terms: in other words, rejecting history as a method of inquiry should not be an excuse for treating these works and the socio-cultural context in which they were created in abstract and imprecise terms. At the same time, however, these two temporally unrelated contingent moments should not be linked together so as to form a series of cause-and-consequence relations and trace an evolution of romance as a literary form. In contrast, these contingencies can serve a better purpose when linked together so as to uncover characteristics of romance that historicism would not be able to recognize, such as the characteristics that can enable romance to be considered an example of minor art.

Chapter 2 will form the basis of this nomadology of romance. The first half of this

[27] As Roland Bogue points out, "for Deleuze any history of philosophy must be a paradoxical enterprise, for it must be a history of the untimely, or that which escapes history .... Rather than offering a narrative of the development of ideas, arguments, positions, etc., he describes the functioning of specific problems and sets them in resonance with one another through the unfolding of the problems proper to his own thought" (104).

chapter will summarize Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical framework by discussing their pluralistic and immanent ontology, the concept of becoming-minoritarian and, finally, minor art itself. Indeed, to those unfamiliar with Deleuze and Guattari's works, the terminology they use to express their ideas may appear quite obscure at first. Hence, I wish to clarify from the very beginning this terminology which I will use throughout the rest of this work. This terminology will be key to understanding how romance works, and what the prerequisites are for it to be employed as minor art. In the second half of chapter 2, I will move away from the insufficient tools of Frye's archetypal criticism so as to propose a new definition of romance as a literary mode. By offering a first and general comparison of *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars*, I propose to define romance as a literary form that features both a high degree of narrative delay and depicts space and time according to Bakhtin's chronotope of adventure-time. In turn, I read these features via Deleuze and Guattari's theory of mixed semiotics, which the two authors discuss in the Fifth plateau (*Plateaus* 111-49). Due to these features, romance can be defined as either an example of postsignifying or countersignifying semiotics. In the latter case, a strong authorial voice is absent in the text, and so narrative delay and adventure-time are used merely to deprive the semiotic elements that a romance appropriates from other texts of any name, function or command they formerly held. *Star Wars* and *Inamoramento de Orlando* are indeed two clear examples of a countersignifying semiotics. Both texts borrow numerous items from other popular texts: for example, *Star Wars* appropriates elements from twentieth-century pop and pulp culture, whereas *Inamoramento* makes numerous references to chivalric narratives as well as other classical and medieval literary genres. In adopting these textual elements, both *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars* deprive these elements of their original meaning and purpose; yet, at the same time, they do not give these elements any new definition or command. In other words, *Star Wars* and *Inamoramento* profoundly unsettle their semiotic systems of reference and, as such,

they both are perfect candidates for being considered examples of minor art.

In the following two chapters I investigate how *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars* act politically in their original social and cultural context. In keeping with the spirit of nomadology, I do not follow a chronological order in my close readings; instead, I begin with an analysis of *Star Wars*. Indeed, chapter 3 discusses Lucas' film as an example of Junkspace, or in other words a countersignifying semiotic space whose main purpose is that of numbing the audience's critical capabilities. While on the one hand *Star Wars*' Junkspace deprives the semiotic material it appropriates from other texts of their original meaning and purpose, on the other hand it does so to commodify these very semiotic elements and resell them to its own audience. As *Star Wars*' Junkspace ends up reinforcing the majoritarian structure of power of capitalism, it does not allow any kind of antagonistic political intent which, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, designates the main goal of minor art. In chapter 4, I posit instead that the countersignifying semiotic space of Boiardo's poem creates a Thirdspace, or a space that aims at establishing interactions between semiotic elements that could not otherwise meet. While *Inamoramento*'s Thirdspace is a more enlightened political use of romance, Thirdspace politics is still not what Deleuze and Guattari would call a minor politics, as Boiardo's use of Thirdspace aims at finding allegedly objective truths about reality instead of questioning these very truths.

In chapter 5, I argue that, as romances, *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* can be pushed closer to a condition of minor art via performance adaptations of these texts. The folk theatre tradition of the *Maggio emiliano* qualifies as minor theatre because, while preserving the countersignifying semiotics typical of the chivalric romance tradition, it also uses this same semiotics so as to discourage its audience from perceiving what is happening on stage as an unitary image that carries an univocal meaning. Similarly, the discontinued massive multiplayer video game *Star Wars: Galaxies* (recently brought back online by a community of committed fans) is an ex-

ample of minor videogame because it encourages its players not to emulate the events of the *Star Wars* saga, but rather to experience the semiotic environment in more creative and unsettling ways.

2

A Deleuzian Theory of Romance

2.1 A Survey of Deleuze and Guattari's Political Philosophy

2.1.1 Immanent Ontology

Although the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari is inherently political, this political thought is the result of the immanent and monadic ontology they develop throughout their works. In turn, the prime element of Deleuze and Guattari's ontology is the virtual, or the chaos of shapeless things as they exist in a state before being organized by thought:

> [c]haos is defined not so much by its disorder as by the infinite speed with which every form taking shape in it vanishes. It is a void that is not a nothingness but a virtual, containing all possible particles and drawing out all possible forms, which spring up only to disappear immediately, without consistency or reference, without consequence. Chaos is an infinite speed of birth and disappearance (Deleuze and Guattari, *Philosophy* 118).[1]

In order to better understand what the virtual is, we should think of it as a body of water, such as a sea or an ocean.[2] In plain words, this description of the virtual is not unlike how a sea appears to us at first sight, that is as an immeasurable space traversed by uncontrollable events such as waves and currents.

[1]Before being used in Deleuze and Guattari's writings, the concept of the virtual was formulated first by Deleuze by elaborating upon Henri Bergson's own concept of duration (Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 42-3, 96-8; *Difference* 168-222).

[2]Deleuze and Guattari themselves make use of the sea example in their works to discuss their idea of ontology (*Plateaus* 479-81; *Philosophy* 36).

As Deleuze and Guattari explain, one interacts with the chaos of the virtual by laying planes over it.[3] One of these planes is the plane of organization, which aims at giving order to the virtual by halting its flows and organizing them hierarchically (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 265-66). In the sea example, this process would mean to draw geographical coordinates over this territory, so to determine the precise location of any object over the body of water. Scientific, political and social systems can all be forces that give hierarchical order to the virtual. Of course, this activity can produce positive results: without the plane of organization of science, we would not have essential frameworks for the understanding of reality such as chemistry or physics.[4] However, ignoring the infinite speeds of the virtual can also be limiting in terms of knowledge of the real, and even harmful as far as ethics and politics are concerned. A plane of organization can also segment humanity so to divide it into classes, races and genders, thus creating social inequalities between wealthy and poor people, whites and blacks, men and women, and so on (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 195).

Deleuze and Guattari posit that philosophy should provide an alternative way of interacting with the virtual by laying a plane of consistency over it. Instead of halting the velocities of the virtual, philosophy wants "to retain different speeds while gaining consistency," that is by "giving the virtual a consistency specific to it" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Philosophy* 118).[5] A more effective way of understanding the plane of consistency is, once again, the example of the sea. If the plane of organization is similar to the geographical coordinates that run across a body of water, we should instead picture the plane of consistency as an immense blanket that can adapt to the waves and currents of the same body of water.

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[3]Brian Massumi clarifies that the term plane in Deleuze and Guattari "designates both a 'plane' in the geometrical sense and a 'plan'" (xvii). Indeed, as Bonta and Protevi point out, Deleuze and Guattari use the French word 'plan' in these sense of project plan, blueprint and map (126).

[4]To be precise, Deleuze and Guattari define the plane of organization created by science as the "plane of reference" (*Philosophy* 118).

[5]See *Philosophy* 35-60 for a more in-depth elaboration upon the plane of consistency.

In order to fulfill the goal of retaining the speeds of the virtual and giving relevance to its minuscule events, the plane of consistency uses tools that stand in direct contrast with those of the plane of organization in the way they interact with the elements of the virtual. For example, while science segments the virtual into functions so to create a cohesive and discursive system and organize its elements hierarchically, philosophy creates concepts or multiplicities, which are non-discursive and non-organic entities that aggregate their components in a fragmentary way (Deleuze and Guattari, *Philosophy* 20, 117).[6] In other words, functions on the plane of organization are arborescent structures, as they proceed through ramifications and hierarchical connections among their components (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 5-6). On the contrary, the entities found on the plane of consistency are rhizomes. In Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, this term describes all entities that are deprived of any center, and whose elements are connected to one another without following a predetermined path.

> In contrast to centered (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 21).

At this point, it would be easy to mistake all of the pairings mentioned above as examples of an inherent binary perspective in Deleuze and Guattari's ontology. However, as expressed in the very first pages of *A Thousand Plateaus*, the dualisms they use throughout their book should be read as monadic, meaning that two or more proprieties of an item do coexist at the same time:

> [w]e invoke one dualism only in order to challenge another .... Each time, mental correctives are necessary to undo the dualisms we had no wish to con-

[6]Deleuze and Guattari define multiplicity as the multiple being treated as a substantive *per se* and not as a feature of another substantive: "A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 8). Similarly, the concept is "a whole because it totalizes its components, but it is a fragmentary whole" (*Philosophy* 16). As Bonta and Protevi point out, the terms 'multiplicity' and 'concept' should be regarded as synonyms (70, 117).

> struct but through which we pass. Arrive at the magic formula we all seek—PLURALISM = MONISM—via all the dualisms that are the enemy, an entirely necessary enemy, the furniture we are forever rearranging (*Plateaus* 20-1).

As Deleuze and Guattari see ontology as monadic, the existence of one element in reality does not preclude the coeval presence of its opposite. Scientific functions are as real as philosophical concepts are, and so all items in existence are arranged both in arborescent structures and rhizomatic ones at the same time. After all, a sea is divided both into geographical coordinates and traversed by waves and currents simultaneously. While it is true that Deleuze and Guattari do not hide their preference for the elements that the plane of consistency allows them to create—that is, rhizomes, concepts or multiplicities—they also posit that all of these elements continuously intersect and interact with those established by the plane of organization. Thus, while Deleuze and Guattari seem to imply that any interaction with the virtual should be mediated preferably by non-hierarchical tools, these interactions would be inevitably incomplete if these tools were not used in conjunction with hierarchical ones (Guareschi 17-19).

2.1.2 Becomings and Becoming-Minoritarian

Perhaps the most evident proof of Deleuze and Guattari's attempt of modulating different planes together can be observed in the concept of becoming (in French, *devenir*) which describes a non-hegemonic interaction between major and minor identities.[7] In this context, both majority and minority should not be considered as quantitative parameters, but rather as qualitative ones: for example, whiteness, masculinity or heterosexuality are examples of majority not because they are larger in numbers, but rather because they are considered fixed and immutable conditions. Similarly, minority does not describe necessarily a small group of people, but rather a variation

[7]The English word 'becoming' is not a completely accurate translation of the French '*devenir*.' While the former is a gerund which can also be used as a present participle, the latter is an infinitive which purposely lacks any sense of time. See Protevi for a more detailed explanation of this concept.

over a status of majority. Minor categories such as femininity, blackness or queerness are defined not *per se*, but respectively as non-masculinity, non-whiteness and non-heterosexuality (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 291-92; Guareschi 16).

Indeed, becomings are not evolutionary movements, both because they are never complete and because they always lean towards the categories of minority: "all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian," Deleuze and Guattari point out (*Plateaus* 291). In fact, examples of becomings include the becoming-woman, becoming-child, becoming-vegetable, and becoming-mineral (272). At the same time Deleuze and Guattari also stress that, despite their focus on minor entities, becomings are not regressive movements either but rather involutionary ones (238). For this reason, one should not mistake becomings as complete transformations of a majority into a minority (that is, a man undergoing a sex-change operation), nor as an imitation of a minority by a majority (for example, a man cross-dressing as a woman). Rather, a becoming is a symbiosis of major and minor entities that is perpetually in-between them, and whose purpose is to create the condition for undoing the very categories of both majority and minority. Regardless of whether a body pertains to either of these two categories, all these bodies are always coded by a plane of organization, meaning that the flows of the virtual that traverse them are ordered and controlled hierarchically (*Anti-Oedipus* 38).[8] Thus, activities such as imitation, substitution or transformation between majority and minority keep producing coded entities; on the contrary, the main purpose of becomings is that of decoding entities (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 53). In the end, becomings enable the creation of what Deleuze and Guattari call a "body without organs" out of an organic body, or in other words a body that is not treated as an organism, but rather one that is "permeated by unstable matters, by flows in all directions ... by mad or transitory particles" (40).

Deleuze and Guattari envision becomings as an involutionary process that can

[8] A Deleuzian body describes any kind of homogeneous structure, regardless of whether this structure is physical or not. As Brian Massumi explains, the term 'body' in Deleuze and Guattari should be read "in its broadest possible sense to include 'mental' or ideal bodies" (xvi).

be taken even to more extreme consequences. All of the above-mentioned examples of becoming—such as the becoming-woman or becoming-animal—are what Deleuze and Guattari call relative deterritorializations: in plain words, they are changes of state in a previously stable entity that eventually lead to a reterritorialization, or the creation of a new entity (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 508-09).[9] At the same time, all becomings can also lead to a radical involution towards the becoming-molecular and, finally, to the becoming-imperceptible, which according to Deleuze and Guattari constitutes "the immanent end of becoming" (279). Far from being a nihilistic practice, becoming-imperceptible is instead an example of absolute deterritorialization, which does not create new entities but instead lays a new plane of consistency over the virtual (281-82, 509-10).[10] This new plane of consistency can enable us to see the infinite speeds and movements of the virtual: "[b]y process of elimination," Deleuze and Guattari explain, "one is no longer anything more than an abstract line, or a piece in a puzzle that is itself abstract" (280).

The concept of absolute deterritorialization is also crucial for understanding what Paul Patton calls the "overtly political vocation" of Deleuze and Guattari's works, which is its quest for a Utopian world (179).[11] In the radically humble condition of becoming-imperceptible, not only does one uniquely perceive the virtual, but one can also discover new ways of interacting with it and reshaping it into a better reality. In other words, becoming-imperceptible marks a return to the infinite speeds of the virtual, which allows those who enact this process to build up a new world from scratch. "Revolution," as Deleuze and Guattari argue, "is absolute deterritorialization even to the point where this calls for a new earth, a new people" (*Philosophy* 101).

[9]Bonta and Protevi clarify that Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization is "the always complex process by which bodies leave a territorial assemblage following the lines of flight that are constitutive of that assemblage and 'reterritorialize', that is form new assemblages (there is never a simple escape or simple return to the old territory)" (78).

[10]Deleuze and Guattari also discuss the difference between relative and absolute deterritorialization in the Plateau on micropolitics. See Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 220-21.

[11]In Deleuze and Guattari's own words, "it is with utopia that philosophy becomes political and takes the criticism of its own time to its highest point" (*Philosophy* 99). And, again, "the word utopia . . . designates that conjunction of philosophy, or of the concept, with the present milieu" (100).

In this context, becoming-minoritarian is potentially a revolutionary act: as the two authors effectively summarize, "becoming everybody/everything . . . is to world . . . to make a world" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 279-80).[12]

2.1.3 A Functionalist Approach to Reality

Hence, becoming-minoritarian (and, consequently, becoming-imperceptible) is the preferred kind of political action in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical framework. However, what is a concrete example of becoming-minoritarian? Where can one see this process in action? According to Deleuze and Guattari, an excellent tool for becoming-minoritarian is art: indeed, from their point of view, art can "make perceptible the imperceptible forces of the world" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Philosophy* 182-83). Throughout their works, Deleuze and Guattari often refer to painting, cinema, literature and music so as to propose a liberating aesthetic theory akin to their idea of becoming-minoritarian.[13] This theory refuses to study artistic texts in terms of interpretation or hermeneutics and rather chooses to approach them from the point of view of what Bruce Baugh calls "a revolutionary pragmatics of reading" (34).

To understand this innovative perspective on the arts correctly, we should address first the concept of the machine. Deleuze and Guattari use this term alongside the germane concepts of body and assemblage to discuss the items that exist in the plane of consistency, regardless of whether these items are physical or immaterial.[14] This usage is evident in the very first pages of *Anti-Oedipus*, in which the term 'machine' is employed to describe everything that exists: living beings, inanimate objects, social structures and abstract entities are all machines from Deleuze and Guattari's point

[12]For the sake of clarity, the original French version of this quote reads as follows: "[d]evenir tout le monde, c'est faire monde, faire un monde" (*Mille Plateaux* 343).

[13]See Buchanan and Marks 1-2 for a summary of Deleuze and Guattari's studies on art.

[14]Although in very simplified terms a Deleuzian assemblage can be considered an aggregation of different bodies, Bonta and Protevi argue that 'body' and 'assemblage' are roughly synonymic and interchangeable terms in Deleuze and Guattari's writings. Indeed, the correct usage of the terms depends upon the kind of analysis one is working upon: "[a]t a lower level of analysis, a body is an assemblage of organs; at higher levels, a body may itself be an organ in a social body" (Bonta and Protevi 61).

of view. To quote the two authors directly, "[e]verywhere *it* is machines—real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections" (*Anti-Oedipus* 1).

What is the purpose of describing every item in existence as a machine? Deleuze and Guattari are not interested in defining their objects of study via the intrinsic properties they allegedly have. Instead, the two authors want to discuss these objects via the relationships they entertain with other objects. The concept of the machine helps them in this endeavour: indeed, asking oneself 'what is a screwdriver?' is quite pointless, as instead one usually defines this kind of object by its purpose and by understanding how it works. By applying the same logic to every item in reality, Deleuze and Guattari discourage us from understanding these items as static and unchangeable entities. Instead, they invite us to perceive these items as in a constant relationship with other items, thus encouraging us to study how different items interact with each other. To quote Deleuze and Guattari directly once again, "[g]iven a certain effect, what machine is capable of producing it? And given a certain machine, what can it be used for?" (*Anti-Oedipus* 4).[15]

Deleuze and Guattari's functionalist or pragmatic approach also applies to their aesthetic theory: indeed, if every item in existence is a machine, then works of art also should be treated as machines.[16] Thus, if we choose to approach an artistic text as we would approach a machine, understanding such text in terms of meaning becomes entirely irrelevant. On the contrary, the most cogent question we should ask ourselves about a text is: what does this text do? If an artistic text is a machine that acts upon other machines while it is also being acted upon by other machines, we should likewise ask ourselves: what does this text want to influence? What effect does the

[15]Deleuze stresses this point in a conversation with Catherine Backes-Clement: "[Guattari and I are] strict functionalists: what we're interested in is how something works, functions—finding the machine. But the signifier's still stuck in the question 'What does it mean?'—indeed it's this very question in a blocked form. But for us, the unconscious doesn't mean anything, nor does language" (Deleuze, *Negotiations* 21-22).

[16]This idea is made quite explicit also at the beginning of *A Thousand Plateaus*: "when one writes," Deleuze and Guattari explain "the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, must be plugged into in order to work" (*Plateaus* 4).

text want to have on other machines? How does it want to achieve such an effect? Of course, the opposite question is also cogent: in other words, what other machines act upon a work of art, and what effect do they want to produce over it? Finally, and perhaps most important of all, is an artistic text successful in achieving its desired effect? If not, what prevented it from being successful?

2.1.4 Minor Literature, or Becoming-Minoritarian through Art

Deleuze and Guattari's pragmatic attitude to aesthetics is what allows them to approach art as an example of becoming-minoritarian, and indeed the concept of minor literature serves the purpose of understanding how art can help us in enacting this process. Although Deleuze and Guattari use this term to describe a specific use of art (that is, an art that challenges majoritarian structures and offers an escape from them) the concept of minor literature may be easily misinterpreted and misused. As Roland Bogue points out, these misinterpretations are the result of how cultural studies have "sympathetically received" the notion of minor literature in the context of identity politics while also failing to recognize "the theoretical implications of the concept" (99). Moreover, while Deleuze and Guattari encourage us to apply minor literature to different examples of art, they also elaborate upon this concept mostly through the works of Franz Kafka: as certain principles of this concept seem to be tailored explicitly to Kafka's body of works, applying these same principles to other texts arguably requires some reworking of them. Hence, while in this section I will discuss the concept of minor literature *vis a vis* Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical framework discussed above, I will also include elaborations of minor literature by Bogue and Simon O'Sullivan, who convincingly expand upon this concept. In turn, this elaboration will allow me to adapt the concept of minor literature to my reading of romance.

As Deleuze and Guattari explain, a text can act as minor literature by fulfill-

ing three conditions, which they define as "the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation" (*Kafka* 18). Let us start with the first characteristic: what does it mean that a minor literature features a "high coefficient of deterritorialization" of language? (16). First and foremost, this characteristic clarifies how the adjective 'minor' should be understood in the formula 'minor literature.' As already explained, in Deleuze and Guattari this adjective is not used in quantitative terms, but rather in qualitative ones. Hence, a minor language is not necessarily a language spoken by a small number of people; rather a minor language is an innovative and unsettling use of a major language or, in Deleuzian terms, a deterritorialization of it. "A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language," Deleuze and Guattari further point out, "it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language" (16). The Prague German in Kafka's times or today's black English are both examples of minor languages in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the word because they are both alterations of major languages such as German and English (17). In sum, Deleuze and Guattari are interested in how language operates as a structure of power, and how this structure can be challenged via hijacking language itself so as to undermine its restrictive uses.[17] Minor literature, as Deleuze and Guattari define it, is "the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature" (18).[18]

The use of the terms 'language' and 'literature' in Kafka also requires some clarification. At first, it may seem that in this volume Deleuze and Guattari are mostly

[17]More precisely, Deleuze and Guattari discuss Kafka's work through Henri Gobard's tetralinguistic model. According to this model, languages can be divided into four different categories, which include vernacular, vehicular, referential and mythic languages: each of these languages operate as structures of power in their own context (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 23-4).

[18]Deleuze and Guattari further point out that a minor language does not only affect people who belong to minor groups, but also (and, perhaps, above all) those who belong to majoritarian ones. "How many people today live in a language that is not their own . . . and know poorly the major language that they are forced to serve? This is the problem of immigrants, and especially of their children, the problem of minorities, the problem of a minor literature, but also a problem for all of us: how to tear a minor literature away from its own language . . . ? How to become a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy in relation to one's own language?" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 19).

interested in discussing minor uses of art only through literature and writing.[19] However, as Bogue points out, throughout his individual works on aesthetics "Deleuze uses the words 'writing' and 'literature' interchangeably to refer to the verbal art he admires" (112). As a consequence, "[m]inor literature is . . . a way of writing, a use of language. What Deleuze and Guattari call 'minor literature' in Kafka is simply what Deleuze elsewhere refers to as 'writing' or 'literature,' i.e., the linguistic practice that he admires and promotes" (115). Not only is this reading quite coherent with Deleuze and Guattari's pragmatics approach to aesthetics, but arguably it also enables a more expansive definition of what minor literature entails. While in *Kafka* the terms 'literature' and 'language' are both used as synonyms of 'writing,' arguably all art forms can enact a process of becoming-minoritarian as long as they propose a variation over majoritarian practices. In other words, this concept should be intended as describing minor uses of language in different semiotic systems or media than writing, including for example also audiovisual or performative arts.[20]

While a deterritorialization of a semiotic system is the first characteristic of minor literature, a deterritorialization *per se* is not necessarily an enactment of a process of becoming-minoritarian. If a deterritorialization is halted and reterritorialized (in other words, if this deterritorialization is only relative) then this process does not challenge coercive structures of thought; in fact, this action may end up reinforcing these very structures. Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, deterritorializations are an ubiquitous phenomenon, since any language (and, by extension, every semiotic system) is continuously subject to processes of deterritorialization and reterritorializa-

[19]In fact, written language seems to have a privileged role in Deleuze and Guattari's aesthetic theory of becoming. To quote the first essay of Deleuze's *Essays Critical and Clinical*, "[w]riting is inseparable from becoming: in writing one becomes-woman, one becomes-animal, or vegetable, one becomes-molecular to the point of becoming-imperceptible" (*Essays* 1).

[20]Deleuze and Guattari themselves propose a more expansive theory of the arts in *What is Philosophy?* Here, the two authors define art in general as the process of creation of percepts and affects. "Percepts are no longer perceptions," Deleuze and Guattari explain, "they are independent of a state of those who experience them. Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them. Sensations, percepts, and affects are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived" (*Philosophy* 164). Percepts and affects are effectively a deterritorialization of the semiotic system to which an art form belongs. In literature, percepts and affects take the form of words and sentences, whereas in painting they assume a visual form.

tion. "Rich or poor," Deleuze and Guattari explain, "each language always implies a deterritorialization of the mouth, the tongue, and the teeth" (*Kafka* 19). Nonetheless, as a deterritorialized entity, language also undergoes a reterritorialization: in other words, "language compensates for its deterritorialization by a reterritorialization in sense" (20). Since language is always subject to processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, how can the deterritorialization enacted by minor art be truly revolutionary?

As Deleuze and Guattari further explain, minor language or literature refuses to reterritorialize itself in sense or meaning and instead pushes this process of deterritorialization even further, that is into an absolute deterritorialization. This drive towards becoming-imperceptible is made possible by the second characteristic of minor literature, or the fact that in this use of language "everything . . . is political" (*Kafka* 17). In the specific case of Kafka's works, this characteristic is made evident by the fact that his characters are not "fixated on the familial, domestic unit" but instead they are linked "to the larger social . . . milieu" (O'Sullivan 70). To quote Deleuze and Guattari directly,

> [i]n major literatures . . . the individual concern (familial, marital, and so on) joins with other no less individual concerns, the social milieu serving as a mere environment or a background; this is so much the case that none of these Oedipal intrigues are specifically indispensable or absolutely necessary but all become as one in a large space. Minor literature is completely different; its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics. The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it (*Kafka* 17).

What exactly do Deleuze and Guattari mean to say in this excerpt? How do individual concerns turn political in minor literature? This rather peculiar use of the term 'politics' is expanded and clarified in the Plateau "Micropolitics and Segmentarity" (*Plateaus* 208-231). In this Plateau, Deleuze and Guattari propose a rather extensive definition of politics by adopting once again the May '68 slogan "everything is political" (213). However, as Bonta and Protevi explain, this slogan in the context

of *A Thousand Plateaus* should be taken quite literally: indeed, from the point of view of Deleuze and Guattari "[e]verywhere there are bodies politic" (127).

More precisely, the term politics in this context is used to describe "the regulation of the interchange of *molar* segmentation and *molecular* flow" (Bonta and Protevi 127; emphases mine). Here, the scientific terms molar and molecular are related respectively to the concepts of coded and decoded bodies mentioned above. In sum, both major and minor identities (I.e., man/woman or straight/queer) are examples of molar aggregates: in other words, they are homogeneous constructs that apparently cannot be broken down into smaller components (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 41). Molecular aggregates, on the other hand, are a breaking down or a transformation of molar entities following a process of deterritorialization. When facing these molecular aggregates, "we are presented with consolidations of very heterogeneous elements, orders that have been short-circuited or even reverse causalities, and captures between materials and forces of a different nature" (335).

As Deleuze and Guattari use the term 'politics' to discuss the interactions between molar and molecular aggregates, then this politics is "simultaneously a macropolitics and a micropolitics" (*Plateaus* 213). While the former term describes interactions among molar aggregates, the latter is used to discuss those among molecular ones. Hence, when in *Kafka* Deleuze and Guattari argue that minor literature turns all concerns into political ones, they arguably use this term in the narrower sense of micropolitics: in other words, minor literature transforms every macropolitical entity into micropolitical ones. Indeed, as emphasized in the plateau on becoming, molecular aggregates are vital to enacting a process of becoming-minoritarian, which in turn is also the primary goal of minor literature.

> You become-animal only if, by whatever means or elements, you emit corpuscles that enter the relation of movement and rest of the animal particles, or what amounts to the same thing, that enter the zone of proximity of the animal molecule. You become animal only molecularly (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 274-5).

And, again, a few paragraphs later:

> [y]es, all becomings are molecular: the animal, flower, or stone one becomes are molecular collectivities, haecceities, not molar subjects, objects, or form that we know from the outside and recognize from experience, through science, or by habit (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 275).

Hence, not only does minor literature reinvent a major language in an unsettling way, but it does so for a definite political goal. Through its inventive use of language, a minor work of art encourages its readers (or listeners, or viewers) to question their worldviews, and to see the reality around them not as static and unchangeable, but rather as fluid and dynamic.

Finally, Deleuze and Guattari illustrate that "third characteristic of minor literature is that in it everything takes on a collective value" (*Kafka* 17). At first, Deleuze and Guattari use this term to stress that minor literature's difference from major one, in that the former is not made of great individual authors. "[P]recisely because talent isn't abundant in a minor literature," Deleuze and Guattari explain, "there are no possibilities for an individuated enunciation that would belong to this or that 'master' and that could be separated from a collective enunciation" (17). This argument also serves the purpose of clarifying Deleuze and Guattari's apparently paradoxical approach to Kafka. Although Kafka is celebrated today as a great writer and one of the most distinct voices of Modernism in literature, Deleuze and Guattari refuse to treat him as a major author in the vein of Goethe, Shakespeare or Dante. After all, Kafka was a Czech-Jewish writer who composed his works in German (an idiom that was foreign to him) and so it is quite difficult to locate him in a literary canon that divides authors according to their nationality or language.[21] In fact, authorship or nationality are examples of molar aggregates which minor literature is supposed to

[21] As Bogue further explains, "[b]y treating Kafka as a minor writer, Deleuze and Guattari call attention to his status as a member of an ethnic minority and citizen of a minor region/proto-nation within a foreign-based empire, while insisting that his formal and thematic innovations in literature have direct social and political implications. As this analysis is extended to other modernists—Joyce and Beckett, for example—the seeming unity of European modernism comes into question, as does its supposed remove from the domain of social and political struggle" (Bogue 105).

challenge.

> [S]carcity of talent is in fact beneficial and allows the conception of something other than a literature of masters; what each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others aren't in agreement. The political domain has contaminated every statement.... But above all else ... literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 17).[22]

As Bogue summarizes, the collective character of minor literature is a consequence of the political goal of this kind of literature.

> Minor literature embraces the anonymity of the secondary, but pushes it to an extreme, turning the generic into the imperceptible, the cliched into the collective, for ... the minor writer manipulates the same forces that marginal groups activate in their creative deformation of a major language. Yet if minor literature is an inherently collective activity, it is one that in its very operation dissolves the collectivity, since minor literature's various becomings have as their function the decoding of all fixed identities (109-10).

While in his reading Bogue clarifies the link between minor literature's political intent and the resulting dissolution of all identities, arguably the collective character of minor literature is not only limited to an eradication of existing structures of thought, mainly because Bogue's reading reiterates what Deleuze and Guattari discuss in the second characteristic of minor literature. Instead, as Simon O'Sullivan points out, the collective character of minor literature has more to do with the future than the present, because it is strictly linked to the Utopian vocation of Deleuze and Guattari's thought. In other words, Deleuze and Guattari propose the concept of minor literature as a "prophetic" tool, which

> will involve a collective enunciation, the production of collaborations and indeed the calling forth of new kinds of collectivities. Here a minor practice joins forces with what Deleuze and Guattari call philosophy, that practice which in itself

[22] In fact, the less a writer is present in a community, the more a minor literature seems to be effective. "[I]f the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 17).

> calls forth "a new earth, a new people" .... A minor art in this sense summons its audience into being (O'Sullivan 74-5).[23]

In sum, a minor work of art in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the concept is a work of art that relies upon an established and major language or semiotic system in order to produce an unsettling variation over it. This variation should have a precise political scope, namely the undoing of majoritarian structures of thought which limit our understanding and interaction with the reality that surrounds us. Finally, this overturning of coercive structures should encourage the readers of a minor text to envision a new and possibly better world.

2.2 Romance and Minor Art

2.2.1 Can Romance be Minoritarian?

After discussing Deleuze and Guattari's framework, let us finally return to the issue of romance. In light of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of radical immanence, which sees minoritarian practices such as minor literature as a relevant tool for challenging and reshaping reality, a secondary form such as romance acquires new and fundamental importance. Within this framework, romance's distance from the sphere of official or hegemonic culture and emergence in periods of political upheaval puts this form in a privileged position for starting a process of becoming-minoritarian, that is of undoing the constructs of majority, of liberating the speeds of the virtual and, potentially, of creating a new world. In other words, due to its association with subaltern social groups and its rise to prominence in highly politicized historical periods, romance may constitute an example of minor literature in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the word.

[23]To support his argument, O'Sullivan references a passage of *Cinema 2* in which Deleuze underscores how political cinema should have a similarly Utopian vocation: "This acknowledgement of a people who are missing is not a renunciation of political cinema, but on the contrary the new basis on which it is founded, in the third world and for minorities. Art, and especially cinematographic art must take part in this task: not that of addressing a people, which is presupposed already there, but of contributing to the invention of a people" (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 217; O'Sullivan 75).

I wish to stress, however, that 'may' is the operative word in this context. Even if romance easily lends itself to minoritarian uses due to its secondary nature, I should clarify from the very beginning that becoming-minoritarian is a complex and difficult process which requires an extremely demanding and rigorous intellectual apprenticeship. After all, Deleuze and Guattari themselves stress that we should not use the terms 'minority' and 'minoritarian' as synonyms:

> [i]t is important not to confuse 'minoritarian,' as a becoming or process, with a 'minority' as an aggregate or a state. Jews, Gypsies, etc., may constitute minorities under certain conditions, but that in itself does not make them becomings. ... Even blacks, as the Black Panthers said, must become-black. Even women must become-women. Even Jews must become-Jewish (it certainly takes more than a state) (*Plateaus* 291).

Indeed, this warning applies quite well to *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars*. On the one hand, literary and film criticism have treated these two texts as somehow minor in the history of literature and cinema. Not only have they been considered raw or vulgar works for several decades (or, in the case of Boiardo, even for centuries),[24] but significant sectors of contemporary literary and film scholarship dismiss both romances as works whose only purpose is to provide entertainment to their readers and audiences.[25] On the other hand, however, neither of these two romances is genuinely minoritarian in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the word. Indeed, one should not forget that the intended readership of *Inamoramento* was the Este family (that is, the ruling house in Boiardo's native Duchy of Ferrara) who saw Boiardo's poem as a tool for increasing their standing and prestige in the political context of fifteenth-century Italy. Boiardo himself, who held the title of Count of Scandiano, was

[24]In his monumental *Storia della letteratura italiana* (1870-71), Francesco De Sanctis condemns *Inamoramento*'s supposed lack of style compared to *Furioso* (1:455-58). Decades later, in the 1920 comparative study *Ariosto, Shakespeare e Corneille*, Benedetto Croce expresses a similar sentiment: Boiardo is a raw and primitive poet, one who cannot stand a comparison with Ariosto (68-70). Some 1977 reviewers have been even harsher towards *Star Wars*. To quote Jonathan Rosenbaum, Lucas' film is a "dehumanized update of *Flash Gordon* with better production values, no ironic overtones and a battery of special effects," and whose trivial narrative merely offers "solitary, narcissistic pleasures" to its audience (208-09).

[25]Micocci (864), Bologna (248) and Everson ("rev. of Ethics" 497-99) all agree that *Inamoramento de Orlando* should be approached only as a work of entertainment. Similar opinions about *Star Wars* are expressed by King (135), Schatz (29-31) and Wood (145-47).

an erudite author and prominent politician in Ferrara.[26] Similarly, director George Lucas was regarded as an *auteur* in 1970s New Hollywood, and *Star Wars* solidified this reputation.[27] Moreover, this film was distributed by a major Hollywood studio such as 20th Century Fox, and its popular success and merchandising sales made him a wealthy producer and critical player in the American film industry. These blatantly majoritarian uses of Boiardo's poem and Lucas' film separate them from the minoritarian ones the works discussed by Deleuze and Guattari—such as, Kafka, Melville or Bene's—and prove once again that the concepts of minor literature and becoming-minoritarian should be used carefully.

Nonetheless, the fact that *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* have been employed in a majoritarian way does not prevent both works from being used in different fashions, possibly even minoritarian ones. As Baugh argues, if one chooses to adhere to Deleuze and Guattari's pragmatics of reading, then one should not restrict the reading of an artistic text only to its original intentions, but also open it up to further experiments. "Things made for one purpose," Baugh explains "can work quite well to serve another" (35). Indeed, a work of art is not only experienced by its intended audience, but it also welcomes readers (or listeners, or viewers) from different genders, social classes, levels of education or historical situations. These readers may have their own desires and goals, and thus a text can work in different ways for them (36, 53). In the light of this interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari's pragmatics of art, I propose that the ultimate goal of a Deleuzian theory of romance should be to discover the possible minoritarian uses of this secondary form. In other words, can two romances like *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* lead to a becoming-minoritarian? What stops them from being used in a minoritarian way in

[26]See Zanato 13-35 for a detailed biography of Boiardo.

[27]Susan Hayward explains that "the term *auteur* could now refer either to a director's discernible style through mise-en-scène or to filmmaking practices where the director's signature was as much in evidence on the script/scenario as it was on the film product itself" (29). Indeed, as Will Brooker argues, *Star Wars* made Lucas' style even more recognizable (22). I will discuss *auteur* politics of *Star Wars* more in-depth in section 3.6.

the first place? Moreover, under what conditions can these examples of secondary art be reshaped into minoritarian ones?

In order to answer these questions, we first need to formulate a new definition of romance through the tools and categories of Deleuze and Guattari's thought. Of course a Deleuzian definition of romance should not try to understand what romance is; instead, this theory of romance should pose questions that are more akin to Deleuze and Guattari's pragmatic approach to reality. In other words, a Deleuzian theory of romance should seek to understand how romance works and what does romance do. As a consequence, this new definition should not be divorced from the social, cultural and political context of romance, so to discern how romance interacts with other entities (or, rather, other machines) that exist in the same context.

As already explained in the previous chapter, the categories of Frye's criticism are too restricting, too inconsistent or in some cases even just too outdated to define romance convincingly and accurately. Above all, Frye's inadequate critical tools (which, as Fuchs's study shows, are still the privileged means of interpreting romance) do not allow us to approach romance in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's pragmatics of reading but only in hermeneutical ones, and as such they hinder our understanding of romance as an example of minor literature.[28] Arguably, a first step towards exploring the minoritarian capabilities of romance is to offer an alternative to Frye's definition of romance from a Deleuzian perspective. In the next few pages, I will discuss two traits of Frye's archetype of romance that, in my view, prevent us from reading *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* from the perspective of Deleuze

[28]Even the more robust Marxian framework that Jameson employs in *The Political Unconscious* does not allow us to understand the minoritarian capabilities of romance. As a blatantly macropolitical framework, Jameson's approach does not let us look at how romance interacts with other bodies on a micropolitical level. Deleuze and Guattari themselves clarify why Marxian thought is a macropolitical perspective in the Plateau on politics (*Plateaus* 208-32). Specifically, Marxism is macropolitical because it focuses solely on discussing social classes, which are molar aggregates: "the notion of mass is a molecular notion operating according to a type of segmentation irreducible to the molar segmentarity of class. Yet classes are indeed fashioned from masses; they crystallize them. And masses are constantly flowing or leaking from classes" (213). As such, Marxism alone does not provide an entirely accurate view of the world "[i]t is wrongly said (in Marxism in particular) that a society is defined by its contradictions. That is true only on the larger scale of things. From the viewpoint of micropolitics, a society is defined by its lines of flight, which are molecular" (216).

and Guattari's pragmatics: I am referring, of course, to Frye's definition of romance as a quest-based narrative set in an idyllic world.

2.2.2 Romance and Narrative Postponement

Frye's framework assumes that, despite their historical and cultural distance, *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* follow the same archetypal narrative structure.[29] To quote Frye directly:

> [t]he complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero. We may call these three stages respectively, using Greek terms, the *agon* or conflict, the *pathos* or death-struggle, and the *anagnorisis* or discovery, the recognition of the hero (*Anatomy* 187).

In truth, both *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars* feature this very narrative scheme or at least some variations over it. *Star Wars* proposes it more straightforwardly, as it tells the story of Luke Skywalker undertaking a journey to become a Jedi knight with the help of his mentor Obi-Wan Kenobi. Throughout this journey, Luke is supposed to join the Rebels in the conflict against the Empire and avenge his father's death by killing his murderer, the evil Sith lord Darth Vader. Since Boiardo wrote *Inamoramento de Orlando* in an episodic form, this poem is much broader in scope and size compared to *Star Wars*, and thus includes an interweaving of numerous subplots and detours that adhere to the narrative technique known as *entrelacement* (Canova 6).[30] Nonetheless, Boiardo's poem also features a quest-based narrative similar to the one described by Frye in the story of the pagan knight Rugiero, a mythical ancestor to the house of Este who is one of the main characters of Book

[29]Once again, Frye saw romance as a transhistorical genre that began "in the late Classical period" and continues up until his times due to "the rise of what is generally called science fiction" (*Secular* 3-4).

[30]See Vinaver 68-98 for a more in-depth inquiry on the use of *entrelacement* in medieval romance. While in medieval romance *entrelacement* was used for the purpose of creating a convoluted and yet conclusive plot, Boiardo employs this technique as an element of suspense, which tends to produce unexpected narrative turns rather than a coherent whole (Praloran, *Lingue* 81-4; *Artificio* 20-77).

Two of the poem. The character enters the picture as the African king Agramante enrolls him in his expedition against Charlemagne; yet, in two instances, his mentor Atalante predicts that Rugiero will have a different destiny, as he will convert to Christianity, found the house of Este, defeat the Saracens in battle and die by the hand of the treacherous House of Maganza (Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.16.35, 2.21.53-60).

Even though *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* seem to adhere to Frye's narrative structure of romance, I argue that what makes both Boiardo's poem and Lucas' film examples of this literary form is not their compliance to a fixed storytelling scheme. On the contrary, both texts are quite flimsy from a narrative point of view, as neither of the two works presents a coherent and self-contained story. This fact is quite evident in the case of *Inamoramento*, which Boiardo left abruptly incomplete at the time of his death in 1494. When we reach the poem's interruption, we have yet to see the *pathos* and *anagnorisis* stages of Rugiero's story, as the knight has not yet accomplished all the feats the narrative sets out for him through Atalante's prophecies (Boiardo, *Orlando* 3.7.56).

Moreover, Boiardo first mentions Rugiero only at the end of Book One, that is twenty-nine cantos into the poem. Indeed, the poet devotes the entire first book of *Inamoramento* to the adventures of Orlando, Rinaldo and Angelica, which do not seem to follow Frye's narrative scheme at all.[31] Moreover, in Book Three Boiardo further complicates the narrative structure of his poem by shifting its focus to yet another character, that is the pagan knight Mandricardo, who is on a quest to avenge the death of his father Agricane by Orlando's hand (Boiardo, *Orlando* 3.1). In sum, the late introduction of Rugiero's plot means that Boiardo began his work with a different narrative structure in mind than the one described by Frye, while the introduction of Mandricardo so late in the poem signals that, perhaps, the author also abandoned any plan to provide a satisfying conclusion to the plot started in Book

[31]In fact, the adventures of Orlando told in *Inamoramento* may be read as a narrative digression from the well-known main story of the character, who eventually dies a martyr and a virgin during the battle of Roncevaux. See *La Chanson de Roland*.

Two. In fact, these radical changes in the narrative's direction signal that Boiardo may neither have known how to end *Inamoramento* nor did he have any intention to conclude it.[32]

As opposed to *Inamoramento*, *Star Wars* tells a seemingly complete story on its own. At the end of the movie, Luke joins the Rebels in a desperate space battle against Vader's fighter squadron to destroy the Death Star before the super-weapon annihilates the Rebel base on the planet Yavin. During this battle, Luke indeed follows his father's footsteps, as he finds the confidence to use his Force powers to destroy the Death Star, thus inflicting a significant defeat on Vader and the Empire. Nonetheless, this ending feels more like the conclusion to a single episode that is part of a much larger narrative: indeed, Lucas' 1977 film does not fully resolve every single conflict that its plot establishes, thus leaving several key questions unanswered. Will Luke become a Jedi knight? Will he face Darth Vader directly (who in the end survives the Death Star battle) in order to avenge the death of his father and Obi-Wan? Will he survive this duel, or will he also die by Vader's hands? By leaving all of these questions open, *Star Wars* effectively postpones any final narrative resolution to other episodes.

In fact, both *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* provide a conclusive plot only if read as part of a larger narrative. Many of the numerous storylines set off by *Inamoramento de Orlando* eventually reach their conclusion only in *Orlando furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto, the vastly influential sequel to Boiardo's poem written between the beginning of the sixteenth century and 1532.[33] Indeed, this continuation provides a satisfying ending to the story of Rugiero (or Ruggiero, as Ariosto spells his name). After numerous adventures, the knight converts to Christianity; discovers that Marfisa

[32]The narrative inconclusiveness of the poem has been the subject of debate among scholars of Boiardo. While critics like Reichenbach (146-48) and Di Tommaso (9) claim that the poet had a precise structure in mind for his narrative, and thus knew how to conclude the poem, on the other hand, Zottoli (97), Durling (104, 107-8) and, more recently, Praloran (*Lingue* 99-123) have argued that *Inamoramento* follows an open structure, which does not aim for any narrative conclusion.

[33]Although we do not know precisely when Ariosto started composing Furioso, we know that the poet was working on it as early as in 1507 (Ferroni 116-17).

is his sister; and, in the very last canto of the poem, he marries Bradamante and defeats the surviving pagan knight Rodomonte in a duel.[34] Similarly, *Star Wars*' plot reaches its conclusion only in its two sequels, that is *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and *Return of the Jedi* (1983). At the end of the first sequel, Luke finally faces Darth Vader in a lightsaber duel for the first time. Not only does Vader defeat Luke in this duel, but he also reveals himself to be Luke's father. In *Return of the Jedi*, Luke also discovers that Leia is his sister before facing Vader in one last lightsaber battle. While Luke wins this last duel, he refuses to kill Vader and thus becomes a true Jedi knight.

If considered as individual chapters of a more extensive saga, *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars* form a coherent plot that resembles Frye's archetype of romance. If considered alone, however, these texts are two narratives so egregiously open-ended that their readers and audiences could not easily presume that their respective plots will continue as they do in *Empire* and *Furioso*. For example, *Star Wars* does not give its audience any hint about the dramatic revelations of *Empire* and *Jedi*: on the contrary, by watching the 1977 film alone without any knowledge of the following chapters, Darth Vader and Princess Leia appear to be, respectively, the antagonist and the love interest of Luke.[35] Likewise, *Inamoramento* lacks any real foreshadowing of Orlando's love turning into madness, as on the contrary Boiardo often portrays love not merely as a source of chaos and madness, but also as a positive force.[36]

In sum, defining romance as quest-based storytelling that always makes use of the same narrative tropes does harm our understanding of texts such as *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars*, both of which fulfill only in part the narrative structure

[34]See Ariosto 22.31-36; 36.58-66; 46.48-140 for the above-mentioned episodes.

[35]Despite Lucas's claims that he had a precise idea of how to end his saga, at the time of the film's release in May 1977 the director did not seem to have a well-established narrative structure in mind for the rest of the episodic narrative, which on the contrary was always subject to rewritings and radical changes. For example, crucial plot points such as Darth Vader being Luke's father and Leia his sister are blatantly absent in the early screenplay drafts written between 1974 and 1977, as these twists were conceived only as late as during the production of *The Empire Strikes Back*. See Bouzereau for a more detailed look at the changes between screenplay drafts in *Star Wars*.

[36]I discuss the multifaceted characterization of love in Boiardo in section 4.5.

outlined by Frye. In contrast, Parker's argument that romance is a literary form that (even outside of oral storytelling and folktales) always postpones endings and definitions is undoubtedly more convincing than Frye's, mainly because this definition of romance arguably applies to all texts in this category. While some examples of this form such as the ancient romance or the nineteenth-century Gothic fiction provide self-contained narratives, they nonetheless rely on the strategy of delay Parker discusses.[37] Above all, some romances do indeed postpone their narrative conclusions indefinitely: apart from *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars*, examples of entirely open-ended romances are book and film serials such as the *James Bond* series or comic book publications like *Superman*, whose stories have been going on respectively for 60 and 80 years.[38]

At the same time, however, a definition of romance based on the issue of postponement alone seems too generic to provide genuinely groundbreaking insights about texts in this category. Although the strategy of delay is a relevant aspect of romance, it is not an exclusive feature of this mode, as instead it can be found in other kinds of literary texts.[39] For example, the delay of narrative endings is also a vital component of a literary form that is quite distant from romance, that is nineteenth-century plot-based realistic novels and novellas which, as Peter Brooks famously argues, mirror the simultaneous human desire for and repulsion of death theorized by Freud (Brooks 90-113). If the postponement of endings and definitions is so ubiquitous in narrative texts, how does romance use it differently compared to, for example, the nineteenth-century novel? Arguably, we can answer this question by looking at a distinctive element of romance, that is its fictitious, abstract and imaginative narrative setting.

[37]Although Parker does not discuss Gothic fiction directly, she points out that the "gothic terrors of speechlessness and suffocation" are structures of delay manifest themselves in this form of romance (14). See Nimis, "Open-Endedness" 215-38 on narrative postponement in the ancient romance.

[38]See Eco 107-24, 144-74 on the seriality of Superman and James Bond.

[39]Parker herself discusses thoroughly how the postponement of definitions typical of romance also concerns the lyrical poetry of Keats, Mallarmé, Vàlery and Stevens (159-244).

2.2.3 Romance and Adventure-Time

Once again, Frye's scholarship on romance proves to be limiting also when it comes to discussing the setting of romance. Specifically, Frye's description of the spaces of romance as either idyllic or demonic does not highlight the central aspect of the fictional setting of romance, that is its bewildering spatial and temporal coordinates. Indeed, the geographical and temporal setting in which a romance takes place is usually quite confusing: Lucas' film is set "a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away," as the opening text at the beginning of the movie states, while Boiardo's poem happens in the rather generic setting of "[n]el tempo de il re Carlo imperatore" ("when Charlemagne was emperor") (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.1.1; Ross 3).[40] Space and time remain loose and abstract also throughout the rest of these narratives. For example, although the characters of Boiardo and Lucas travel seemingly immense distances, readers and audiences can neither tell how much time is passing as events unfold nor quantify the distance from one location to another. As we read *Inamoramento de Orlando*, we do not know for how many days or weeks Orlando rode his horse to reach the Asian city of Albraca (*Orlando* 1.14.49, 1.15.39) or how long Gradasso's journey to Europe took (1.1.4-7, 1.3.51).[41] By watching *Star Wars*, it is difficult to tell for how long the two droids C-3PO and R2-D2 were left wandering on the sands of Tatooine before being discovered by the Jawas, or whether the Millennium Falcon's trip from Tatooine to the Death Star took minutes, hours or even days.

Moreover, even though characters in both texts visit very different and bizarre locations, the narrative does not provide any meaningful description of these places. In *Inamoramento de Orlando*, Albraca is described only in its outer aspect: its language, customs and laws are completely ignored, thus blurring any difference this East Asian fortress might have with the European cities of Paris or Barcelona.[42] In

[40]See Zanato 190-92 on the generic temporal setting of *Inamoramento*.
[41]See Tizi and Praloran 146, 203-04 on the representation of time in Boiardo.
[42]See Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.6.42, 1.10.36, 1.14.11-12 for the only short descriptions of Albraca.

Star Wars, the planets visited by the protagonist have no distinctive elements apart from their climate: Luke's home planet of Tatooine is a desert world, the Death Star is an artificial and industrial planetoid, and Yavin IV is covered entirely by a lush rainforest. Apart from these superficial differences, the cultures of these places seem all quite similar.

An insightful analysis of abstract narrative settings such as those found in *Innamoramento* and *Star Wars* comes from Mikhail Bakhtin's essay "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" (84-259) in which the author discusses the different representations of space and time in literature (which Bakhtin defines as chronotopes) throughout history, starting from their abstract portrayal in romance. Bakhtin describes the imaginative setting of romance as the chronotope of "adventure-time," which always presents the same features in each of the historical examples of romance from the ancient narrative prose to Medieval chivalric poems, arguably including even today's blockbuster movies (87).[43] This chronotope is quite distant from the realism of the nineteenth-century novel or other kinds of realistic fiction, as on the contrary it "possesses its own peculiar consistency and unity" and "its own ineluctable logic" (Bakhtin 102).

First and foremost, the chronotope of romance is impossible to measure from a temporal point of view. Time does not affect the characters of a romance, as they do not grow up or change in terms of personality throughout the story. "Such a form of time," Bakhtin points out, "is not measured off . . . and does not add up. . . . This time—adventure-time highly intensified but undifferentiated—is not registered in the slightest way in the age of the heroes" (90). Moreover, Bakhtin points out that historical time in romance is also unquantifiable: "[n]o matter where one goes in the world of . . . romance, with all its countries and cities, its buildings and works of art,

[43] As Bakhtin argues, adventure-time first appears in the ancient Greek romance, and "the technique of its use . . . is so perfected, so full, that in all subsequent evolution of the purely adventure novel nothing essential has been added to it down to the present day" (87). See Bakhtin 86-111, 151-58 on the use of adventure-time in medieval chivalric romance. See Flanagan 62-9 on the presence of the same chronotope in contemporary Hollywood cinema.

there are absolutely no indications of historical time, no identifying traces of the era" (91).[44]

Indeed, the narrative space of romance also follows its own implausible logic. From a spatial point of view, adventure-time features a "very broad and varied geographical background" which is nonetheless "utterly abstract" (88, 100). In other words, the events of a romance "have no essential ties with any particular details of individual countries . . . with their social or political structure, with their culture or history. None of these distinctive details contribute in any ways to the events as a determining factor" (100). As a result, the world of romance remains mostly undefined to readers and audiences.

> Nowhere are we given a description of the country as a whole, with its distinctive characteristics, with the features that distinguish it from other countries, within a matrix of relationships. Only separate structures are described, without any connection to an encompassing whole; we have isolated natural phenomena—for example, the strange animals that breed in a given country. The customs and everyday life of the folk are nowhere described; what we get instead is a description of some strange isolated quirk, connected to nothing (101-2).

Not only does Bakhtin's chronotope of adventure-time signal a fictional setting whose spatial and temporal coordinates are flimsy and abstract, but it also denotes the presence of very heterogeneous intertextual elements in the same literary work. Bakhtin highlights this aspect of romance by noticing how the ancient Greek romance encompasses tropes and motifs that "are, without exception, in no way new" since "[t]hey had all been encountered before and were well developed in other genres of ancient literature" including epic, erotic poetry and drama (88-9).[45] In sum, "[t]he Greek romance utilized and fused together in its structure almost all genres of ancient literature. But all these elements, derived from various different genres, are fused into

[44]Bakhtin also points out that, due to the loose historical time in the Hellenistic narrative prose, it is difficult "to devise a method for analyzing in these romances the presumed 'real world' and 'real era' of their authors" (101). Thus, it is hard "to establish the precise chronology of Greek romances" (91). As Lawrence Kim points out, these difficulties also persist today (147-51).

[45]Specifically, Bakhtin argues that love motifs were elaborated first in Hellenistic love poetry; narrative tropes such as the shipwreck or the kidnapping were part of the Homeric epic; and the final recognition of a character is a typical trait of Greek drama (88-9). See Nimis, "Prosaics" 387-411 for a more recent study on the heterogeneity of styles in ancient romance.

a new . . . unity" (89).

Indeed, this mixture of different literary styles is a distinctive element of romance as a form, since it is present to varying degree in all examples of this literary category throughout history. As Fuchs points out, medieval romance amalgamates elements that belong both to the "Christian world-view" but also to the "classical world of Greece and Rome" (51).[46] In his introduction to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (that is, the foundational text of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic fiction) Horace Walpole explains that his work was an attempt to blend two different kinds of fiction, that is realistic and imaginative ones (9).[47] Finally, today's comic book serials incorporate elements from sources as diverse as Norse folklore, Greek mythology, science fiction and spy stories (J. Bainbridge 64-85).

Once again, *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* are no exception to this rule, as both texts combine references to a heterogeneous body of literary works, which generally would be quite unusual to find in the same context. Readers of *Inamoramento* do not only witness Carolingian characters acting as if they were the protagonists of a Breton poem, but they also see them in situations inspired by other narratives. Perhaps the most notable example of how Boiardo mingles these different traditions is the episode in which Orlando, during his pursuit of Angelica, encounters characters from ancient Greek mythology, such as a cyclops and the Sphinx (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.5-6). However, the intertextuality of *Inamoramento de Orlando* is more complex and nuanced than it may first appear.

As Marco Villoresi explains, one of the defining traits of *Inamoramento* is the seamless coexistence within the same text of literary traditions as diverse as Latin theatre, thirteenth- and fourteenth century Italian lyrical poetry, pastoral literature, allegorical storytelling, and novellas in the style of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (Villoresi

[46] Fuchs mentions that the pen name Chrétien de Troyes embodies this literary taste, as this name can be translated in English as "a Christian from Troy" (51).

[47] 18th-19th Gothic fiction also mixes new technological advancements with the aesthetic of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Hogle 2, 4-6).

156-61).[48] All of these literary genres were read and appreciated at the Este court in Ferrara, and indeed *Inamoramento de Orlando*, in addition to celebrating medieval chivalric narratives, also pays homage to all of these diverse forms of literature.[49] Two examples of this complex intertextuality include the episodes of King Manodante (Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.11-13) and the novella of Iroldo and Tisbina (1.12). While the former sees Orlando re-enacting the plots of Plautus' comedies *Captivi* and *Maenechmi*, the latter is a rewriting of the fifth and seventh novellas from Day Ten of the *Decameron*.

Star Wars references numerous movie genres and film traditions other than westerns, swashbuckler movies and space opera film serials from 1930s-50s Hollywood.[50] For example, not all the references to westerns come from Hollywood's take on the genre, but also from the grittier and edgier European re-elaborations of it, for example in the form of spaghetti westerns. While the sequence in which Luke looks at his homestead burning after an imperial assault is a clear homage to a similar moment from John Ford's *The Searchers*, the cold-blooded and cynical gunslinger Han Solo is very distant from the valiant cowboys played by John Wayne and closer to the antiheroes of Sergio Leone's *Dollars* trilogy. Second World War movies are also very much present in *Star Wars*, as the Death Star battle closely resembles British war films such as *The Dam Busters* or *633 Squadron*. Finally, characters such as Obi-Wan Kenobi and Darth Vader are inspired by the samurai protagonists of Japanese period dramas, and the whole movie's essential plot is drawn directly from Akira Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress*.[51]

This heterogeneity of styles, motifs and tropes is of particular importance in

[48] As Villoresi explains, "[Boiardo] pilucca, a seconda delle esigenze, dall'intero universo letterario [...] e, soprattutto, tende a centrifugare i prestiti, a renderli, se può, difficilmente riconoscibili" ("[Boiardo] cherry picks from the entirety of literature according to his needs [...] and, above all, tends to mix together these borrowing so as to make them difficult to recognize" (157-58; translation mine). See Donnarumma for a more detailed study on *Inamoramento's* intertextuality.

[49] Dennis Looney (*Classics* 55-90), Jane Everson (*Humanism* 163-354) and Cristina Zampese have discussed the presence of ancient Greek and Latin literature in Boiardo's poem extensively.

[50] See Brooker 29-30, 51-7 for a detailed list of references in *Star Wars*.

[51] In Japanese, period dramas are known as "jidai-geki," and the term "Jedi" used in *Star Wars* is indeed a homage to this genre.

Bakhtin's works. Indeed, the primary focus of Bakhtin's scholarship is the novel, or in other words "the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted" (3). As Bakhtin argues, the main reason behind the novel being such a lively and open literary form is the presence of multiple discourses and utterances within a single literary text, which the critic defines as heteroglossia (11-12, 35-9).[52] The novel's heteroglossia, however, is quite different from the heterogeneity of elements found in romance. On the one hand, Bakhtin defines the novel by its "stylistic three-dimensionality" and its "multi-languaged consciousness" (11). The assorted styles and tropes in a romance preserve only their superficial aspect; at the same time, they are deprived of any social, historical or geographical connotation they held initially. For example, the references to Latin literature offered by Boiardo are displaced from their original historical context, just as Obi-Wan Kenobi's samurai sword fighting style is disconnected from the social and political background of feudal Japan. Both elements maintain their outer appearance, but they are emptied of any meaning.

In Bakhtin's vision of literary history, the chronotope of adventure-time holds importance mostly because it is a primitive form of what will eventually become the heteroglossia of the novel, and indeed the critic claims that adventure-time loses its historical relevance after Dante's *Commedia* and *Roman de la Rose* (Bakhtin 85, 155-59). However, as *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* prove, the chronotope of adventure-time has never disappeared entirely. Instead, this chronotope keeps reappearing alongside narrative structures of delay within different historical incarnations of romance. Thus, understanding its role in history is also key to understanding how texts that belong to the literary category of romance work.

[52]See Bakhtin 259-422 on heteroglossia in the novel.

2.2.4 The Smooth Semiotics of Romance

To summarize, Frye's reading of romance as a quest-based narrative that takes place in a partly idyllic and partly demonic setting does not describe accurately texts that we associate with this literary category. On the contrary, the works of Parker and Bakhtin provide a more operative definition of romance. In light of these studies, romance appears to be a literary form characterized by a high degree of narrative delay; a fictional world whose spatial and temporal coordinates are difficult to measure and quantify; and a mingling of heterogeneous literary styles, tropes and motifs that, however, lose any previous connotation they held in their original context. An understanding of the minoritarian capabilities of romance should begin by discussing these characteristics of romance from the point of view of Deleuze and Guattari's framework. Hence, I begin this section by formulating a Deleuzian definition of romance based on romance's reliance on structures of delay and the chronotope of adventure time. In turn, this definition will help me determine whether romance can be considered an example of minor art.

Let us start with the first issue: a Deleuzian definition of romance should describe how a romance works as an artistic machine, namely how it interacts with other bodies and assemblages. While earlier in this chapter I acknowledged that Deleuze and Guattari's worldview is essentially a functionalist one, I have yet to address a fundamental part of this functionalist approach, which involves determining how bodies and assemblages work. If every item in existence is a machine, then what exactly are these machines' modes of operation? How do these machines differ from each other in terms of how they function and what effect do they produce upon each other? Deleuze and Guattari expand upon these issues in the Plateau on signs of *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which they discuss their theory of mixed semiotics (*Plateaus* 111-49).

At first, a theory of signs may seem unrelated to the functionalist approach to

art Deleuze and Guattari propose: as André Pierre Colombat explains, we commonly understand signs in Ferdinand de Saussure's sense of the word, that is as items related only to meaning, and not to function (Colombat 14). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari indeed also acknowledge the existence of a Saussurean semiology but, at the same time, they stress that not all signs adhere to this specific system. On the contrary, signs organize themselves in numerous semiotic systems or regimes of signs. "[S]emiology," Deleuze and Guattari explain, "is only one regime of signs among others and not the most important one. Hence the necessity of a return to pragmatics, in which language never has universality in itself, self-sufficient formalization, a general semiology, or a meta-language" (*Plateaus* 111-12).[53]

Not only do signs organize themselves in different semiotic systems, but these different systems always coexist in the same spatial or temporal context, or even in the same body or assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 119). In plain terms, signs are part of each and every body, regardless of whether the body in question is a literary text, a motion picture, or even a physical human body.[54] "Signs are at work in things themselves," sum up Deleuze and Guattari (87). Moreover, different regimes of signs constantly interact with each other: while in a body or assemblage a single semiotic system can have a dominant role, other semiotic systems are also at play at the same time in the same context. Finally, regimes of signs can act upon each other so as to reshape these regimes of signs into other systems thus leading to a deterritorialization and reterritorialization of signs from one regime to another (136). In sum, signs in Deleuze and Guattari's framework do not only *mean* something but, above all, they *do things*. As such, a truly comprehensive semiotic should not

[53]In the Plateau on signs, Deleuze and Guattari provide an "arbitrarily limited" list of four semiotic systems (*Plateaus* 119). Apart from the signifying regime typical of Saussurean semiology, this list includes the postisignifying, the countersignifying and the presignifying regimes (117-19, 128). I discuss the countersignifying and postsignifying semiotics more at length in section 2.2.5, whereas an explanation of the presignifying regime can be found in the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (*Anti-Oedipus* 139-54).

[54]This expansive reading of Deleuze and Guattari's semiotic theory may seem in conflict with how signs are discussed in *A Thousand Plateaus*, that is only in terms of linguistic expression (*Plateaus* 111). However, here I choose to follow the argument of Manuel DeLanda, who points out that in previous works Deleuze discusses signs also as present in physical systems (207n67).

focus merely on the meaning of signs, but above all on what Deleuze and Guattari call their "usage" (85).[55] Analyzing the signs we find in a body (more precisely, examining how these signs organize themselves within this body) is a fundamental step towards understanding the modes of operation of any body or machine that exists in reality as well as the interactions these bodies entertain with each other.

Hence, how do the signs of a romance organize themselves? Moreover, what does this structure of signs tell us about the minoritarian capabilities of romance? Arguably, the most evident feature of the semiotic systems we find in romance is that its signs are organized in a smooth semiotic space. What is the exact meaning of this term, and why can it be applied to romance? In the last Plateau of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that space (once again in its broad meaning of the space of each body in existence, regardless of whether a body is physical or abstract) can organize itself both as a striated space or as a smooth space (*Plateaus* 474-500). As such, all semiotic spaces that a regime of signs establishes on a body can be understood as either smooth or striated.[56]

A Deleuzian smooth space always presents three features which involve the relationship between points and trajectories: in mixed semiotic terms, we should understand these two terms respectively as the signs of a semiotic system and the method of distribution of these signs. First and foremost, Deleuze and Guattari explain that in a smooth space "the points are subordinated to the trajectory," meaning that trajectories are not forced to move through pre-established paths but rather roam freely (*Plateaus* 478). The trajectory of a smooth space is also an immeasurable entity: in

[55]Without a doubt, the philosopher who exerts the most profound influence on Deleuze and Guattari's pragmatic theory of signs is Spinoza, whose concept of affectus plays a crucial role in shaping the functionalist approach found in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Colombat 14, 29-32). In *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Deleuze clarifies that signs describe the effects that result from these interactions. "A sign, according to Spinoza, can have several meanings," Deleuze argues "but it is always an effect. An effect is first of all the trace of one body upon another, the state of a body insofar as it suffers the action of another body" (*Essays* 138). See Deleuze, *Spinoza* 104-06 for Deleuze's reading of signs in Spinoza.

[56]For example, both the signifying and presignifying regimes are striated semiotic spaces. In the former regime, signs are allocated by a master signifier in a circular network, so that this signifier can govern all the signs and connect them together (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 114-15). The latter regime, despite being "plurilinear" and "multidimensional," also segments its signs into different territories, thus making it an example of striation (117).

Deleuze and Guattari's own words it is "a vector, a direction and not a dimension or metric determination," as it is instead in a striated space (478). Finally, this trajectory disseminates its points (or signs) also in an unbounded and thus unquantifiable way. "In the smooth [space]," explain Deleuze and Guattari, "one 'distributes' oneself in an open space, according to frequencies and in the course of one's crossings" and not "according to determined intervals [or] assigned breaks" (481).[57]

Due to their reliance on structures of delay and on the chronotope of adventure-time, all examples of romance we have encountered so far (including *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars*) adhere from a semiotic point of view to the description of smooth space provided by Deleuze and Guattari. For example, the characters' journeys in these romances are all vectorial trajectories, as readers and audiences cannot tell how long or how far are the characters travelling. In fact, the very storytelling technique used to compose these romances (which are based on a very high degree of narrative postponement) is a quintessential example of a vectorial trajectory, since the narrative of a romance is not constructed through pre-determined plot points or a pre-established conclusion, but instead proceeds in a rather extemporary fashion. Moreover, the chronotope of adventure-time found in romance denotes an open distribution of signs, or in other words a distribution that does not follow pre-determined intervals. Indeed, the fictional world of a romance does not lend itself to precise spatial or temporal measurement, since it blends elements from different cultural and historical contexts, and even from very diverse artistic styles.

Therefore, by looking at romance's features through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's spatial and semiotic theories, we are now able to formulate a minimal Deleuzian definition of romance. In short, the term 'romance' always designates the presence of

[57]Once again, we can notice the difference between smoothness and striation in the example of the sea mentioned in section 2.1.1, which Deleuze and Guattari also use in the Plateau on space. Longitudes and latitudes are measurable lines that connect single points to each other and allocate elements in a discrete way and, as such, they construct a striated space. On the contrary, waves and currents are elements of a smooth space, since they are vectorial trajectories that distribute elements on their path (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 479-80).

a smooth semiotic space in an artistic text, which takes the form of a series of trajectories based on delay and the mingling of heterogeneous semiotic elements together. Above all, since all examples of romance are based on a smooth semiotic space, then we can narrow down the possible regime of signs of romance to the two semiotic systems which organize signs via vectorial trajectories that roam over an open space, that is the postsignifying and the countersignifying semiotics.

2.2.5 Romance between Post and Countersignification

Let us first discuss the postsignifying regime of signs which, as Bonta and Protevi summarize, constitutes "the semiotic of escape, of betrayal, of turning away" (129). In a postsignifying semiotics, signs are distributed smoothly across this straight line, that is in "a linear proceeding into which the sign is swept via subjects" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 127). This trajectory originates from a "point of subjectification," which may be anything that establishes a "double turning away, betrayal, and existence under reprieve" (129). An example of the point of subjectification is "the faciality trait for someone in love," whose meaning has changed into "the point of departure for a deterritorialization that puts everything else to flight" (129).

Once a point of subjectification is established, this point produces a "subject of enunciation," which is the active element in the postsignifying regime (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 129). In turn, the subject of enunciation issues a "subject of the statement," or an entity that is named or defined by the subject of enunciation. In Deleuze and Guattari's own words, this entity is "a subject bound to statements in conformity with the mental reality" created by the subject of enunciation (129). What follows from the issuing of this double subject is an infinite movement onward, also known as the "line of subjectification," that constantly redistributes the two subjects (129). Throughout this movement, we witness a "doubling of the two subjects" and "a recoiling of one into the other" (129). In other words, the two subjects keep facing

each other while also distancing each other, thus forming a trajectory that forever draws the two subjects together only to push them apart again and again.

The postsignifying regime of signs describes accurately specific texts that belong to the category of romance, such as Chrétien de Troyes' medieval chivalric romances, *The Empire Strikes Back* and the examples discussed by Parker in her study including, Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*.[58] All of these romances focus on the postponement of narrative endings and definitions, and indeed the structures of delay of these romances are based on the same logic of Deleuze and Guattari's line of subjectification. In these romances, we also find a subject of enunciation (for example, the narrative's protagonist) who is chasing a subject of the statement, or in other words a fleeting object of desire. Deleuze and Guattari themselves point out that the courtly love typical of medieval romance (in which a knight undertakes a journey and faces a series of obstacles to conquer a beloved woman) is a quintessential example of the postsignifying system of signs (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 130-33).[59]

What is particularly striking about the postsignifying regime of signs for the sake of this thesis is its majoritarian quality, or in other words the fact that this semiotic system constitutes another repressive structure of thought. Despite being a smooth semiotic system, the ultimate goal of this regime is still to define, control and command all the signs it distributes across its semiotic space. Indeed, throughout its roaming across space, the subject of enunciation also names and commands each and every sign it distributes.[60] A proof that the postsignifying regime of signs is a coercive semiotic system is the fact that Deleuze and Guattari use this semiotics to describe

[58]I discuss the postsignifying nature of *The Empire Strikes Back* in section 3.6.

[59]Deleuze and Guattari discuss courtly love more in-depth in the sixth and seventh Plateaus (*Plateaus* 156-57, 174). See Auerbach 132-36 on the infinite narrative trajectory in chivalric literature and its ties to courtly love.

[60]Despite their different mode of operation, the postsignifying regime of signs shares the same repressive goals of the signifying regime typical of Sausseurian semiology. While the signifying regime names and defines its signs via striation (that is, by having a master signifier dividing these signs into a circular network and connecting them together) the postsignifying semiotics does so through a process of smoothing. To quote Deleuze and Guattari directly, in the postsignifying regime "[t]here is no longer . . . a need for a transcendent center of power; power is instead immanent and melds with the 'real,' operating through normalization. . . . A new form of slavery is invented, namely, being slave to oneself" (*Plateaus* 129-30).

two social orders as repressive as religious fundamentalism and capitalism (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 127, 457).[61]

If romance were only an example of postsignifying semiotics as Deleuze and Guattari seem to imply in *A Thousand Plateaus*, then employing romance in a minoritarian way would prove quite challenging. However, while there are romances that adhere to the postsignifying semiotic system, I argue that identifying romance only with the postsignifying regime of signs is not an accurate depiction of this art form. Despite the striking similarities between the smooth semiotics of romance and the postsignifying system of signs, not every romance shares the same mode of operation (or, in fact, even the same agenda) with the postsignifying regime of signs. Arguably, two clear cases of non-postsignifying romance are indeed *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars*.

At first, it may seem that both romances present themselves as based upon a postsignifying semiotics, mainly because in both texts the narrative allegedly starts when the main character falls in love at first sight with a mysterious and charming woman. In Deleuzian terms, this event represents a point of subjectification based on the faciality of a beloved person, which subsequently provokes the departure of the line of subjectification. At the beginning of Boiardo's poem, Orlando falls in love with Angelica by admiring her "viso sereno" ("sweet, bright face") (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.1.31; Ross 7). Indeed, this event is the reason why the paladin departs in search of Angelica in the following canto (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.2.21-28). In *Star Wars*, a similar episode happens when Luke Skywalker discovers Princess Leia's holographic message projected by R2D2: similarly to *Inamoramento*, this episode also triggers the protagonist's journey towards completing his own quest. While it would seem straightforward to read both these plot points as the establishment of a postsignifying regime of signs,

[61] In the first case, a prophet plays the role of a subject of enunciation who names and commands in which a prophet commands a group of believers (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 127). Moreover, capitalism is also a postsignifying regime of signs: here, the subject of enunciation and the subject of the statement are, respectively, the capitalist and the worker (457).

the mode of organization of signs that follows this event does not conform to the one that Deleuze and Guattari discuss as they describe the postsignifying semiotics. If *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars* were indeed based upon a postsignifying semiotics, then Luke and Orlando's journey towards their beloved woman would lead them to name, define and command each and every sign that they encounter on their respective paths. Instead, in both texts the signs that the protagonists encounter remain blatantly without a name and independent from any control of the subject.

In *Star Wars*, the characters of Obi-Wan Kenobi and Han Solo maintain only the broad signifiers—that is, the outer appearance and attitudes—of a samurai and an Old West gunslinger. As these characters are deterritorialized into the setting of Lucas' film, they are emptied of their original functions and meaning while at the same time they do not acquire any new relevant name or command. Similarly, *Inamoramento de Orlando* deprives the signs it incorporates in its regime of any identity, while also refusing to give them any other name. When in the first few cantos of Book One Orlando faces a Cyclops and a Sphinx (two easily recognizable creatures from Greek mythology) Boiardo provides only physical descriptions of them, without ever naming either of the two monsters (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.5.70, 1.6.24). In fact, the main character falling in love with an elusive woman is not even the event that triggers these texts' narrative, as in both *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* the narrative is already in motion before Orlando and Luke admire the face of the beloved woman.[62]

These kinds of romances in which the elements of a fictional world are emptied of any meaning or command because they do not depend upon the actions of a subject of enunciation can be best described in Deleuzian terms as examples of the countersignifying semiotics, or the semiotics of nomadic culture (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 118, 389-93). Like the postsignifying semiotics, the countersignifying regime of signs

[62] *Inamoramento de Orlando* begins with King Gradasso preparing to invade France Boiardo (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.1.4-7) whereas in *Star Wars* the narrative begins *in medias res* with a space battle between Rebels and the Empire.

also operates via smoothing, and yet these two smooth spaces are very different from each other. In the countersignifying regime, the signs are not aligned across a straight trajectory created by a subject of enunciation; instead, they spread themselves over a free, open and undivided space. In other words, the countersignifying regime "distributes something in space, instead of dividing up space or distributing space itself" (389). Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari explain in the fifth Plateau, the sign of the countersignifying semiotics is

> a numerical sign that is not produced by something outside the system of marking it institutes, which marks a mobile and plural distribution, which itself determines functions and relations, which arrives at arrangements rather than totals, distributions rather than collections, which operates more by breaks, transitions, migration, and accumulation than by combining units (*Plateaus* 118).

With the term "numerical sign," Deleuze and Guattari mean to say that the sign of the countersignifying semiotic is emptied of any intrinsic meaning or function: in Deleuzian terms, this sign is simply a "numbering number" (*Plateaus* 118, 390-91). This kind of sign is defined as a numerical entity because it is deprived of any intrinsic property in and by itself once it is incorporated into the countersignifying semiotic. Instead, the countersignifying sign acquires such property only through the way it distributes itself across space.

> The number becomes a subject. The independence of the number in relation to space is a result not of abstraction but of the concrete nature of smooth space, which is occupied without itself being counted. The number is no longer a means of counting or measuring but of moving: it is the number itself that moves through smooth space (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 389).

Following a suitable example provided by Deleuze and Guattari themselves, we should imagine the signs of the countersignifying regime as the pieces of a game of Go, that is as "pellets, disks, simple arithmetic units" that "have . . . an anonymous, collective, or third person function" and hold only situational properties (*Plateaus* 352-53).

Since the signs of both *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* seem to distribute themselves across a smooth semiotic space in complete autonomy from any subject of enunciation, and since they do not have any intrinsic meaning, definition or command but only hold situational properties, I argue that these two texts belong to the category of countersignifying romance. Not only does this definition clarify the mode of operation of *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars*, but it is above all key to understanding how these two romances can be used in a minoritarian way. In fact, the countersignifying semiotics found in Boiardo's poem and Lucas' film is an essential element for the politicized use of art that Deleuze and Guattari propose. Indeed, this semiotic regime fulfills the first requirement of minor art, or in other words the deterritorialization of a major semiotic system.[63]

The displacement of characters, locations and events from different genres and different narratives into the smooth space of a countersignifying romance is arguably not unlike Kafka's unsettling use of the German language in his writings. As mentioned earlier in this chapter Kafka's writings can be considered minor literature in part because of the author's unconventional use of German language, which puzzles native German speakers. Similarly, the mingling of Carolingian, Breton and Classical elements in *Inamoramento de Orlando* and the mixture of space opera, westerns and Japanese period movies in *Star Wars* also produces a destabilizing effect upon readers or viewers who are used to experiencing these elements not in the same text, but rather in different genres. In other words, watching a samurai wielding a lightsaber instead of a katana or reading about an eighth-century Frankish knight fighting against fantastic creatures that belong to Greek mythology are arguably both quite perplexing

[63]Deleuze and Guattari also describe the countersignifying regime of signs as the prime semiotic system of the war machine, or a machine that opposes entities based on striation, such as the state (which follows the signifying regime of signs) or the tribe (that is, an example of presignifying semiotics). As the two authors explain, "[t]he specificity of numerical organization rests on the nomadic mode of existence and the war machine function. The numbering number is distinct both from lineal codes and State overcoding. Arithmetic composition, on the other hand, selects, extracts from the lineages the elements that will enter into nomadism and the war machine and, on the other hand, directs them against the State apparatus, opposing a machine and an existence to the State apparatus, drawing a deterritorialization that cuts across both the lineal territorialities and the territory . . . of the State" (*Plateaus* 390-91).

artistic experiences.

These unsettling experiences are a necessary step towards encouraging readers and audiences to question the reality that surrounds them, while also enabling them to evoke a new and possibly better one. The fact that *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* use their countersignifying semiotics for non-minoritarian goals (which I explain in more detail in the next two chapters) is of relative importance for the purpose of this thesis. Indeed, *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars*' adherence to a countersignifying semiotics makes these two texts readily usable as minor art, provided of course that one is willing to push this semiotics to the extremes so as to challenge the very categories of majority and minority.

By looking at romance's characteristics through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's mixed semiotics, we have achieved a better understanding of this elusive literary category. First and foremost, the semiotic theory discussed in *A Thousand Plateaus* clarifies why romance is a somehow confusing category in literary theory and criticism. While the term 'romance' always marks the presence of a smooth semiotic space in an artistic text, the same term can describe simultaneously two completely different uses of smooth semiotics. As a result, I propose to replace the arbitrary dichotomy between naive and sentimental romance formulated by Frye with a Deleuzian monadic distinction between countersignifying romance and postsignifying romance. On the one hand, the smooth semiotic space of a romance can assume the shape of a postsignifying regime, in which a subject of enunciation distributes signs across its path so as to define and command them. On the other hand, this smooth semiotics allows romance also to function as a countersignifying regime, or in other words a regime that empties its signs of any intrinsic property merely to distribute them across space.

From the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari's functionalist approach to the arts, these two different kinds of romance mark two very different uses of the same literary

form. Postsignifying romance is a majoritarian use of romance's structure of delay and chronotope of adventure-time, whereas countersignifying romance indicates a potential minoritarian use of the same tropes and conventions. Indeed, the signs of countersignifying romance (which are deprived of names, identities and commands) mark a first and necessary step towards the enactment of a process of becoming-minoritarian, thus posing a severe challenge to repressive structures of thought. In sum, while postsignifying romances are arguably the least interesting for understanding the minoriarian capabilities of this art form, countersignifying texts such as *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* invite us to explore the abundantly neglected minoritarian uses of romance.

This angle is indeed worth exploring especially due to Jameson's claim that romance rises to prominence in historical periods (or, as Deleuze and Guattari would write, in contingent moments) marked by profound political changes. As explained in the introduction, neither *Inamoramento* nor *Star Wars* are examples of minor literature, and indeed the fact that these two countersignifying romances fail to enact a process of becoming-minoritarian opens up further questions about the minoritarian capabilities of countersignifying romance. In fact, if countersignifying romances such as *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* operate in moments of political upheaval such as the decline of feudalism and the rise of postmodernism (which, intuitively, would encourage politicized uses of romance) why do these texts fail to enact a process of becoming-minoritarian? What prevents them from being employed so as to challenge oppressive structures of thought in such politicized historical periods?

As I explain in the following two chapters, the reasons why *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars* dissipate their minoritarian potential are entirely different, as they depend upon the way these individual romances interact with the contingent moment in which they came to be. In chapter 3, I claim that while *Star Wars* effectively deprives the signs it deterritorializes in its own semiotic space of any name or command, it does

so in a way that resembles what Rem Koolhaas calls a Junkspace, or the space of today's capitalism whose only aim is to accelerate commodification and consumption. In chapter 4, I argue that, on the contrary, *Inamoramento de Orlando* features a more enlightened political intent in that it puts signs into dialogue with each other in the form of a semiotic Thirdspace. However, Boiardo employs a countersignifying semiotics not to challenge existing power structures, but rather for the arguably contradictory goal of seeking objectives truths about reality.

3

The Junkspace of *Star Wars*

3.1 An Aesthetic of Junk

The narrative of George Lucas' 1977 film *Star Wars* involves a tight and streamlined plot, and indeed the very beginning of the movie communicates a sense of storytelling urgency. For example, the movie's first sequence does not feature any opening credits in accordance to classical Hollywood cinema convention. On the contrary, the film famously beings with John Williams' bombastic film score accompanying a brief introductory text crawl, followed immediately by a furious space battle over the skies of the desert planet of Tatooine.[1] In this battle, a small spacecraft of the Rebel Alliance is being chased by a giant cruiser of the evil Galactic Empire: the Rebels just acquired the plans of the Death Star, that is an imperial planet-size space station capable of destroying an entire planet. This event could turn the tide of the war between these two factions, and indeed the Empire agents want to recover these plans so as to prevent any attack to their massive weapon. As soon as the Imperial stormtroopers board the rebel ship, the space battle turns into a futuristic laser rifle skirmish, during which the imperial soldiers rapidly defeat the rebel forces and secure their ship.

[1]The planet's name is revealed only in the opening crawl of *Return of the Jedi*. The name is a homage to the Tunisian city of Tataouine, near which the Star Wars troupe shot the movie's desert scenes (Rinzler ch. 5).

During this boisterous and exciting action which involves significant stakes, the storytelling shifts almost immediately to two characters that barely qualify as people, but more as commodities. Of course, I am referring to C-3PO and R2-D2, the servant robots (or 'droids,' as they are called in this fictional setting) played respectively by actors Anthony Daniels and Kenny Baker. 3PO is supposed to be the more sophisticated robot of the pair: he has an anthropomorphic appearance and speaks in an exaggerated British accent. Instead, R2 is a short and bulky machine who communicates only through electronic beeps and whistles. Even on a superficial glimpse, both robots look in quite a bad condition: in fact, the two droids' appearance stands in stark contrast with the *mise-en-scène* of this sequence. While the rebel spaceship's interiors and the soldier's armour are all white and polished, the two droids instead look dirty and worn-out. Arguably this space battle is not the first one the two are witnessing, and perhaps their masters have had a hard time maintaining them. 3PO even spots a silver left leg, which does not fit well with the rest of his golden armour.

Even if depicted as secondary in this story world, these two characters soon become fundamental from a narrative point of view. As we learn from a brief scene during the laser rifle battle on the Rebel spaceship, Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) hands over to R2 the Death Star plans so he can deliver them to Obi-Wan Kenobi (Alec Guinness), an old Jedi knight who lives on Tatooine. Hence, R2 becomes effectively the MacGuffin of the movie or, in other words, the object of desire chased by all other characters during the story.[2] After receiving the Death Star plans from Princess Leia, R2 urges an oblivious 3PO to board an escape pod, and so the two droids make an emergency landing on Tatooine.

Although up until this moment *Star Wars*' narrative has unfolded at a very frenetic pace, after this point and for almost seven minutes of screen time the film does not

[2]Lucas himself calls R2 the MacGuffin of the movie in an audio commentary to *Star Wars* included in the 2004 DVD edition of the original trilogy.

continue at the same frantic rhythm of the opening battle and, instead, it dramatically slows down. In fact, for seven minutes, nothing that is happening on the screen advances the movie's plot in a relevant way. Instead, *Star Wars* chooses to devote these minutes to show the two droids' exhausting journey through the sands of the desert planet. Indeed, this sequence consists of R2 and 3PO taking separate paths after arguing about which direction to take: the former droid wants to reach Obi-Wan as soon as possible so as to give him the Death Star plans, whereas the latter is simply seeking the least dangerous way to safety. Eventually, both robots end up being captured in different circumstances by the same group of scavenger aliens known as the Jawas: while R2 is the victim of an ambush in a canyon, 3PO unintentionally surrenders himself to the Jawas as he encounters them on his path. Hence, the two droids finally reunite when the Jawas confine them in the same cargo vehicle, and once both are sold to Luke Skywalker (the movie's protagonist, played by Mark Hamill) the main narrative plot of the film can resume once again. Apart from effectively stopping the film's plot, the sequence of R2 and 3PO marooned on the desert stands in stark contrast with the rest of the movie also for stylistic reasons. While in the rest of the movie dialogues are delivered at a breakneck pace in the style of classical Hollywood film serials, this sequence contains little to no speech apart from 3PO's mumblings, R2's whistles and the alien language spoken by the Jawas who capture R2 in a canyon. Moreover, while during the rest of *Star Wars* the narrative continually cuts between different groups of characters, in this sequence R2 and 3PO are the only focus of the movie, to the point of making these scenes willingly mundane.[3]

There is no reason why this sequence needs to feel this long, aimless and excruciating compared to the rest of Lucas' film: or, to be more precise, there is no narrative reason for it. From a thematic point of view, however, this sequence is of fundamental

[3]Arguably the *avant-garde* style of this sequence is quite similar to Lucas' first feature film, *THX 1138*, which often features sombre and restrained scenes. Lucas' fixation with objects that are both artificial and yet humanized such as R2 and 3PO also reminds us of *American Graffiti*: in this film (which is devoted to car culture in early 1960s southern California) the camera often gazes upon the metallic surfaces of the characters' cars, which serve the purpose of characterizing the protagonists of this film.

importance, in that it puts the main theme of the movie front and center. By stressing R2 and 3PO's battered condition and, above all, by focusing on their disposal as used-up commodities and their subsequent recycling, *Star Wars* warns its audience from the very beginning that its semiotic space will include only elements borrowed and recycled from other narratives. First and foremost, 3PO and R2's battered looks mirror their lack of a specific semiotic identity: in other words, these two characters look as if they were roughly patched-up also because they are indeed a patchwork of references and quotations originating in other narratives. For example, 3PO's aspect reminds us of two robot characters from 1920s-30s cinema, that is the machine-man from Fritz Lang's expressionist film *Metropolis*, as well as of the Tin-Woodman from *The Wizard of Oz*.[4] Similarly, R2 resembles the drones of *Silent Running*, a science-fiction movie released in 1972, only a few years earlier than *Star Wars*. Above all, the two droids interact with each other almost entirely through reciprocal insults and accusations, quite like the two peasants Tahei and Matashichi from Akira Kurosawa's 1958 film *The Hidden Fortress*.[5]

As already pointed out in section 2.2.3, R2 and 3PO are not the only elements that *Star Wars* borrows from other texts: indeed, every character, setting or event found in Lucas' film has been recycled from early twentieth-century pop narratives such as western films, Second World War movies or space opera serials. However, perhaps the most distinguishing and compelling aspect of *Star Wars* is that it portrays all of these recycled elements just as it portrays R2 and 3PO, or more specifically as if all these elements were physically recycled. In other words, *Star Wars* exhibits the derivative and composite quality of its settings, characters and events by depicting them as having the same tattered and worn-out consistency of the two droids left abandoned on a desolate planet.

[4]The fact that 3PO is a robot is not the only reference to *The Wizard of Oz* movie and series of books. Indeed, the character's wimpy attitude is quite similar to that of the Cowardly Lion, while the Lion's look may have been an inspiration for Chewbacca's appearance.

[5]In fact, *Star Wars*' plot is in fact a retelling of *The Hidden Fortress* (Brooker 52-6).

The planet of Tatooine itself (which is the backdrop of the first act of the film) is a mash-up of two very different desert landscapes famously portrayed in cinema. On the one hand, it comprises steep hills and clefts similar to the Arizona-Utah Monument Valley, which director John Ford often used as a setting for his westerns.[6] On the other hand, the planet includes vast dunes more akin to the Nefud Desert depicted in David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*. Not only are these references quite evident to moviegoers familiar with Ford and Lean's movies; but the fact that these settings derive from previous movies is underlined by the fact that Tatooine is a dirty and filthy place. Indeed, this planet consists of run-down farms full of damaged, second-hand commodities, such as Luke's "desert-battered . . . landspeeder" or his "worn, washed-out . . . farmer's clothes" (Brooker 23). Moreover, Tatooine also hosts a "wretched hive of scum and villainy," to quote Obi-Wan's description of the Mos-Eisley spaceport (Bouzereau 41). In turn, the cantina of this spaceport, in which Luke and Obi-Wan meet for the first time Han Solo and Chewbacca (played respectively by Harrison Ford and Peter Mayhew) is a place populated by all sorts of hideous alien creatures, most of whom are low-life criminals.

R2, 3PO and Tatooine are not the only items in *Star Wars* that are both derivative and physically sloppy at the same time: in fact, this description can be extended to other characters, locations and objects in the *Star Wars* story world. The *Millenium Falcon*, Han Solo's spaceship, shares with the Rebel X-Wing fighters the appearance of Second World War fighter-bombers depicted in British films set during the Second World War such as *633 Fighter Squadron* and *The Dam Busters*. At the same time, this ship is also quite clearly a "piece of junk" as Luke openly states and Leia implies the first time they respectively see it (Bouzereau 52, 77).

So far, it might seem straightforward to associate this aesthetic of junk only with the Rebels and to posit that order and spotlessness belong solely to the Empire.

[6]Monument Valley can be seen for example in *Stagecoach* (1939) and *The Searchers* (1956).

However, as Will Brooker explains, this distinction between trash and cleanliness "is not quite so simple as Rebel versus Empire" (23). Indeed, even objects, characters and locations related to the Empire (which at first appear as polished and sterile as the small Rebel corvette we saw at the beginning of the film) hide an untidy side that becomes evident on a closer look. Once again, this untidy side reflects the derivative nature of these items. When Leia meets Governor Tarkin (played by Peter Cushing, an actor famous for his roles in 1950s-70s British horror cinema) she insults him by saying that she recognized his "foul stench when [she] was brought on board" (Bouzereau 57). Due to its gloomy and threatening look, the Death Star is arguably a variation upon the trope of the haunted manor from Gothic fiction.[7] Even though this location appears as a perfect and aseptic piece of technology, this appearance is betrayed at closer scrutiny. For example, while the exterior surface of the Death Star looks smooth and spotless from a distance, when the Rebel star-fighters get up close to it during the final space battle this surface reveals a chaotic amalgamation of scrap metal. Above all, the space station interiors, made of gleaming steel corridors, also contain trash compactors which the protagonists of the story use as a temporary refuge when escaping Imperial troops. On top of being full of garbage, this trash compactor is even inhabited by a horrific tentacular creature.[8]

3.2 Postmodern Commodification and New Materialism

Hence, *Star Wars* gives a tactile and material consistency as worn-out commodities not only to the two droid characters, but also to all the other items present in this story world. In some extreme cases, the outward aspect of items in *Star Wars* is even portrayed as horrendous and repulsive, as in the case of the Death Star trash

[7]The trope of the haunted manor originated in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and concerns an "old, dark, decaying castle plagued by an ancestral curse" (Willis).

[8]Similarly, at the end of *Return of the Jedi*, Luke removes Vader's helmet in the moments before the Sith lord's death. While Vader's armor is made of glossy metal, the man inside of it looks horrid and disfigured (Brooker 26).

compactor sequence. On the one hand, the film communicates quite effectively that every element found across its semiotic space originates in other texts. On the other hand, in doing so, *Star Wars* also stresses that these characters, locations and objects have lost the meaning and purposes they held in their text of origin as they are displaced in this new semiotic environment. Above all, these items have not gained any new meaning or purpose in this displacement. *Star Wars* is an assortment of different narratives, but approaching this assortment merely as a trite postmodern game of spotting the reference would mean to ignore the fact that this mixture of signs is also willingly presented as a rough patchwork of garbage.

What is *Star Wars* trying to achieve by absorbing all of these references into its own semiotic space only to empty them of their original purpose and significance and showcasing this deprivation? Is there any political implication in portraying all of these narrative references as barely meaningful or useful? In other words, how can we describe the politics of *Star Wars* from a Deleuzian point of view? In order to analyze a romance from a Deleuzian perspective (which, once again, means understanding how a romance functions and how it interacts with other bodies and assemblages that surround it) we first need to contextualize this work in its own social and cultural *milieu*.

Star Wars had been originally conceived, produced and experienced at the dawn of the age of postmodernism, a historical period that arguably still endures today. Among the numerous definitions of this concept, Jameson's own theory of postmodernism (which aims at historicizing this phenomenon) is arguably the best starting point for understanding the cultural context of this movie. As also stated in the subtitle of his 1991 book *Postmodernism*, Jameson defines this concept as the "domi-

nant cultural logic or hegemonic norm" of late capitalism (*Postmodernism* 6).[9] From Jameson's point of view, the most fundamental aspect of this logic is ubiquitous commodification which, as Georges Van Den Abbeele effectively summarizes, means "the extension of the marketplace logic ... from the strictly economic realm of manufacturing into the most intimate corners of cultural and physical life" (18). In Jameson's own words,

> in postmodern culture, 'culture' has become a product in its own right; the market has become a substitute for itself and fully as much a commodity as any of the items it includes within itself: modernism was still minimally and tendentially the critique of the commodity and the effort to make it transcend itself. Postmodernism is the consumption of sheer commodification as a process (Jameson, *Postmodernism* x).[10]

As already mentioned in chapter 2 of this thesis, *Star Wars* is indeed a quintessential example of how the ubiquitous commodification logic also extends to cinema. Without a doubt, this movie embraces the economic model of today's capitalism as it relies on commercial practices such as franchising and merchandising. Since its release in 1977, this film has been spun off into a myriad of other narratives such as prequel and sequel films, novels, comic books, television shows and video games, so as to engage different kinds of audiences. In fact, the *Star Wars* commercial brand also extends to the realm of material commodities in the form of toys, action figures, gadgets and even food, apparel or furniture. In sum, almost every aspect of *Star Wars* has been turned into a product to be sold.[11]

[9] Jameson explains that he chooses to use of the concept of "late capitalism" in Postmodernism so as to mark "its continuity with what preceded it rather than the break, rupture, and mutation that concepts like 'postindustrial society' wished to underscore" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* xix). Although in a later article Jameson argues that his usage of the term "is not meant as a prophetic forecast" ("Capital" 249) I contend that the 'late capitalism' still has a teleological quality. As Marxist historical determinism is arguably in contrast with the nomadologic approach I adopt in this work, throughout this chapter I will instead use the terms 'modern capitalism' or 'today's capitalism.'

[10] Jean-François Lyotard similarly argues that in the postmodern condition "[k]nowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production" (4).

[11] While today these merchandising and franchising practices are used to promote all major blockbuster releases, at the time of *Star Wars*' release in 1977 licensing rights were usually ignored by Hollywood studios. Indeed, Lucas became a wealthy producer in part because he was able to license *Star Wars* products himself (Pollock 136-37). To better clarify the fundamental role merchandising has played in the promotion of *Star Wars*, I should point out that several names of characters or races (i.e., Boba Fett in *The Empire Strikes Back* or the Ewoks in *Return of the Jedi*) are well known to fans or even casual viewers of the saga even though these names are never pronounced in the actual movies: evidently, audiences of these movies learnt these names through tie-in products such as novelizations or action figures.

Although Jameson's scholarship on postmodernism is fundamental for contextualizing *Star Wars* in its own historical moment, this perspective does not allow us to understand this movie from the point of view of Deleuze and Guattari's aesthetic theory. Specifically, while Jameson's historicist approach is key to understanding why the logic of commodification has also extended to the arts in today's society, this same approach is unable to clarify if and how postmodern art acts politically. On the one hand, Jameson does address the political nature of art and culture in postmodernism by discussing the fact that today's capitalism inevitably influences all kind of cultural expression. In Jameson's own words, "every position on postmodernism in culture—whether apologia or stigmatization—is also at one and the same time, and necessarily, an implicitly or explicitly political stance on the nature of multinational capitalism today" (*Postmodernism* 3). On the other hand, however, this position today does not offer much critical nuance, and thus needs to be supplemented with a more effective reading of culture in today's capitalism.

Arguably, a perspective that allows us to read the postmodern condition in more accurate terms is the scholarly current of new materialism. This line of research expands upon the 1970s-1990s scholarship on the postmodern condition in a fundamental way as it focuses on the ontological implications of accelerated production and consumption of commodities in modern capitalism. Indeed, new materialist scholars do not merely approach commodification from a historicist point of view as Jameson does; instead, as Maurizia Boscagli explains in her 2015 volume *Stuff Theory*, new materialism explores commodification in a more functionalist way, so as to understand "the effects of matter as a force operating through different network flows of power—economic, technological, scientific, libidinal, affective, collective, and individual" (4).

One aspect of modern capitalism that new materialism highlights quite effectively is the idea that the proliferation of objects caused by commodification makes it some-

what difficult to separate which objects are relevant, valuable or useful and which are not. In more everyday terms, commodification blurs the distinction between useful objects (or, instead, 'stuff' if we choose to follow Boscagli's terminology) and outright junk. Examples of this blurring abound in our everyday lives: for instance, a plastic bag is valuable only as long as it carries groceries from a store to a home, but it rapidly becomes garbage once it has been used. Similarly, a smartphone may be sold for hundreds or thousands of dollars on its first release, but it loses its original value as soon as a new, slightly upgraded model appears on the market a few months later. In the words of Boscagli, "stuff is protean, volatile, always on the verge of becoming valueless while never ceasing to be commodified, awash with meaning but always ready to become junk or to mutate into something else" (2-3).

Of course, new materialism perspectives on commodification like Boscagli's tend to focus more on the ontology of material objects such as plastic bags or smartphones. At the same time, however, this approach can help us also in discussing *Star Wars* from a Deleuzian point of view and, consequently, in understanding how does this text act politically. In fact, this film enables us to expand upon Boscagli's idea that the distinction between stuff and junk is quite unstable. In other words, *Star Wars* openly suggests that the lack of separation between useful items and used up ones does not only concern material commodities. By presenting itself as a patchwork of literally recycled filmic elements, Lucas' film also extends this logic to the more abstract realm of cinema storytelling. Hence, *Star Wars* points out that the worth and usefulness of narrative items such as fictional locations, characters and events are as ontologically volatile in today's capitalism as physical commodities are. The idea of *Star Wars* as a semiotic space in which items can become junk quite rapidly helps us framing the politics of Lucas' film in a more accurate way. However, as I argue in the following section, the most appropriate framework to understand how Lucas' film acts politically is the concept of Junkspace as formulated by architectural theorist

Rem Koolhaas.

3.3 *Star Wars* as a Semiotic Junkspace

In the 2002 article "Junkspace," Rem Koolhaas introduces the titular concept of his paper to describe the aggregation of the drab and aseptic places where modern capitalistic consumption takes place, such as the shopping mall, the airport or the chain restaurant. As such, the concept of Junkspace bears striking similarities with the more popular notion of non-place, which anthropologist Marc Augé formulated in the early 1990s. According to Augé, "non-places" are "in opposition to the sociological notion of place, associated ... with the idea of a culture localized in time and space" (34). In contrast with culturally determined places, non-places comprise the locations of modern capitalism which do not produce any sense of culture or, in other words, which "cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity" (78). In sum, the world of non-places is

> [a] world where people are born in the clinic and die in hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions (hotel chains and squats, holiday clubs and refugee camps, shantytowns threatened with demolition or doomed to festering longevity); where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing; where the habitue of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral (Augé 78).[12]

Arguably, the success of the notion of non-place derives from the fact that Augé framed for the first time the lack of identity in the social spaces of postmodern culture with a very compelling and captivating formula. The evident problem with Augé's definition, however, is that it discusses this issue only by focusing on what these locations are not, instead of proposing what they are instead. Not only does Koolhaas

[12]The concept of non-place has been used to discuss *Star Wars*. For example, David Rivera points out that the Death Star's interiors resemble from an aesthetic point of view the cold and aseptic surfaces of non-places such as the shopping mall or the airport (42).

propose to discuss these postmodern locations with a more proactive approach, but he also offers a radical way (one that is also quite akin to Deleuze and Guattari's pragmatic approach to reality) of interrogating the spaces of modern capitalism.

While Koolhaas initially used the concept of Junkspace to approach only physical locations, the same term has been applied quite effectively also to interrogate fictional spaces.[13] In my view, *Star Wars*' semiotic space also lends itself to be studied via Koolhaas' approach: indeed, this movie's exhilarating and chaotic space populated only by worn-out and second-hand items bears evident similarities with the idea of modern capitalism that Koolhaas conveys from the very title of his essay. In the following pages, I read the concept of Junkspace via the mixed semiotics theory of *A Thousand Plateaus* so as to apply this definition to the semiotic space of *Star Wars*. The twofold goal of this reading is to clarify Koolhaas' captivating yet obscure prose and to understand how the theory of Junkspace can help us in identifying the minoritarian capabilities of *Star Wars*.

Let us start this reading by acknowledging that Junkspace presents itself quite clearly as a Deleuzian smooth space: indeed, Junkspace is a space without any division or separation between different zones or territories. As Koolhaas explains, "[c]ontinuity is the essence of Junkspace; it exploits any invention that enables expansion, deploys the infrastructure of seamlessness" (175). And, again, "Junkspace is beyond measure, beyond code" (177). Also, similarly to a Deleuzian smooth space, there are more than one possibility of traversing a Junkspace: "although it is an architecture of the masses, each trajectory" that travels across this space "is strictly unique" (179). As a result, Junkspace is a "fuzzy empire of blur" which blends contrasting elements—such as "high and low" or "public and private"—in a rather seamless way

[13]For example, Xiaofam Amy Li employs Koolhaas's framework to discuss space representation in Italo Calvino's *Le città invisibili* (70-8).

(176).[14]

Junkspace's lack of barriers and divisions among different locations is, in fact, an apparent feature of the real spaces of modern capitalism. Indeed, most of the places we inhabit today end up being used for purposes other than the ones for which they were intended initially. For example, teleworking can turn a private house into a workplace, whereas compulsive working behaviours can result in using the workplace also as a place to rest. In Koolhaas' own words,

> Junkspace is space as vacation; there once was a relationship between leisure and work, a biblical dictate that divided our weeks, organized public life. Now we work harder, marooned in a never-ending casual Friday... The office is the next frontier of Junkspace. Since you can work at home, the office aspires to the domestic; because you still need a life, it simulates the city (185-86).

The semiotic space of *Star Wars* also follows the same logic I just summarized, as the audience's gaze continually switches between radically different places which, in other examples of narrative cinema, would not coexist side-by-side. In one sequence, we are seeing a committee of Imperial officers discussing how to defeat the rebels in a futuristic and austere meeting room on board of the Death Star, which seems to resemble the war room from Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*. Immediately after this sequence, the movie cuts to Luke and Obi-Wan Kenobi in the Tatooine desert which, as already pointed out, is a more appropriate setting for a Western movie.[15] The consequence of the lack of borders between different settings is, of course, a coalescing of incompatible elements together, even opposite ones. As these incompatible locations exist side-by-side, semiotic elements from each of these locations eventually mingle. For example, the Death Star ends up welcoming an Old West character like Han Solo, whereas the Western setting of Tatooine hosts a samurai-like figure such

[14]Even the aesthetic elements and the architectural structures of a Junkspace embody this fusion of opposites: "[a]ll surfaces are archaeological, superpositions of different 'periods'" (Koolhaas 179). At the same time, construction elements embody "opposite conditions simultaneously" such as "old and new, permanent and temporary, flourishing and at risk" (180).

[15]In fact, this very narrative section of *Star Wars* in which Luke finds out that the Empire's stormtroopers have murdered his aunt and uncle is a re-enactment of an iconic sequence from John Ford's *The Searchers*, and specifically the scene in which the John Wayne character discovers that the Indians have assaulted his brother's homestead.

as Obi-Wan.

In sum, both the physical Junkspace of modern capitalism and the fictional Junkspace of *Star Wars* are quite clearly Deleuzian smooth spaces. At the same time, however, these smooth spaces do not seem to exert control upon their own semiotic elements as, for example, a postsignifying regime of signs would do by having a subject naming and commanding each and every sign in this regime. In his essay, Koolhaas repetitively stresses that Junkspace lacks any subject: indeed, this space "is a web without a spider" (179). In other words,

> [i]n Junkspace . . . it is subsystem only, without superstructure, orphaned particles in search of a framework or pattern. . . . Where as [sic] detailing once suggested the coming together, possibly forever of disparate materials, it is now a transient coupling, waiting to be undone, unscrewed, a temporary embrace with a high probability of separation; no longer the orchestrated encounter of difference, but the abrupt end of a system, a stalemate (Koolhaas 178).

Similarly to *Star Wars*, Koolhaas' Junkspace accumulates elements from other regimes mainly to consign them within its own space and, in doing so, it deprives them of their original meaning or function. As such, Junkspace is "a space of collision, a container of atoms," as it "represents a reverse typology of cumulative, approximative identity, less about kind than about quantity" (Koolhaas 179). And, again, "Junkspace is a Bermuda Triangle of concepts" which "cancels distinctions, undermines resolve, confuses intention with realization. It replaces hierarchy with accumulation, composition with addition" (176). If Junkspace mingles different elements together, the result of this mingling is "a seamless patchwork of the permanently disjointed," not unlike *Star Wars*' characters such as 3PO and R2-D2 or locations such as Tatooine (176).

Most of the features of Junkspace I have mentioned so far (mainly, Junkspace's lack of identity) can also be found in Augé's theory of non-places: hence, how do Koolhaas and Augé's theories truly differ? Moreover, why should we define *Star Wars* as a semiotic Junkspace instead of a fictional non-place? One of two distinguishing feature of a Junkspace is the fact that Koolhaas chooses not to portray it merely as a

cold, aseptic place as Augé instead does. Indeed, while Augé describes the aggregate of locations in modern capitalism as vacuous and cold, Koolhaas stresses throughout his essay that, instead, we should perceive Junkspace as a hideous and repulsive aggregate of items that have no purpose or meaning. To borrow a key definition from Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*, Junkspace can be easily defined as a space of abjection.[16]

Indeed, Koolhaas pictures the space of today's society in very colorful and unappealing ways, for example by saying that in this space "[r]egurgitation is the new creativity," or that Junkspace is "quartered the way a carcass is torn apart - individual chunks severed from a universal condition" (176, 77). The more we dive into Junkspace, the more this space appears to be disgusting in a similar way organic waste is repulsive: "it always leaks somewhere in Junkspace," Koolhaas explains, and "in the worst case, monumental ashtrays catch intermittent drops in a gray broth" (178). Finally, "[e]ach Junkspace is connected, sooner or later, to bodily functions" (179). Once again, the similarities between Junkspace and the semiotic space of *Star Wars* are quite evident. Koolhaas' prose could be used easily to describe locations of Lucas' fictional setting, such as the pile of robotic and electronic junk within the Jawa cargo vehicle, the deplorable and criminal clientele at the cantina of the Mos Eisley spaceport, or the infested liquid waste of the Death Star trash compactor.

3.4 The Politics of Numbness and Exhilaration in Junkspace

In sum, Junkspace (and, more precisely, the specific Junkspace of *Star Wars*) is a semiotic space chaotically populated by heterogeneous semiotic materials emptied of

[16] "What is abject," Kristeva explains "is not my correlative, which, providing me with someone or something else as support, would allow me to be more or less detached and autonomous. The abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to I. If the object, however, through its opposition, settles me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning, which as a matter of fact, makes me ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it, what is abjecty, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses" (1-2). Although Koolhaas himself neither uses the term 'abject' nor references Kristeva in "Junkspace," Boscagli argues that the two concepts are quite germane (237).

their original significance and purpose. Hence, from a Deleuzian point of view, the Junkspace of *Star Wars* is quite clearly an example of the countersignifying regime of signs discussed in chapter 2. Moreover, in addition to the definition of countersignifying semiotics we already encountered, in Junkspace this proliferation of heterogeneous elements is portrayed as unruly, shoddy and degraded. In other words, Junkspace is an abject countersignifying space, a space in which semiotic elements are not only deprived of their original qualities but also look hideous and repulsive as a result of this process. Similarly, the most distinguishing feature of the countersignifying regime of *Star Wars* is that its objects, locations and people lose their own identity or purpose and, for this reason, they look filthy and aberrant.

However, what relation does the chaotic and abject semiotic environment of Junkspace entertain with today's capitalism? More precisely, how does a Junkspace such as *Star Wars* interact with capitalism? These questions are quite relevant especially if we consider that capitalism seems to oppose the countersignifying nature of Junkspace. As also pointed out in chapter 2, capitalism can be best described from a Deleuzian perspective as a postsignifying regime of signs: indeed, in this semiotic system the capital functions as a subject of enunciation which distributes, names and commands all the signs that he or she encounters across its path (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 457). Even though Deleuze and Guattari associate capitalism as a whole with a postsignifying logic, they also claim that different semiotic systems (even those that are antithetical to each other in the way the organize signs) can work in conjunction with each other to further a common goal.[17] In fact, even the countersignifying regime of signs can at times be tamed and used by other regimes to further different goals rather than enacting a process of becoming-minoritarian.[18]

[17]For instance, signifying and postsignifying regimes of signs often work in conjunction. Examples of this association are the modern nation-state, which follows a signifying semiotics but is also connected with "the global smooth space of capital" (Bonta and Protevi 129).

[18]Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari point out that the war machine (that is, any kind of assemblage that challenges majoritarian structures of power and thus follows a countersignifying semiotics) is always at risk of being tamed and co-opted by the very structures it opposes, such as the State (*Plateaus* 356).

From this point of view, Junkspace is quite clearly an example of a countersignifying semiotic space that capitalism has appropriated for its own purposes. Establishing a countersignifying system of signs may not be the intended goal of late capitalism; yet, as Boscagli points out, in Junkspace "we cannot simply oppose the viscosity of junk to the frozen stasis of the well-ordered capitalist system of consumption, since that system has already adopted a kind of viscosity as its own strength" (237).

Hence, how does Junkspace work in conjunction with modern capitalism? As discussed so far, Junkspace operates in a similar way to how a literal junkyard would because it accumulates diverse semiotic elements and, in doing so, does not merely deprive these elements of their original definition or purpose, but also transforms them into abject. However, Junkspace fundamentally differs from the ordinary notion of the junkyard. In Junkspace, the abject is not what results from the production of something better, mainly because in this space "[c]hange has been divorced from the idea of improvement" (Koolhaas 178). In contrast with junkyards, Junkspace is not a location confined in a remote place: in fact, Junkspace does not have an outside at all. As Boscagli explains in her own reading of Koolhaas' essay, the "key feature" of Junkspace is "our inability to position ourselves outside it" (240).

The idea that Junkspace does not have an outside is perhaps the most ingenious characteristic of Koolhaas' concept. Indeed, while Augé's non-places imply by definition that their opposite—that is, culturally determined places and locations—can still exist or can somehow be re-established, Junkspace presents itself as the only possible space for today's society. While the concept of non-place conveys the idea that contemporary locations are ephemeral and fleeting, Junkspace characterizes the aggregate of these locations as repulsive but also as very much durable and inescapable. In other words, Junkspace is quite literally the whole panorama of modern capitalist society, meaning that nobody can distance themselves from this aggregate. As Koolhaas himself explains in his typical aphoristic style, "Junkspace seems an aberration,

but it is the essence, the main thing. . . " (175).

Once again, this characteristic of Junkspace can be observed quite clearly in *Star Wars*. On the one hand, Lucas' film showcases the lack of purpose and meaning of its own semiotic elements by constantly consigning these very elements in peripheral locations where useless items or unaccepted individuals usually are relegated, such as sketchy bars, remote farms, storage compartments or junkyards. On the other hand, the fictional setting of *Star Wars* comprises for the most part locations that look or function like depots or slums. As a result, the whole semiotic space of Lucas' film serves the purpose of an immense junkyard from which no semiotic material can escape.

Similarly, the Junkspace that exists in the real space of today's society is first and foremost a product of contemporary capitalism. In fact, Koolhaas implies that Junkspace is one way in which modern capitalism accelerates commodification and consumption. In Koolhaas' own words, "[J]unkspace's modules are dimensioned to carry brands . . . Brands in Junkspace perform the same role as black holes: they are essences through which meaning disappears" (177). As Boscagli clarifies in her own reading of the concept,

> Junkspace is . . . a space of consumption modeled on the mall—a space designed for the maximal consumption of commodities. . . . If the mall is the model of Junkspace, its many locales include the airport, the duty-free shop, the hotel, the nightclub, the freeway, the bachelor pad, the hospital, the golf course, the office (240).

How exactly does Junkspace (that is, a semiotic space that comprises exclusively material and conceptual scrap) end up favouring commodification and consumption? As already pointed out, Junkspace treats its semiotic materials as empty shells that possess neither meaning nor any intrinsic quality. Ultimately, the aggregation of all this emptied semiotic material produces an exhilarating and intoxicating experience, which numbs a person's critical abilities by continually overloading our sensory per-

ceptions with captivating images and sounds. "Because it cannot be grasped," Koolhaas explains, "Junkspace cannot be remembered. It is flamboyant yet unmemorable, like a screen saver; its refusal to freeze ensures instant amnesia" (177).

In *Stuff Theory*, Boscagli clarifies Koolhaas' argument by explaining that "in Junkspace perception is the experience, an end in itself, producing only self-reflexive isolation" (240). Indeed, the result of this multitude of stimuli that we find in Junkspace is an information overload that restrains our critical thinking. As Boscagli continues, "Junkspace's most important affect is sedation: in this sense Junkspace is the culmination of the narcosis of modernity, a post-Wagnerian total work of art which has managed to fully aestheticize reality" (240-41). Arguably, this sense of numbness is also the very effect that Koolhaas wants to convey with his disturbing and impressionistic writing style, which ends up being more evocative than argumentative.[19] As we read "Junkspace," any initial attempt at engaging this essay on a critical or intellectual level is frustrated by the fact that Koolhass repetitively deviates from his own line of thought so as to convey shocking visions of life in Junkspace. By discussing Junkspace only through small vignettes, flashy images and outrageous prose, Koolhaas produces in written form the same sense of existing in this abject semiotic space.

Similarly to the Junkspace that permeates every aspect of today's society, the Junkspace of *Star Wars* also hinders its audience's critical thinking through sensory overload for the purpose of facilitating consumption: indeed, in his writing on the postmodernism, Jameson stresses this aspect of Lucas' film, and connects it to the postmodern condition as a whole. As explained in the introduction to *Postmodernism*, Jameson's main preoccupation with the age of late capitalism is that this age "has forgotten to think historically" (*Postmodernism* ix). As a postmodern product, *Star Wars* is also a film that does not feature any example of historical thinking. In

[19] Boscagli herself defines Koolhaas' style as "delirious" (241).

the essay "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," Jameson explains that *Star Wars* clutters our sense of history as it proposes an acritical nostalgic pastiche of twentieth-century pop and pulp narratives (*Turn* 8). In doing so, the movie gratifies a desire "to return to [an] older period and to live its strange old aesthetic artefacts through once again" (8). Jameson further argues that narratives like Lucas' "do not represent our historical past so much as they represent our ideas or cultural stereotypes about that past" and as such they illustrate how "we seem condemned to seek the historical past through our own pop images and stereotypes about the past, which itself remains out of reach" (10).

While *Star Wars*' flamboyant yet insubstantial aggregate of nostalgic semiotic elements does not produce any sense of historical meaning, this same aggregate is used quite effectively for the purpose of commodifying the nostalgic elements Lucas' film parades. Indeed, the portrayal of nostalgic artifacts in media and the extensive commodification so ingrained in late capitalism are not separate phenomena. Rather, these phenomena are deeply intertwined since, for example, the nostalgic representation of the past is openly used for advertisement purposes.[20] However, in the case of *Star Wars*, nostalgia and commodification work together to more extreme stretches. Indeed, Lucas' film does not reproduce past narratives in an acritical, nostalgic and idealized way as a means of selling a separate product, but instead it relies on the strategy of nostalgia so as to commodify the very same nostalgic artifacts it produces. In 1977, *Star Wars* sold to its adult audience the possibility of re-experiencing popular narratives from the past and offered more ways of doing so through its tie-in narratives. To younger audiences who do not appreciate the nostalgic quality of *Star Wars*, these nostalgic artifacts are proposed nonetheless as commodified items in the

[20]As Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering point out, today's cultural context is characterized by "a lack of sufficient time or purpose for engaging with and drawing on the past, caused by the hectic pace of contemporary social and cultural change, leaving us prey to reiterative cycles of consumption which mimic the incessant patterns of wider social change and further dislocate us from the past, our only compensation for this being the aesthetic idealisation of highly selective aspects or features of the past that are exploited in the advertising and promotion of commodity goods and services" (88).

form of as toys and merchandising products which lose any link with their original semiotic environment and are reduced only to their broadest signifiers. In sum, *Star Wars* uses its own countersignifying regime (or, in other words, its Junkspace) to promote further consumption, to market nostalgic artifacts in the form of spin-off products.

3.5 Minoritarian Uses of Junkspace

The analysis I offered in the previous section belongs to the sideline goal this thesis wishes to achieve, as it contributes to mapping the composite politics of romance. Indeed, by reading *Star Wars* via Koolhaas' concept of Junkspace we discovered a political use of romance. In light of this reading, *Star Wars* can be best described as an example of a tamed countersignifying regime, or in other words a countersignifying environment that serves the purposes and the agenda of today's capitalism. Indeed, the accomplishments of Lucas' film are, for the most part, rather majoritarian. First and foremost, *Star Wars* reinvigorated the commodification practices of modern capitalism by inventing new ways of selling merchandise and tie-in products. Secondly, as already pointed out in section 2.2.1, this movie contributed to establishing Lucas himself as an *auteur* on the same level as, for example, John Ford or Akira Kurosawa. In other words, *Star Wars* proves that the political uses of romance go beyond the scope of identity politics, and can also be appropriated by modern capitalism in very effective ways.

While studying the role of romance in today's capitalism is critical to achieving a better understanding of romance as a literary form, I also wish to discuss *Star Wars* in order to further the primary goal of this work. In other words, what can Lucas' film teach us about minoritarian uses of romance? The main reason why I am posing this question concerns the semiotic regime *Star Wars* employs. Indeed, although in Deleuzian terms Junkspace can be described as a tamed countersignifying regime of

signs, Junkspace is still first and foremost a countersignifying regime, or in other words the best semiotic system for enacting a process of becoming-minoritarian. Indeed, as explained in section 2.2.5, the existence of a countersignifying regime in a text means that such a text features a high degree of deterritorialization of a semiotic system or, in other words, that this text uses a language in a creative but also unsettling way. In turn, this unsettling use of a language or semiotic system is the first necessary condition for such text to be qualified as minor art.

Arguably, *Star Wars* was initially conceived to offer a somewhat unsettling experience to its audiences. Indeed, let us try to consider for a moment *Star Wars* from the perspective of the 1977 public. This audience, in the previous decades, became very familiar with space opera film serials, with the conventions of classical Hollywood and with the cinema of *auteurs* such as Ford or Kurosawa. To the eyes of this audience, *Star Wars* does indeed present itself as a very unsettling cinematic experience. As Jonathan W. Rinzler points out in his retrospective on the making of *Star Wars*, one of Lucas' goals as he was writing and directing the film was

> to re-create the feeling of disorientation he'd felt as a student watching films from different cultures. Lucas imagined what it would be like to watch a foreign film as if it had just washed up on the shore—all of its customs, history, language, and mannerisms strangely exotic, somewhat familiar, but not explained (Rinzler Ch. 4).[21]

Of course, this sense of disorientation *Star Wars* once conveyed is wholly lost today: after more than three decades of exposure to Lucas' saga, audiences are now extremely familiar with the setting and the characters of *Star Wars*. "Thirty years of speculation and spin-offs," Will Brooker explains, "have filled in the gaps and 'fixed' the rickety text, reducing all its pleasurable mysteries to a dense but somehow uninspiring background" (32). In Deleuzian terms, our current familiarity with *Star Wars*

[21] Brooker argues that Lucas conveys the same feeling of disorientation in his two earlier feature films, that is *THX 1138* and *American Graffiti*. While the former movie portrays a "rigid future world ... governed by enigmatic classifications and castes," the latter "drops the viewer into a distinct culture with its own rules, cliques and quick-fire slang" (31).

is proof that, at some point, the profound deterritorialization this film enacted has been reterritorialized into order and meaning. In other words, the deterritorialization of cinematic language we witness in the original *Star Wars* did not encourage the audience to question the idea of auteurism in cinema and, as a result, it did not lead them to reject the commodification practices of modern capitalism. Hence, why did the Junkspace of *Star Wars* fail to enact a process of becoming-minoritarian? What are the reasons behind this failure despite its use of a countersignifying semiotic system? Once again, Koolhaas' theoretical framework (as well as Boscagli's reading of it) can help us to answer these very questions.

At first, it would seem that there is no possibility of performing political activities in Junkspace other than the majoritarian politics of modern capitalism. Indeed, within Junkspace all political practices (even majoritarian ones that do not conform to the logic of capitalism) are actively dissuaded in the name of accelerated commodification and consumption. As Koolhaas explains, Junkspace can be understood politically as "Fascism minus dictator," or as "authorless, yet surprisingly authoritarian..." (Koolhaas 181, 185). In other words, "Junkspace is political: it depends on the central removal of the critical faculty in the name of comfort and pleasure" (183).[22] However, the possibility that a Junkspace could be used in alternative ways other than those promoted by capitalism is contemplated (and, in fact, even encouraged) by Koolhaas himself throughout his writing.

Indeed, as Koolhaas implies at the beginning of his essay, Junkspace can be subtracted from the control that modern capitalism exerts over it. In other words, Junkspace is not merely a countersignifying semiotic space that capitalism creates and controls for the goal of accelerating consumption and hindering any attempt at formulating alternative critical frameworks. On the contrary, Junkspace is first and foremost an unintended byproduct of capitalism. To quote Koolhaas directly,

[22]Boscagli summarizes the politics of Junkspace as follows: while Junkspace "makes politics impossible," at the same time "this impossibility is nonetheless itself political" (241).

> [t]he built . . . product of modernization is not modern architecture but Junkspace. Junkspace is what remains after modernization has run its course, or, more precisely, what coagulates while modernization is in progress, its fallout. Modernization had a rational program .... Junkspace is its apotheosis or meltdown. . . Although its individual parts are outcome of brilliant inventions . . . their sum spells the end of Enlightenment, its resurrection as farce (175).

As Boscagli further explains, "Junkspace is space that doesn't function the way it is supposed to, and that should be discarded. Given the reversibility and transvaluation of categories that contemporary culture allows, the valuable and the valueless exchange places and collapse into each other" (239).

Indeed, capitalism's primary goal is the never-ending pursuit of profit: as such, this economic and cultural framework in and by itself is not interested in blurring the line between commodities and junk. Junkspace is only the fallout of the accelerated consumption of commodities which, in turn, is an unavoidable consequence of capitalism's logic of profit. Arguably, the core argument of "Junkspace" is that capitalism is simply astute enough to take advantage of the semiotic wasteland it accidentally created so as to reinforce compliance and resignation its own economic and cultural logic. However, while capitalism most certainly causes Junkspace, capitalism is not the only authority that can control Junkspace. Indeed, even if Junkspace may seem static and stagnant, the fact that elements in this space have lost their identity and purpose does not limit interactions with this space but instead favours more creative ones. In Koolhaas' own words, Junkspace's "geometries are unimaginable, only makable" (177). As a result, Junkspace does not only have to be an exhilarating experience, but also a somewhat liberating one. Koolhaas himself claims that Junkspace's anarchy "is one of the last tangible ways in which we experience freedom" (179).[23]

Koolhaas' interest in how we can experiment with Junkspace puts into view the fundamental divide between his approach to culture in modern capitalism and Jame-

[23]Koolhaas expresses a similar idea also in his essay "The Generic City." Here, Koolhaas asks himself "[w]hat are the disadvantages of identity, and conversely, what are the advantages of blankness? What if this seemingly accidental—and usually regretted—homogeneization were an intentional process, a conscious movement away from difference toward similarity?" (Koolhaas and Mau 1248).

son's critique of postmodernism, which extends to the latter critic's analysis of postmodern products such as *Star Wars*. On the one hand, Jameson claims that political power derives only from the possibility of thinking historically; as such, political action is simply impossible within the cultural framework of modern capitalism. "Consumerism itself," Jameson explains, "is ... an utter lack of any political power" since "reified products ... occupy our minds and float above that deeper nihilistic void left in our being by the inability to control our own destiny" (*Postmodernism* 316-17). On the other hand, by suggesting that political action can rise somehow in an uncompromising product of modern capitalism such as Junkspace, Koolhaas shares a complementary worldview to the one Deleuze and Guattari propose in their writings. Indeed, similarly to the latter two theorists, the former as well is interested in how a countersignifying semiotic space such as Junkspace can serve the purpose of undermining repressive structures of thought.

The fact that Junkspace eradicates most of its population's intellectual abilities is not problematic at all from the perspective of minoritarian reasoning. In fact, minoritarian art should challenge all of the intellectual frameworks that tend to construct majoritarian worldviews, including for example the historicist perspective that, as Jameson points out, is lacking both in the postmodern condition as a whole and, more precisely, in a postmodern product such as *Star Wars*. Indeed, as already pointed out in section 1.5, if a lack of history is problematic for the historicist perspective that Jameson adopts, for Deleuze and Guattari this lack is the first necessary condition for undoing the categories of majority and minority. From this point of view, a genuinely revolutionary political action is one that also goes against historical thinking. Instead, if we choose to approach Junkspace from the point of view of Deleuze and Guattari's minoritarian philosophy, what may be truly problematic about Junkspace would be the impossibility of minoritarian political thinking and action. However, as Koolhaas implies, minortiarian action is perhaps the only possible alternative political pursuit

left in Junkspace.

Although Junkspace clutters any attempt at critical thinking, the implication that Junkspace may lend itself also to alternative and creative use opens up the possibility of political action within Junkspace. As such, while Koolhaas posits that Junkspace is the only semiotic space we can imagine today for our reality, he also encourages us to hijack it from capitalistic control and to experiment with it, so as to understand how it can serve other purposes than sedation and accelerated consumption. In other words, if capitalism as a whole uses Junkspace for its own ends, arguably other entities that reside within Junkspace can interact with this semiotic space for achieving different goals than commodification and consumption. However, since Junkspace is a space that effectively paralyzes all critical thought or action, who or what can use a Junkspace in an authentically revolutionary way? Which entities that exist inside Junkspace can hijack this semiotic space so as to use it in alternative, creative and potentially subversive ways?

As Koolhaas suggests in his essay, Junkspace already contains forces who can perform alternative actions (perhaps even revolutionary ones) within Junkspace. Not only do these agents regularly interact with Junkspace in a different way compared to the rest of this space's inhabitants, but these agents are also very much estranged from the logic of modern capitalism. In other words, these agents are the people that modern capitalism is not interested in gratifying but that, at the same time, are truly necessary for a Junkspace to perform its sedation through over-stimulation. To quote an apparently marginal and yet fundamental sentence of Koolhaas' essay, "[a]s you recover from Junkspace, Junkspace recovers from you: between 2 and 5 A.M., yet another population, this one heartlessly casual and considerably darker, is sweeping... Junkspace does not inspire loyalty in its cleaners..." (Koolhaas 179).

Of course, in this passage, Koolhaas is referring to the menial workers that keep Junkspace in function by cleaning and maintaining it. Paradoxically, these people

are indeed in a privileged position, as they interface with the mechanics of Junkspace while also being somehow external to it. This subversive category does not only include low-status workers, but also the refugees, the impoverished, the disabled, and generally all the people that capitalism alienates but who also inevitably exist in Junkspace. As Koolhaas elucidates a few sentences later in his essay,

> Junkspace features the tyranny of the oblivious: sometimes an entire Junkspace comes unstuck through the nonconformity of one of its members; a single citizen of an another culture—a refugee, a mother—can destabilize an entire Junkspace, hold it to a rustic's ransom, leaving an invisible swath of obstruction in his/her wake, a deregulation eventually communicated to its furthest extremities. (180).

In sum, those who indeed hold power in Junkspace are neither the wealthy nor the privileged, but rather the underprivileged and the marginalized. In fact, when given the possibility of interacting with Junkspace, these individuals can exert a surprisingly considerable influence. Under the right circumstances, perhaps this influence could be used even for antagonizing capitalism itself, or in other words the very power structure that produced Junkspace. Indeed, it is impossible to read Koolhaas' assertions on the role of the unprivileged in Junkspace without being reminded of the minoritarian politics Deleuze and Guattari propose in their writings. As pointed out in section 2.1.2, every becoming-minoritarian as theorized by Deleuze and Guattari should first and foremost pass through a minor body, since every minority is in a privileged position for starting a process of undoing majoritarian constructs. In proposing his theory of the Junkspace, Koolhaas concurs with Deleuze and Guattari that repressive structures of power can be genuinely undermined only via the minor entities discussed in "Junkspace." Hence, we are finally able to address why *Star Wars* does not qualify as an example of minor art despite its reliance on a counter-signifying semiotics in the form of a Junkspace. Indeed, *Star Wars* fails to encourage social upheaval not because, as Jameson argues, it lacks any sense of history: once again, history is also a construct that minoritarian politics wants to challenge. On

the contrary, *Star Wars* does not enact a process of becoming-minoritarian because its countersignifying semiotic space does not give its own minoritarian entities the possibility of enacting this very process.

The lack of an effective minoritarian action in *Star Wars* becomes manifest once we put into closer scrutiny the back-story of Lucas' fictional world. Once again, the narrative of *Star Wars* takes place in the background of a galactic civil war between a small guerrilla group known as the Rebel Alliance (with whom the audience is supposed to sympathize) and a domineering Empire, which sports a militaristic look akin to mid-twentieth-century totalitarian regimes. At first, the rebels of *Star Wars* are depicted as a subversive political organization, or in other words as an armed force that aims at sabotaging and overthrowing the Empire's dictatorial state from within. As Brooker points out,

> [t]he Rebels are freedom fighters, or terrorists, depending on your point of view: they are potentially everywhere, and hard to pin down. ... The Rebels not only discover the rubbish that the Imperials' sleek white surfaces usually keep hidden; they immerse themselves in it and escape by hiding in their enemies' waste, knowing the Empire will, primly, never look at its own dirt (23).

At a superficial view, this narrative backdrop would seem to prove that *Star Wars* is willing to enact a minoritarian politics. Indeed, the clandestine actions that Rebel characters perform in Lucas' film could be read as minor in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the term, in that they are attempts at subverting majoritarian bodies from within. For example, both Obi-Wan's furtive mission to disable the Death Star's tractor beam or Luke, Han, Leia and Chewie's chaotic escape via the space station's trash compactor could be read as innovative and subversive interaction with a majoritarian body such as the Death Star. In this case, the presence of a battling minor entity within a highly deterritorialized semiotic system (represented respectively by the Rebels the Junkspace of *Star Wars* itself) would fulfill two essential conditions of minor art. In other words, their presence would mean that *Star Wars*

constitutes a deterritorialized semiotic space employed in a minoritarian way, that is so as to push this deterritorialization even further and create a liberating aesthetic experience.

However, on a closer look, the fictional political struggle depicted in Lucas' film is more opaque and disconcerting than it would initially seem. The rebels, who are trying to overthrow the Empire's dictatorial regime, do not seem to promote anti-authoritarian ideas, as instead they adhere to the values of a hierarchical and aristocratic society based on collectivism and blood ties (Brooker 79-80). In fact, most of the characters who take part in the Rebel Alliance seem to be more at home in stratified societies such as the European Middle Ages or feudal Japan. For example, Leia is an aristocrat and, as a princess, also potentially the heir to her kingdom; Obi-Wan Kenobi is a samurai-like figure, and Luke seems to be destined to become a hero only because (as Obi-Wan reveals to him) his father was a Jedi knight and a formidable star pilot.[24] In sum, from a Deleuzian point of view, the values promoted by the Rebel Alliance are quite majoritarian.

In fact, the majoritarian politics of the Rebels is pushed even further since at the end of the movie also the Rebels (who should oppose the Empire's tyranny) are depicted through the same fascist aesthetic used for the Empire. Indeed, the establishing shot in the ceremony at the end of the film, in which the Rebel Alliance celebrates Luke, Han and Chewbacca's decisive efforts in the Death Star Battle, is framed in the same way Leni Riefenstahl depicted the 1934 Nazi congress in Nuremberg in the propaganda documentary *Triumph des Willens* (Brooker 78). Through this climactic sequence at the end of the movie, we are made aware that, even though *Star Wars* portrays its protagonists as freedom fighters, the film is not interested in enacting

[24]Brooker points out that Leia and 3PO, "are not from the same sphere as Han and Luke . . . Both characters . . . belong to the culture of the old Republic—a world of moneyed elegance, poise and etiquette" (24). Indeed, the only character in both the original and the prequel trilogies of *Star Wars* who follows a more modern and individualistic ethos is arguably Han Solo, a mercenary and gunslinger clearly inspired by the imaginary of the old American West and who, for most of the 1977 movie, is an outsider in the broader fight between Empire and Rebels. As Brooker further points out, the idea that the Rebel Alliance strives for aristocratic order is confirmed in the prequel trilogy of the *Star Wars* saga, in which the old Republic is depicted as hierarchical and stagnant as the Empire (80).

any kind of minoritarian politics. In fact, *Star Wars* does not seem to be interested in espousing or supporting at all any of the ideologies depicted in the movie. On the contrary, the film treats these ideologies as yet another example of semiotic junk: indeed, elements from real-life political systems such as aristocratic titles or fascistic uniforms exist in the Junkspace of *Star Wars* only so they can be deprived of their original purpose or meaning and, later on, commodified in the form of merchandise or tie-in narratives.

The fact that *Star Wars* chooses to represent both Empire and Rebels through the same aesthetic is a clue of the lack of political thinking within this movie. In truth, perhaps *Star Wars* could have not been defined as a minor example of romance even if the rebels would have been portrayed as a guerrilla group fighting for a democratic or socialist state instead of members of an aristocratic elite trying to reestablish a what appears to be a feudal society. Indeed, this kind of politics would have been still an example of majoritarian action which, even if it would have appeared more appealing than oligarchic or totalitarian ideologies, would have been in contrast with Deleuze and Guattari's minoritarian philosophy.

Hence, while on the one hand *Star Wars* features a high deterritorialization of semiotic elements in the form of a Junkspace, on the other hand this movie lacks a strong minoritarian political intent. Indeed, the political elements that exist in the semiotic space of *Star Wars* are just as emptied of their original function and amalgamated with other signs that are deterritorialized into Lucas' film. Without the presence of a truly minoritarian political activity, the deterritorialization of signs we observe by watching the Junkspace of *Star Wars* is never pushed into an absolute deterritorialization that can enable audiences to envision a new world and a new people. Without a minoritarian action *Star Wars*' deterritorialization of signs remains only relative, and as such it is exposed to a process of reterritorialization. In fact, this reterritorialization is at play even in *Star Wars* itself. As I explain in the following

section, the only political action that takes place in *Star Wars* other than the politics of Junkspace is a politics of the *auteur* or, in other words, George Lucas' attempt at imposing his own order upon the semiotic space of this film.

3.6 *Auteur* Politics in *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*

Even though *Star Wars* lacks a minoritarian political intent, the sensory exhilaration and intellectual numbness produced by this movie's Junkspace for the purpose of accelerated commodification is not the only political activity taking place in this text. Indeed, there is another profoundly influential political action developing in this semiotic space: I am referring to the *auteur* politics which George Lucas enacts by trying to exert total control over his own creation. As Brooker points out, Lucas has been developing his own style of film auteurism since his years as an experimental student filmmaker at the University of Southern California (47-51). This peculiar brand of authoriality of course pertains to directing, but it is arguably made more autocratic by Lucas' specific interest in other aspects of film post-production, including editing. As Brooker further explains,

> [t]his approach to cinema, with the editor as creator holding total control over the final result, in a direct and intense relationship with both picture and soundtrack, remained Lucas's ideal; the actual process of feature-film production was a painful compromise. What he really wanted was to transfer his ideas directly onto the film stock; and he wanted it enough to struggle through what, to him, was the horrific trial of working with actors, crew, effects teams and budgets (61).[25]

Indeed, Lucas' "approach to editing" in the post-production of *Star Wars* "was tight, controlled and disciplined" so as to make up for the troubles the project encountered during the production stage (Brooker 64).[26]

[25]Brooker also points out that Lucas' desire for total control over his movies reached its climax in the 1990s and 2000s, when the advancement in computer-generated imagery allowed Lucas even "to govern the construction of whole cities and crowds through computer simulation" (Brooker 61).

[26]See Pollock 163-89 on the troubled development of *Star Wars*.

Other than in the post-production stage, Lucas' desire for total authorial control is, in my opinion, very much evident from a visual point of view even in how the director chooses to frame *Star Wars*' narrative space. Indeed, the visual style of this film obsessively makes use of the one-point linear perspective technique that originated in Renaissance painting. In the visual arts, the one-point perspective serves the purpose of representing a three-dimensional space realistically on a flat surface by depicting the objects at different sizes according to their position from a single vanishing point in the distance.[27] While cinema is capable of using alternative visual techniques so as to give a sense of depth to the film image, Lucas conveys this effect mainly by employing the one-point perspective throughout his movie.[28] As Ira Konigsberg illustrates, the one-point perspective in *Star Wars*

> is especially prominent in the shot of Luke's X-Wing and Darth Vader's T.I.E. Fighters hurling through the trench in the Death Star, each fighter shot separately against a blue-screen backing with motion control. This perspective dominates the last part of the film, but throughout the film a similar perceptional depth is created, for example, in a series of shots through the cockpit of Han Solo's ship, depicting the Millennium Falcon [sic] rushing through space with light rays receding toward the viewer, moving to light speed, or moving toward fighters streaking in its direction from a single point in the distance and the rapidly passing the ship (73).

Lucas' interest in the one-point perspective does not only concern sequences set in outer space. For example, the scene in which Leia gives the Death Star plans to R2D2 is framed by using the same perspective technique, in this case by depicting the two characters at the end of a long corridor inside the Rebels' spaceship. In fact, this technique is even adapted and employed in shots that do not require it to communicate a sense of visual depth at all, such as in the reveal of the film's title and the introductory crawl text, both of which are pulled away towards a distant point in outer space.

Lucas' desire for geometrical order over the semiotic space of *Star Wars* is in

[27] See Hauser 8-10 on the origin of one-point perspective in Renaissance art.
[28] See Bowell and Thompson 146-47 for a summary of depth techniques commonly used in cinema.

contradiction with the rest of the information the film image wants to communicate. In particular, the one-point perspective diverges from the mise-en-scène of the movie which characterizes the *Star Wars* narrative world as shoddy and used-up. Above all, this precise geometrical representation of space is in stark contrast with *Star Wars*' adherence to the Bakhtinian chronotope of adventure-time which, as pointed out in the previous chapter, makes any spatial or temporal measurement of the narrative space within *Star Wars* simply impossible. Lucas' obsessive attention to how the narrative universe of *Star Wars* should be framed arguably mirrors his desire for total authorial control over his own creation. In other words, Lucas' main purpose is to provide a constrained visual experience to the public, one that constantly informs the audience how the author perceives this fictional space. Indeed, this visual choice seems to imply that any other attempt at reading this fictional universe is automatically inferior or incorrect compared to Lucas' own vision, and thus should be disqualified. Hence, the only truly effective political activity that takes place within *Star Wars* other than the politics of accelerated commodification implemented by this movie's semiotic Junkspace is Lucas' own variety of *auteur* politics, which the director carries out via framing choices and unquestionable supervision in the editing room.

Deleuze and Guattari teach us that every body or assemblage is always a monadic structure, and as such it always comprises together constructs that are apparently incompatible with each other. Junkspace's politics of sedation and Lucas' *auteur* politics are two opposing actions which usually do not coexist within the same semiotic space. Indeed, on the one hand Junkspace does not provide its own signs with any meaning or command but mingles them to discourage any kind of activity other than the consumption of commodities. On the other hand, Lucas' *auteur* politics is an attempt at giving meaning (or, at the very least, a sense of visual order) to the *Star Wars* narrative world by constraining the information that appears on screen in a perspective grid.

Lucas' attempt at imposing his own authorial will is not completely successful as far as *Star Wars* alone is concerned. Indeed, in the decades after the release of this movie, Lucas has claimed that the 1977 theatrical version of his movie did not correspond to the original vision he had about this story and this fictional setting (Magid, "Universe" 60). In other words, the original theatrical version of *Star Wars* is a text that its own author openly disowned.[29] Although Lucas failed to assert his own artistic vision in the first version of his space opera movie, the enormous success of *Star Wars* granted him a second chance of doing so in the sequels and spin-off narratives to the original movie. In later movies of the *Star Wars* saga directed or produced by George Lucas (that is, all the *Star Wars* films released before Disney's 2012 acquisition of Lucasfilm) the opposition between Junkspace and authorial intent that characterized *Star Wars* disappears as the second element prevailed. As a result, starting from *The Empire Strikes Back*, the whole *Star Wars* saga has been reshaped into what we can best describe in Deleuzian terms as a postsignifying regime of signs.

In *The Empire Strikes Back*, several of the plot points left open by *Star Wars* are continued and brought to a climax. The movie begins with all the main protagonists gathered on the same rebel base on the ice planet of Hoth, but soon the Empire besieges and conquers this base. As the main characters escape from the siege, they end up taking different paths. Luke joins Yoda (a short, pixie-like Jedi master played by puppeteer Frank Oz) on the swampy planet of Dagobah so as to conclude his training as a Jedi knight. In the meantime, Han and Leia are chased by the Imperial fleet commanded by Darth Vader: after breaking away from the chase, the two seek refuge on a floating colony over the gas planet of Bespin, where Han's friend Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams) hosts them. However, as Vader reached Bespin before Han and Leia, the Sith Lord blackmails Lando and is able to capture Han. As Luke senses through his powers that his friends are in danger, he interrupts his training to

[29]Since 1978, Lucas' production company re-released at least seven different versions of *Star Wars* which included rather profound changes, including the addition of new scenes created through computer graphics. See Magid, "Saga" 52-55 for a summary of the alterations to *Star Wars* over the years.

rescue them: once he faces Vader on a lightsaber duel, he discovers that his adversary is, in fact, his father.

Similar to *Star Wars*, *Empire* makes use of the tropes and conventions of romance which allow us to classify this movie from a Deleuzian point of view also as a smooth semiotic space. First and foremost, *Empire*'s storytelling technique is based on constant narrative delay, as the film concludes with numerous cliffhangers that are supposed to be resolved in the following chapter of this film saga. Moreover, the entire movie plot is structured through the narrative technique of *entrelacement*, or in other words through the intertwining of two concurring plots—namely, Luke's training and Han and Leia's escape—that are postponed continuously until the final act of the film. *Empire* also employs the chronotope of adventure time: not only does the film maintain the same fictitious setting of the first movie, but it also keeps portraying spatial and temporal coordinates as flimsy and inconsistent. Indeed, Luke's training seemingly lasts for weeks or months but, at the same time, the events on Dagobah happen in the same time-frame of Han and Leia's escape from Hoth, which instead seems to take place only in the space of a few days.

Even though both *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back* rely upon the same romance tropes and conventions—that is, the technique narrative postponement and the chronotope of adventure time—the latter movie employs these conventions in an intransigently majoritarian way. Proof of this majoritarian intent is the fact that, unlike *Star Wars*, *Empire* lacks a semiotic Junkspace. First and foremost, this movie does not incorporate any new elements from other twentieth-century pop and pulp narratives: with only a few exceptions, *Empire* relies upon the same characters, items and story-lines from the 1977 film.[30] Moreover, this movie does not seek to portray these semiotic elements as used up or abject so as to underline their derivative nature.

On the one hand, the characters of *Empire* do still encounter aberrant creatures

[30]New significant characters, such as Lando and Yoda, do not seem to be references to any other narrative. Similarly, the new locations introduced in this movie (Bespin, Hoth, Dagobah) are not clearly borrowed from other examples of literature or cinema.

in squalid places: Luke and R2 face a monstrous fish after they land on the swamps of Dagobah, whereas Han, Leia and Chewie seek refuge by mistake in the stomach of a giant space worm who lives in the caves of an asteroid. On the other hand, however, these encounters with monstrous creatures do not seem to serve the purpose of characterizing the locations visited by the characters as based upon existing narratives. Even the fact that the *Millenium Falcon* is malfunctioning throughout the entire movie is not linked to the fact this spaceship is a derivative and used-up semiotic material as it was the case in *Star Wars*. Instead, the ship's breakdown is merely a plot device, which explains why Han, Leia and Chewie cannot escape the Imperial fleet via hyperspace.

Indeed, *The Empire Strikes Back* does not use its smooth semiotics so as to deprive semiotic elements of any significance they held in their text of origin. On the contrary, the primary goal of this movie is to provide new meanings and purposes for the semiotic material that *Star Wars* initially appropriated. Indeed, every narrative detail introduced in the 1977 film gets developed in a nuanced way in *Empire*. Darth Vader, who first appeared as a rowdy thug of Governor Tarkin rather than someone in an actual position of power, is characterized here as a quiet but ruthless fleet commander who answers directly to the Emperor. The love triangle among Luke, Han and Leia is finally resolved as the latter two characters fall in love with each other while the Imperial fleet chases them. The Force is not merely discussed as a forgotten religion from the past that adheres to a somewhat mystical and New Age spirituality. On the contrary, once Luke encounters Yoda, we discover that the fallen Jedi order was a structured monastic religion with precise principles and rules.

All these details and characterizations indeed provide more nuance to the story world of the *Star Wars* saga, thus making this narrative feel both more entertaining

and more sophisticated to its audience.[31] At the same time, however, all these new characterizations push Lucas' space opera away from the condition of minor art. Indeed, while *Star Wars* presented itself as a clear deterritorialization of other texts' semiotic elements, *The Empire Strikes Back* does not expand upon this deterritorialization in a political way: on the contrary, this movie chooses to reterritorialize this semiotic space by giving them new information, new details and, ultimately, new meanings to the signs *Star Wars* itself deterritorialized.

Of course, the most notable change both in tone and in narrative between *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back* is the plot twist occurring during the lightsaber duel between Luke and Darth Vader. At the end of this dramatic sequence (which sees Darth Vader maiming and defeating Luke) the Sith lord reveals that he is not the killer of Luke's father, as Obi-Wan previously told Luke; on the contrary, Vader confesses that he is indeed Luke's father. Not only is this reveal a momentous plot twist in the whole *Star Wars* saga, but is also a narrative detail that enabled Lucas to re-frame his whole saga as a space opera version of his own autobiography. On the one hand, Luke's quest to seek revenge for his father's death was undoubtedly a significant aspect of the 1977 film and, as Dane Pollock argues, even at that stage this plot willingly resembled Lucas' own ambitions and struggles:

> *Star Wars* was effective because, for all its fantastic elements, it had the ring of truth. George Lucas was the farm kid from Tatooine, hungering to escape a safe existence. He was the young initiate confronted with a difficult calling and finding the strength within himself to meet it. He was the brave warrior fighting an Empire (Hollywood) that threatened to stifle his vision and his soul (189).

Despite these autobiographical traits, this quest was, arguably, of secondary importance in the narrative structure of *Star Wars*, mainly because it was somehow sec-

[31] *The Empire Strikes Back* is often described as the best movie in Lucas' saga. For example, popular film critic Roger Ebert stated in his 1997 review for *Empire* re-release in theatres that "*The Empire Strikes Back* is the best of three *Star Wars* films, and the most thought-provoking. After the space opera cheerfulness of the original film, this one plunges into darkness and even despair . . . It is because of the emotions stirred in *Empire* that the entire series takes on a mythic quality that resonates back to the first and ahead to the third."

ondary to the more urgent plot point of returning of the Death Star Plans to the Rebel Alliance. Above all, this quest was one narrative line among a compelling mixture of different intertextual references and thus was lost in the background. As the death of Luke's father is mentioned briefly towards the first act of the movie, his quest appears to be just an excuse to put the story into motion instead of a definite character trait and a profound motivation in his actions. On the contrary, *Empire* chooses to give absolute relevance to this plot detail, even to the point of retroactively making it the primary narrative drive of both the entire original trilogy.

With *Empire*, the *Star Wars* saga becomes first and foremost the story of a generational conflict between father and son and, by extent, an allegorical narrative of Lucas own struggles as an independent filmmaker against the Hollywood studio system. After this event, this romance acquires a robust Oedipal connotation that was utterly absent in its first iteration. From a Deleuzian point of view, the consequences of this shift are of course quite profound. While the structure of narrative delay employed by *Star Wars* was only a trajectory of distribution of signs which did not aim at defining and commanding these signs, from *The Empire Strikes Back* onwards this trajectory becomes a trajectory of subjectification. By reshaping the *Star Wars* narrative into his own personal narrative, Lucas finally established himself as the real author of this movie or, in Deleuzian terms, as the real subject of enunciation which imposes a new order to these signs according to his own mental reality. Above all, the fact that *Star Wars* becomes the story of a hero seeking to kill his own father inevitably distances the *Star Wars* saga from a condition of minor art. Despite its high degree of deterritorialization of semiotic elements, *The Empire Strikes Back* ends up reinforcing the archetype of the Oedipal conflict, that is the repressive structure

of thought that Deleuze and Guattari despise the most.[32]

[32]Indeed, the entire *Anti-Oedipus* is a critique of Freudian psychoanalysis and, in particular, of the concept of the unconscious. To quote Deleuze and Guattari directly, "[t]he great discovery of psychoanalysis was that of the production of desire, of the productions of the unconscious. But once Oedipus entered the picture, this discovery was soon buried beneath a new brand of idealism: a classical theater was substituted for the unconscious as a factory; representation was substituted for the units of production of the unconscious; and an unconscious that was capable of nothing but expressing itself—in myth, tragedy, dreams—was substituted for the productive unconscious" (*Anti-Oedipus* 24).

4

The Thirdspace of *Inamoramento de Orlando*

4.1 A Poem about Dialogue

As discussed in the previous chapter, the fictional setting of *Star Wars* welcomes characters who adhere to outright conflicting ideologies and worldviews. On the one hand, Lucas' narrative universe is populated by an archaic figure such as Obi-Wan Kenobi, a mystical sword-fighter who uses the magic powers of the Force and obeys to a strict chivalric code of honour. On the other hand, this same setting also features more modern and secular figures—such as the Empire officials or the mercenary gunslinger Han Solo—who see the Force as an antiquated and superstitious creed, and thus are at home in a more modern historical setting.

The fact that such conflicting systems of belief share the same narrative space would intuitively make any interaction between them a compelling aspect of *Star Wars*. In other words, one may expect that a meeting between a spiritual character and a technophile would lead to a stimulating exchange of ideas. However, these divergent worldviews enter in communication with one another only in some infrequent cases during the movie. In the rare cases in which these interactions do occur, they do not lead to a judicious dialectic, but rather to superficial and resentful exchanges which result in dismissive scorns or, even worse, in violent altercations.

To be precise, only two examples of dialogue between characters in *Star Wars* come

to mind, and both of them conclude on a bitter note. The first of these dialogues takes place during the war room meeting on the Death Star, when one of the Empire officials praises this recently built space station as "the ultimate power in the universe" (Bouzereau 39). Darth Vader immediately rejects this claim by stating that the Force is instead the most powerful entity in existence; in turn, the officer dismisses the Force as an old and unfounded cult. In a later scene, a similar conversation takes place between Kenobi and Solo abroad the *Millenium Falcon*, where Obi-Wan is training Luke Skywalker for the first time on how to wield a lightsaber. As soon as the trainee makes a mistake, Han also ridicules the Force as an erroneous system of beliefs compared to more recent technological advancements. "Hokey religions and ancient weapons are no match for a good blaster at your side, kid," says the gunslinger (59).

In the end, neither of these interactions offers any compelling or insightful information about the two viewpoints represented in these sequences. The fact that characters discuss this fundamental difference in worldviews only in two brief moments of *Star Wars* is proof that facilitating an exchange of ideas is not the primary preoccupation of this film. Since this movie employs romance tropes and conventions so as to create a semiotic Junkspace, the primary purpose of *Star Wars* is that of producing a numbing and exhilarating experience for its audience. Not only does this intoxicating semiotic environment discourage any attempt at critical thinking in the viewer, but it also makes it impossible for the divergent worldviews that uneasily coexist in this fictional setting to engage any productive dialogue with each other.

At the same time, this lack of dialogue in *Star Wars* signals Lucas' desire for total control over his work. Indeed, what is particularly striking about *Star Wars*' quarrels is that, in the end, the religious side always emerges as victorious. In the Death Star sequence, Darth Vader demonstrates to the insubordinate Imperial officer that the Force is in fact real by choking him from afar, using his Force powers. Similarly, in

the *Falcon* sequence, Obi-Wan proves Han wrong by teaching Luke how to control his powers in a better way. To summarize, not only do the technophile and the spiritual characters of the *Star Wars* universe maintain irreconcilable differences but, in a final analysis, the worldview of the latter group always prevails over that of the former. Indeed, the undisputable superiority of religious and spiritual worldviews is also a defining trait of other *Star Wars* products in which Lucas had a strong authorial control: in particular, the prequel trilogy movies (which Lucas produced and directed) features Jedi and Sith characters, or characters that believe in the Force. The more secular figures, such as Solo, who contribute to defining *Star Wars* as a countersignifying romance are utterly absent from these later films. As such, the fact that dialogue scenes are downplayed in the 1977 movie can be read in retrospect as proof of Lucas' desire for total control upon his own film: in other words, the futility of conversations among characters in *Star Wars* reflects the fact that Lucas considers his own authorial vision as the only acceptable one.

Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Inamoramento de Orlando* also mingles elements from different kinds of narratives within the same semiotic environment. As a result, similarly to *Star Wars*, this poem ends up welcoming characters whose beliefs clash. For example, characters in this poem can be classified following the typical Carolingian narrative divide between Christians and Pagans. While the former term refers to European characters, the latter is an umbrella definition that includes all non-Europeans, such as Saracens (who adhere to the Muslim faith) or Tartars. In most texts of the *matière de France*, these two religious groups are sworn enemies to one another, and the conflict between these two groups is the main narrative drive. On the contrary, in Boiardo's poem the Pagans seem to be honourable adversaries to the Christian protagonists rather than hateful villains. In fact, Boiardo seems more interested in letting these two groups compete with one another on an intellectual level rather than on a martial one. As such, Boiardo's characters do enter in dialogue

with one another more frequently than in Lucas' film, and these dialogues result in productive exchanges of ideas.

Boiardo's interest in encouraging dialogue among different perspectives is made evident as early as in the very beginning of *Inamoramento*, that is during the Pentecost banquet episode (*Orlando* 1.1). Here, Boiardo devotes several stanzas to the description of the mixed and colourful crowd of guests that are present at Charlemagne's celebration. Not only does the Pentecost banquet welcome knights and lords from all over the Christian world, but it is also open to all dignified guests, including those who observe the Muslim faith. In other words, Charlemagne also welcomes Saracen noblemen to an outright Christian celebration such as the Pentecost.

> Erano in corte tuti i paladini,
> Per onorar quella festa gradita,
> E da ogni parte e da tuti i confini
> Era in Parigi una gente infinita;
> Eranvi ancora molti saracini,
> Perché corte reale era bandita,
> Ed era ciascaduno assigurato,
> Che non sia traditor o renegato (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.1.9).
>
> All of the paladins came to court
> to celebrate that holiday.
> From every region, every nation,
> numberless people entered Paris,
> and there were many Saracens,
> because court royal was proclaimed:
> anyone not an apostate
> or renegade was promised safety. (Ross 4).

In truth, the Saracens are not depicted in very favourable terms since their customs are portrayed as somewhat barbaric when compared to the civility of Christians (Franceschetti 103).

> Re Carlo Mano con facia iocunda
> Sopra una sedia d'or tra ' paladini
> Se fu possato ala mensa ritonda;

> Ala sua fronte fòrno i saracini
> Che non volsero usar banco né sponda,
> Anci stérno a iacer comme mastini
> Sopra a tapeti comme è lor usanza,
> Spregiando seco il costume di Franza (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.1.13).

> King Charlemagne, with radiant face,
> settled himself among the peers
> on a gold throne at his Round Table.
> In front of him were Saracens
> who had no need of bench or couch;
> instead, they lay full length like hounds
> on carpets, as they always do,
> scorning the customs Frenchmen use (Ross 5).

Even when the narrative shifts to a depiction of individual characters among the Saracen crowd the tone remains ominous and sinister. For example, the narrator depicts two Saracen characters such as King Grandonio as "facia di serpente" ("serpent face") and Feraguto as "dali ochii griffagni" ("with falcon eyes") (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.1.10.1-6; Ross 4).

While the terms and the tone that Boiardo adopts in these passages is certainly unfavourable towards the pagans, the fact that the poet gives a name and a basic description to the most notable Saracen guests shows, at the very least, that he does not intend to paint the Pagans as a indistinct and threatening horde, but rather as a group of diverse individuals. In other words, while these quotes convey a sense of othering as far as the Pagan characters are concerned, at the same time Boiardo implies that there is a possibility of dialogue between them and the Christians. After all, regardless of Boiardo's description, it is still quite remarkable to find these pagan Characters feasting alongside Christian paladins at the beginning of a Carolingian narrative. All in all, despite the extant rivalries and the immense cultural differences between Pagans and Christians, a dialogue between these two cultures is not completely out of reach.[1]

[1]In fact, this canto implies that positive interactions between Christians and Pagans have occurred in the past. For example, Balugrante is qualified as "di Carlo parente" ("King Charles's kin") thus proving that this is not the first time the Christian and Pagans are meeting peacefully (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.1.10.1-6; Ross 4). The kinship between Charlemagne and Balugrante is explained in other fifteen-century chivalric narratives such as *Spagna* and *Reali di Francia* (Cavallo, *World* 23-4).

Indeed, a few stanzas past the above quotes, Boiardo offers a first, crucial example of dialogue between a Pagan and a Christian. During the banquet, the French knight Ranaldo becomes the object of scorn and ridicule among the members of the House of Maganza who, in the Carolingian narratives, are infamous for their treacheries. The reason for this conflict has to do with wealth: while the Maganzesi wear elegant robes, Ranaldo is clothed much poorer garments (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.1.15-16). This diatribe within the Christian side soon catches the attention of the Saracen King Balugante, who becomes curious about what it means to be a noble knight according to the Europeans.

> Re Balugante, che in viso [Ranaldo] guardava
> E divinava quasi il suo pensieri,
> Per un suo torcimano il domandava
> Se nela corte di questo imperieri
> Per robba o per vertute se onorava,
> Aciò che lui, che quivi è forastieri
> E de' costumi de' cristian degiuno
> Sapio lo onor suo render a ciascuno.
> Rise Ranaldo e con benigno aspetto
> Al messager diceva: "Raportate
> A Balugante, poiché egli ha diletto
> De aver le gente cristiane onorate,
> Ch'e giotti a mensa e le putane in letto
> Sono più volte da nui acarezate;
> ma nove poi convene usar valore,
> Dasse a ciascuno il suo debito onore" (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.1.17-18).
>
> King Balugant, who watched [Ranaldo's] face
> and practically divined his thoughts,
> sent his interpreter to ask
> if honor, in this emperor's court,
> was won by prowess or by wealth.
> He, Balugant, a foreigner
> and ignorant of Christian customs,
> would honor men as they deserved.
> Ranaldo laughted; his face showed cheer:
> "Report," he told the messenger,
> "to Balugrant, if he would like
> to venerate the Christians, that
> whores in bed and, at dinner, gluttons
> most often get endearmed from us,

> but when our valor is on view,
> let each receive the honor due!" (Ross 5).

The dialogue between Balugante and Ranaldo appears utterly different compared to the strident conversations among characters in *Star Wars*. Despite being brief and pungent, the exchange between these two characters is also cordial and quite productive, since both characters learn something about each others' cultures. Above all, this episode sets the tone for the rest of the poem. By depicting Ranaldo as being in disagreement with the Maganzesi and in agreement with a Pagan king, Boiardo informs his readers that the ideological divisions in the poem will be more complex than they initially appear. Indeed, in this narrative ethnicity and religion are neither the only source of divide in the poem, nor the most serious reason why the characters disagree with one another. For example, characters in *Inamoramento* who belong to the same cultural and religious group adhere to rather different personal tenets (Cavallo, *World* 4, 23).

On the one hand, readers will encounter characters who, regardless of their background, believe that brute force is the best option for overcoming all obstacles. On the other hand, the poems also features characters from different ethnicities and religions who follow more sophisticated worldviews: Ranaldo himself, for example, often proves to be more astute and attentive than his fellow knights. At the same time, characters who belong to this more sophisticated group present a wide variety of worldviews, since they adhere to rather different schools of thought. Finally, to complicate things further, numerous characters renounce their system of beliefs in order to adopt a new one as the narrative progresses. In fact, this change of views is made possible by the fact that characters frequently dialogue with one another.

Perhaps the most meaningful of these encounters is the one that concerns Orlando and Agricane. In Book One of *Inamoramento*, Orlando's search for Angelica leads him to the city of Albraca in Cathay. Angelica has taken shelter in this fortress in an

attempt to escape her pursuers; yet, the East Asian kings Agricane and Sacripante are besieging Albraca with their armies, as both sovereigns are also in love with Angelica. Eventually, Orlando takes part in this siege in defence of his beloved woman. As Orlando is wreaking havoc of Agricane's soldiers, the pagan king pretends to escape from the siege with the intent of distracting Orlando and challenging him to a duel. As a result, the two valiant warriors end up facing in one of the most momentous duels of the poem (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.18.32-55, 1.19.1-11).

Although the narrator states that the fight between the two knights lasts "da il megio giorno insino a note scura" ("from noon until the dark of night") (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.18.38.5; Ross 161) the actual duel is summarized in one single octave (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.18.38). Indeed, Boiardo does not give much space to the description of the duel itself, as most of this episode is devoted instead to an intellectual debate between the two fighters. Once night falls on the battlefield, Orlando and Agricane respectfully agree to halt their fight until dawn: as both duellists lie on the grass under the starred sky, they start a firm but friendly debate with each other about religion, chivalry and education. Orlando begins the disputation since he aims at converting his adversary to the Christian faith.[2] However, instead of rushing to a straightforward proclamation of Christianity as the superior religion, Orlando skilfully introduces his argument by pointing at the night sky.

> E ragionando insieme tutavia
> Di cose degne e condecente a loro,
> Guardava il conte il ciel, e poi dicìa:
> "Questo che ora vediamo è un bel lavoro
> Che fece la divina monarchia:
> E la luna de argento e ' stele d'oro
> E la luce de il giorno e il sol lucente;
> Dio tuto ha fato per la umana gente" (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.18.41).
>
> They talked together for a time
> of worthy and chivalric matters.

[2]In fact, the French paladin already made this goal quite clear at the beginning of the duel (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.18.36.7-8).

> The Count, who watched the sky, then said,
> "What we see is the lovely work
> that was produced by heaven's monarch.
> The silver moon, the golden stars,
> the shining sun, the light of day—
> God made them for the human race" (Ross 161).

Agricane is not interested at all in starting a theological debate with Orlando: this refusal, however, is not motivated by religious fundamentalism. As the Tartar king admits in complete fairness, he is utterly unfamiliar with the topic Orlando just introduced.

> Disse Agricane: "Io comprendo per certo
> Che tu vòi dela fede ragionare.
> Io de nulla scïentia sono esperto,
> Né mai, sendo fanciul, volsi imparare.
> . . . . . .
> Doctrina al prete e al doctor sta bene,
> Io tanto sacio quanto mi conviene!" (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.18.42.1-4; 43.7-8).
>
> "I gather," Agricane said,
> "you want to argue over faith.
> I have no skill in any science.
> I did not want to learn when young.
> . . . . . .
> Learning is fine for priests and scribes:
> I know what I need to know." (Ross 161-62).

As Agricane shows no interest in knowledge, Orlando reprimands his adversary for this dismissal. As the latter knight argues, learning is indeed an essential trait also for knights and warriors (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.18.44). In turn, Agricane rebukes Orlando's remark as rude, since the Pagan knight admitted his ignorance while praising Orlando's knowledge (1.18.45). At the same time, Agricane proves to be still interested in talking with Orlando: "E si meco parlar hai pur diletto, / De arme o de amore a ragionar ti aspeto" ("but if you want to talk to me / then talk of either war of love") (1.18.45.7-8). The conversation reaches an abrupt conclusion only when Orlando reveals that he is currently in Albraca because he is in love with Angelica

(1.18.47-48). Agricane immediately asks Orlando to renounce his claim because he is also infatuated with her. Orlando refuses and the duel immediately resumes "per la notte bruna" ("in black night") (*Orlando* 1.18.55.3; Ross 163). As soon as the sun rises, Orlando inflicts a mortal wound to Agricane: in his last moments, the pagan king asks Orlando to be baptized, and the French paladin complies with this request.

The duel between Orlando and Agricane hence concludes with the victory—both physical and intellectual—of the former opponent over the latter. Nonetheless, the most notable aspect of this episode is the mutual respect and curiosity the two characters demonstrate for one another. First and foremost, the conversion of Agricane is quite distant from the aggressive tones of other *matière de France* narratives. In previous Carolingian texts, the conversion to Christianity was forced upon the defeated Pagan warrior; in this case, Agricane accepts to be baptized after debating with Orlando and recognizing his superiority (Cavallo, *World* 52). Finally, even though Orlando is the winner of this skirmish, his opinions in the debate are not overwhelmingly superior to those expressed by Agricane. Not only has the Tartar king defended his personal creed with disagreeable yet solid arguments, but at the same time he has countered Orlando's impolite behaviour. Even if Orlando has won the duel, he nonetheless has learned something new and valuable from this encounter.

4.2 *Inamoramento* as a 'Third Place' and Boiardo's Didactic Intent

From the very outset, as well as throughout the entire narrative, Boiardo's *Inamoramento de Orlando* proves to be a very compelling and peculiar example of romance, especially when compared to another text in this narrative form such as Lucas' *Star Wars*. As romances, both texts mingle different literary traditions and, as a result, they inevitably feature heterogeneous types of characters whose worldviews clash. However, while Lucas downplays and devalues interactions among the diverse types of characters who live by different beliefs, on the contrary Boiardo is very much

interested in promoting these very interactions.

Evidently, *Inamoramento de Orlando* does not function as a Junkspace as *Star Wars* does: in other words, Boiardo's poem does not wish to collect characters, locations and events from other texts for the purpose of showcasing their worn-out and second-hand nature. Instead, in order to describe how *Inamoramento* opens up a dialogue among different worldviews, I wish to borrow a concept from the lexicon of sociology. My claim is that *Inamoramento de Orlando* bears some striking similarities to what Ray Oldenburg describes as the 'third place.' In *The Great Good Place*, Oldenburg employs this latter term to describe physical locations other than a home or a workplace (for example, barbershops or cafés) which perform "community-building functions" (Preface). In other words, a third place is a neutral, homely and easily accessible place in which every person is welcome regardless of their social or cultural background. Indeed, the main purpose of third places is to encourage meaningful dialogue among a diverse group of people. "[C]onversation," Oldenburg summarizes, "is the cardinal and sustaining activity of third places everywhere" (Ch. 2).

Of course, Boiardo's chivalric poem is a completely different cultural object compared to those discussed by Oldenburg in his study. First and foremost, *Inamoramento de Orlando* is certainly not a physical place and thus calling it a 'third place' may sound rather bizarre. The social aspect of third places is also lost here: Boiardo's poem of course does not include real human interactions, but rather conversations among fictional characters that were conceived by an individual author. Despite these differences, however, I contend that Boiardo's chivalric poem works in a very similar way to how Oldenburg's third places do. Just as Oldenburg's third places encourage otherwise difficult or impossible meetings and conversations in reality, Boiardo's poem accomplishes the same goal in fiction by creating a channel of communication among fictional characters who rarely interact with one another in a peaceful and civilized way. Indeed, where else can a fifteenth-century avid reader of chivalric narratives find

a dialogue between Orlando and Agricane about whether education is important for a knight?

If *Inamoramento* can be best described metaphorically as a third place, what is the ultimate goal that this text wishes to achieve by fostering conversation among different perspectives? Oldenburg's concept of third place has a strong political component which is tied to the rise of prominence of liberal democracy between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. Conversation is of course the key reason why third places are profoundly political locations: by enabling people with different social and ethnic backgrounds to communicate with one another, third places facilitate the exchange of ideas and contribute to the development of a civic and democratic society (Oldenburg Ch. 2).[3] Since *Inamoramento de Orlando* can be described as a fictional third place, did Boiardo want to accomplish a specific political goal by writing a poem in which different worldviews clash with one another? If so, the politics of *Inamoramento* must be quite different from those discussed in Oldenburg's study, since this poem was written in a cultural climate that precedes by two centuries the invention of liberal democracy. Hence, what is exactly the politics of *Inamoramento de Orlando* as a third place? How does this poem act politically by facilitating dialogue between different worldviews?

In order to understand the politics of *Inamoramento*, we need to discuss the scholarship of Jo Ann Cavallo, who more than any other Boiardo scholar has focused on this line of research. As Cavallo explains, Boiardo's interest in politics is well documented: as Count of Scandiano, Boiardo held administrative offices in the Duchy of Ferrara, and thus was involved directly in local and state politics (*Duty* 12). Moreover, other literary texts and private writings left by the author testimony this interest for political matters and current events of his time. On the one hand, his artistic works—in

[3]Oldenburg exemplifies the political function of third place by discussing the role of local taverns in colonial and revolutionary America. "What the tavern offered long before television or newspaper," Oldenburg continues, "was a source of news *along with* the opportunity to question, protest, sound out, supplement, and form opinion locally and collectively" (Ch. 4).

particular, his earlier Latin production such as *Pastoralia*, *Carmina* and *Epigrammata*—was also written to celebrate or reinforce the rulership of the house of Este. On the other hand, Boiardo's correspondence includes frequent comments about current events as well as matters of local administration, thus proving that the author of *Inamoramento* was indeed interested in politics.[4]

Not only was Boiardo a politically active figure of fifteenth-century Ferrara, but his literary works are also proof of a more profound intellectual commitment to politics. Indeed, Boiardo's body of works can be considered political because of the author's commitment to the ideals of civic and humanistic education that were widespread in early modern Italy (Cavallo, *Duty* 4). Boiardo was indeed a relative and a pupil of important humanist figures in Ferrara such as his uncle Feltrino Boiardo and Tito Vespasiano Strozzi: these two civic-oriented figures believed that it was the duty of poets and men of letters to teach and advise rulers (Zanato 13-14). Thanks to the teachings of Feltrino and Tito, Boiardo embraced the idea that literature could have an educational function, and that such function could be particularly useful for those who took part in politics.

According to Cavallo, Boiardo believed that effective education must come from *exempla* (Latin for 'examples') of both good and bad behaviours (*Duty* 11-12). As Boiardo's literary works include numerous examples of these contrasting behaviours, the goal of these texts was to encourage his readers (and, in particular, those who held positions of power) to avoid vices and embrace virtues by seeing the consequences of these different attitudes in works of fiction. Boiardo indeed left proof of this conviction in his minor works: for example, as Cavallo explains, in the preface to his translations of Latin and ancient Greek literary works (known in fifteenth-century Italian as *volgarizzamenti*) Boiardo "assumes the role of teacher, noting . . . that history teaches

[4]See Monducci and Badini for a collection of Boiardo's letters.

good government" (4).[5]

Even though Boiardo was involved in the politics of his time and his idea of civic education through literature emerges in his letters and translations, Cavallo laments that these aspects of Boiardo's biography and artistic activity have not been taken into serious consideration in the scholarship on *Inamoramento de Orlando* (*Duty* 13). In contrast to non-political readings of *Inamoramento*, Cavallo argues that Boiardo's major work should be considered a civic and political text. "In my view," Cavallo explains, "the political aspects of the poem's humanist educational program are much more pervasive than previously acknowledged. Trusting in the didactic force of fiction, Boiardo writes an outwardly entertaining and encomiastic poem with an underlying didactic intent" (13).

How exactly is *Inamoramento*'s didactic process articulated? Cavallo proposes her vision of *Inamoramento* as an entertaining and yet didactic work in two monographs. In *Boiardo's* Orlando Innamorato*: An Ethics of Desire* (1993) Cavallo posits that Boiardo's poem is "about the tenets and possibilities of the humanist idea of character formation through didactic literature," and that this character formation should in particular involves a "moral education" of the reader (*Ethics* 3, 9). As the title of the poem suggests, this moral education mainly concerns how to dominate the potentially overwhelming sentiment of love and turn it into a positive force.[6] Indeed, other than Orlando's titular love for Angelica, *Inamoramento* features several other love stories which, as Cavallo points out, "are not repetitions but variations" on the theme of love (8).

Specifically, Cavallo interprets the theme of love in *Inamoramento* through the

[5]In the introduction to his *volgarizzamento* of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, Boiardo explains to his intended reader - that is, Duke Ercole I of Este, that the narrative he is about to read is "più utile che piacevole" ("more useful than it is delightful"), in that it contains "le leggie con le quali insino da fanciulli si faccino e populi virtuosi et obedienti a li principi, . . . le arti de la guerra e come nel mestieri de l'arme si faccino valenti homini, come si conservino li amici e facciansi da principio e come si domino li rebelli et oltraggiosi" ("the laws that make populations virtuous and obedient to the prince since childhood, . . . the arts of war and how the profession of arms make men valiant, how to keep friendship alive and how to seek them in the first place, how to tame rebellious and harmful people") (qtd. in Cavallo and Confalonieri 48; translation mine).

[6]The literal English translation of *Inamoramento de Orlando* is 'Orlando falling in love,' whereas the more commonly used title *Orlando innamorato* means 'Orlando in love.'

double Venus tradition which, according to poet and literary critic George D. Economou, is ubiquitous in Medieval and Renaissance literature (Cavallo, *Ethics* 8).[7] According to this reading, love can manifest itself in two different forms, that is *Venus in malo* and *Venus in bono*.

> *Venus in malo* is often characterized by its link to inordinate self-love . . . idolatry and . . . disregard of reason. It leads to a loss of consciousness, memory, and even identity, and when frustrated, it leads to violence. It shows little to no regard for, nor any real understanding of, the beloved's true self apart from visual attractiveness. The objects of desire . . . are less stable and are often interchangeable . . . . *Venus in bono* is often combined with the themes of friendship, family, and religion . . . and is eventually expressed through marriage. This positive earthly love is aligned with reason, takes into account the good of the other, and downplays the faculty of sight as the basis for knowledge of the other. [It] leads to a happy ending and establishes a harmonious bond with equally broad ramifications (Cavallo, *Ethics* 8-9).

On the one hand, Orlando's love for Angelica is clearly the quintessential example of this chaotic and destructive form of love. On the other hand, amorous relationships introduced later in the poem illustrate that *Venus in bono* is indeed an achievable and desirable state. Indeed, couples such as Brandimarte and Fiordelisa or Rugiero and Bradamante illustrate how "harmonious bonds" can function (Cavallo, *Ethics* 158). The character of Rugiero is particularly important in *Inamoramento de Orlando* as well as in Cavallo's reading of the poem. This character is mentioned first at the end of Book One and the beginning of Book Two, in which he is described as an extraordinary knight and the only hope for the Saracens in their war against France.[8] As such, according to Cavallo's reading of the poem, Rugiero serves the purpose of being a paragon of private virtues: in other words, Rugiero is the model of strength

[7] As Economou explains, "[t]he basic opposition of constructive, natural love and destructive, sinful love that the double Venus tradition conveys is as fundamental to the courtly lyric and romance as it is to allegory or didactic literature. It cannot work, of course, in exactly the same way in all of these genres, but it is just as viable in works of secular orientation as it is in works with a religious or doctrinal orientation. Perhaps even more so, for it is ultimately the source of the contradictions and paradoxes that appear in any medieval poem—no matter what its formal or historical exigencies or point of view—that deals with the theme of *amor*" (qtd. in Cavallo, *Ethics* 164n26).

[8] As the bravest and strongest knight in the whole poem, the introduction of Rugiero is supposed to celebrate Boiardo's patron since he is "progenitore dela inclita casa da Este" ("Founder of the Renowned House of Este") (Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.1; Ross 249).

and morality, as well as the source of inspiration for both fictional characters in the story as well as for the poem's readers.

The 2004 volume *The Romance Epics of Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso: From Public Duty to Private Pleasure* expands this reading of *Inamoramento* so as to discuss the political implications of Boiardo's educational method. Indeed, this work offers a reading of *Inamoramento* as a *speculum principis*, or in other words as a tool for teaching rulers how to govern a state correctly (Cavallo, *Duty* 8). According to Cavallo, these teachings are also provided through *exempla*, or in other words by showing to the readers the effects of government on society. As Cavallo explains, "Boiardo juxtaposes examples of good and bad rulers and delineates the consequences of each mode of behaviour" (8). In particular, Cavallo argues that several princely characters from Book One of the poem—such as Gradasso or Sacripante—offer negative examples of rulership, in that their incontinence endangers their state and people (15-23). Similarly, the African King Agramante is guilty of the same overbearing ambitions, as he wishes to conquer France, the World and then the Heavens themselves (Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.1.64; Cavallo, *Duty* 39). In contrast to these three rulers, Boiardo presents Rugiero as a character who, as a valiant knight, already incarnates the principles of good leadership (*Duty* 57-62). In other words, not only did Boiardo encourage his readers to become more mature individuals, but he also pushed them to be responsible members of society and, in the case of his princely readers, also competent and accomplished rulers.

Even though Boiardo has a clear idea of what it means to behave appropriately as an individual person or as a prince, Cavallo claims that, with *Inamoramento*, Boiardo does not wish to impose his point of view on his readers, but rather seeks to impart his lesson in a less conspicuous way. Indeed, Cavallo clarifies that *Inamoramento de Orlando* does not feature "a rigid allegorical structure where individual characters merely illustrate moral terms of conceptual ideas," especially because "[c]haracters

and actions have an unmistakable vitality and interest of their own" (*Ethics* 6).

Instead of clearly pointing out correct public and private behaviours, Boiardo invites his public to become critical thinkers and to read the narrative he offers in the poem in a more attentive way. Indeed, as Cavallo argues, *Inamoramento* encourages critical reading as the narrative "contains a number of episodes which illustrate the perils of reading texts on a superficial level without searching for thier underlying allegories" (*Ethics* 9).[9] As Cavallo points out, Boiardo rarely offers reliable comments and insights about these episodes (or, more in general, about the events of the whole poem) thus forcing readers to interpret them on their own (12-26).

As a whole, Cavallo's scholarship seems to confirm the idea that *Inamoramento de Orlando* functions as a metaphorical third place. As a literary work that mingles characters who behave in radically different ways *Inamoramento* wishes to create cogent interactions between different worldviews. To be more precise, Cavallo's studies confirm that the main goal of creating these interactions is ultimately political. This poem is not merely a source of entertainment for its elite public, but, in Cavallo's view, it mainly works as a didactic tool, one that teaches the value of temperance and responsibility to its audience in a delightful way. In turn, according to Cavallo, teaching these values is crucial to encourage readers of this poem to be responsible members of society as well as compassionate rulers. Once again, dialogue has a vital role in this educational process: instead of enforcing his own vision of the world, Boiardo asks his readers to become better critical thinkers. From this point of view, the exchange between Ranaldo and Balugrante or the debate between Orlando and Agricane can be seen as a way of encouraging the reader to approach both the narrative they are reading and the reality around them in a more attentive way. Perhaps

[9]For example, as I discuss later in the chapter, Orlando often encounters books throughout his journey which he needs to read attentively in order to solve problems and achieve his goals and which he often ignores or misunderstand (Cavallo, *Ethics* 42-9, 86-130). Similarly, Agramante's introduction is accompained by a pictorial history of his most famous ancestor, Alexander the Great (Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.1.4-15). As Cavallo points out, Agramante uses this painting as a motivation for his ambition whereas the narrative is supposed to teach him to be a more cautious ruler (*Duty* 38-40).

the most appropriate way of summarizing the core argument of Cavallo's scholarship is to borrow a formulation from another scholar of Boiardo: in the words of Charles Ross, *Inamoramento* "looks like a supreme effort to create a better world" (xlv).

4.3 *Inamoramento* as a Thirdspace Romance

Although Cavallo's studies on Boiardo are crucial to understanding the politics and the educational intent of *Inamoramento de Orlando*, I also believe that her earlier scholarship today presents some limits that need to be addressed in order to understand better how *Inamoramento de Orlando* works as a text that fosters intellectual conversations and, above all, as a literary work that wishes to act politically. In this section, I address these limits by challenging the definition of romance Cavallo employs in her studies. Indeed, my main criticism of *Ethics of Desire* and *From Public Duty to Private Pleasure* is that these works rely upon an excessively adverse and prejudicial understanding of how romance works in Boiardo's poem, and how it contributes to how this poem works as a Thirdspace. In turn, this lacking definition precludes us from better understanding the Thirdspace politics of *Inamoramento*.

If *Inamoramento de Orlando* works exactly as Cavallo argues in her scholarship, then perhaps we could define the metaphorical third place Boiardo wishes to create as a sort of imaginary classroom. In this classroom, a teacher (that is, the author) is encouraging his pupils (or, in other words, his readers) to learn valuable lessons about leadership and society via a trial-and-error process. While the author knows what is actually best for his readers, he wants them to understand what is good and what is bad by themselves: only after becoming invested on an emotional level with a negative situation or an undefendable argument can readers distance themselves from them and learn how to avoid them entirely. Hence, the fact that Cavallo sees *Inamoramento* primarily as a source of positive and negative examples of public and private behaviour means that the debates Boiardo ignites always have a foregone

conclusion. In Cavallo's view, Orlando's love for Angelica is a dangerous distraction, whereas Gradasso, Sacripante and Agramante's desire for conquest are misguided and thus prone to failure. All of these characters (and the readers alongside them) must learn from these mistakes and follow the more positive examples provided by other characters such as Ranaldo, Rugiero Brandimarte and Fiordelisa.

In order to support this reading of *Inamoramento de Orlando*, Cavallo offers an interpretation of the rich and complex intertextuality of Boiardo's poem. As already pointed out in section 2.2.3, this text contains references to numerous works that were widely read and appreciated at the Este court. According to Cavallo, this network of intertextual references plays a crucial role in the educational intent of *Inamoramento* as this poem "incorporates and rewrites both classical and medieval texts allegorically in order to present an underlying didactic message" (Cavallo, *Ethics* 5). In other words, one of the core arguments of *Ethics of Desire* and *From Public Duty to Private Pleasure* is that Boiardo uses literary genres and modes in a very targeted way, that is by associating them with either positive or negative situations. Cavallo's readings of *Inamoramento* give particular space to the two literary traditions—that is, romance and epic—that appear most frequently in Boiardo's poem. In Cavallo's view, the former tradition mainly signals unacceptable behaviours both in the public and in the private sphere, whereas Boiardo uses the latter to communicate that a certain event or character has a positive connotation.

In particular, Cavallo argues that the parts of the poem that are inspired by romance narratives of the *matière de Bretagne* (which recur more frequently in Book One) contain examples of negative and undesirable personality traits which individuals and rulers should avoid. For example, Cavallo considers Orlando's misguided love for Angelica and Origille (as well as Angelica's infatuation for Ranaldo after drinking from the Stream of Love) as cases of destructive love because they rely upon tropes and conventions from the Breton cycle, or in other words the quintessential

example of romance literature in the Middle Ages (Cavallo, *Ethics* 159). On the contrary, Books Two and Three of *Inamoramento* (both of which draw inspiration from the more serious and reputable literary tradition of epic) present positive examples of private and public behaviour. In particular, the union between Rugiero and Bradamante resembles the one between Aeneas and Lavinia in Virgil's *Aeneid* and, as such, represents the paradigm of positive, responsible love (150-55).

In her 2004 study, Cavallo similarly argues that Boiardo presents paradigms of good and bad leadership also through a targeted use of literary genres. According to Cavallo, Boiardo "privileges a different genre to convey his message in each of the poem's three Books, moving from romance to history and, finally, to epic and beginning with negative examples and concluding with positive ones" (*Duty* 8). Cavallo reads the division between the romance structure of Book One and the more overtly epic tones of Books Two and Three as a progression from political misdemeanors to a more enlightened form of leadership. "The romance adventures of Book One," Cavallo further explains, "weave together classical and medieval narratives to warn the princely reader that negligence, incontinence, fraud and/or unjustified force will bring about a ruler's own demise as well as the destruction of the state" (13). Indeed, Cavallo claims that the romance trope of the endless adventure is used in the episodes of Gradasso and Sacripante so as to depict these rulers as arrogant, misguided and careless. In particular, all of these rulers provide examples of bad government because, in a typical romance fashion, they chase elusive objects of desire such as Angelica, and in doing so they put the common good into unnecessary danger (25-33). As the narrative veers towards epic, Boiardo introduces examples of more positive rulers: once again, Rugiero represents the paragon of virtue in leadership, since he carries on the positive traits of Hector of Troy, his ancestor and one of the protagonists of Homer's epic poem *Iliad* (45-68).

All in all, Cavallo reads the intertextuality of *Inamoramento de Orlando* as a

crucial part of Boiardo's didactic intent. In her view, Boiardo counterbalances the mistakes and excesses of the romance story-lines from Book One with the epic narratives from Books Two and Three, which offer positive examples of both public and private ethics. As readers progress in the story, they are encouraged to participate in a precise formative process both as individuals and as members of society. While some readers may feel inspired and entertained by the romance tone at the beginning of the poem, they are eventually invited to reconsider their feelings and their investment in these romance elements as the story progresses.

The Deleuzian framework I chose to adopt for this thesis encourages a high degree of skepticism when dealing with dualistic reasoning such as the one Cavallo employs in her studies. In the specific case of *Inamoramento de Orlando*, I believe that the way Boiardo himself frames the Christian-Pagan divide (that is, the quintessential dualism of medieval and early modern chivalric narratives) as instead a more cordial dispute and not as an all-out war supports this skepticism. Indeed, the Pentecost banquet and the exchange between Ranaldo and Balugrante suggests from the very outset of the story that this poem will counter this kind of binary reasoning as far as religious conflicts are concerned: this suggestion is corroborated later on in Book One, when the dialogue between Orlando and Agricane shows that the relationship between Christans and Pagans can benefit both parts from an intellectual point of view. Finally, the excessively negative way in which Cavallo frames romance tropes and conventions should be another warning sign. Did Boiardo really want to employ romance so as to shed a negative light upon the events of Book One? On the contrary, is this assessment the result of how romance is associated with negative personality traits and disastrous events as I discussed earlier in chapter 1?

In my view, Cavallo's claim that Boiardo uses intertextual references in a restrictively targeted way is the result of surpassed and ineffective definitions of literary forms and genres. To be precise, I do not agree that Boiardo employs tropes and

conventions of romance solely in negative terms. My suspicion is that such a negative evaluation of Boiardo's use of romance devices in *Inamoramento* originates in the scholarly bias against romance. In other words, I claim that Cavallo's earlier scholarship is informed by the idea that romance is a secondary literary form which, at best, can produce mindless entertainment and, at its worst, can distract readers from more important issues. Moreover, I argue that Cavallo's approach to the intertextuality of *Inamormento* limits our understanding of Boiardo's didactic and political goal. In particular, such a negative preconception of romance prevents us from understanding the educational purpose of this text, as well as its political scope. As such, I believe that Boiardo's use of romance must be discussed in more attentive terms.

Hence, before proposing an alternative reading of how Boiardo's poem works as a space of encounter among different worldviews, I wish to challenge the claim that Boiardo intended to use romance only in negative terms: indeed, my contention is that this claim is not supported by archival or textual evidence. In fact, a close reading of *Inamoramento de Orlando* in light of the political and cultural context in which Boiardo operated (as well as via the alternative definition of romance as a literary mode I proposed earlier in this thesis) encourages a very different evaluation of the use of genres in Boiardo's poem than the one proposed by Cavallo. In my view, not only does *Inamoramento* use romance conventions in favourable terms, but this poem ubiquitously and pervasively relies upon these very structures. In turn, the use of these structures dramatically influences how the poem functions as an educational text.

When discussing *Inamoramento de Orlando*, we should not forget that this poem is the result of a protracted and complicated compositional history. The current scholarly consensus is that Boiardo wrote his work over the course of thirty to forty

years between the 1460s and 1494.[10] Because of his chronic health problems and of unfavourable events that afflicted the Duchy of Ferrara, Boiardo frequently took long intermissions between the composition of individual cantos. Over these decades, Boiardo faced different audiences, as well as an ever-evolving political and cultural context. As a result, the poet was forced to adjust his work in order to accommodate the tastes and personalities of very diverse readers. The necessity to adapt to different audiences is the reason behind the particular change in tone and style between Book One and the latter part of *Inamoramento*.

Book One was composed in its entirety before 1471, that is during the reign of Duke Borso of Este (1450-1471) (Zanato 158). As Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti argues, the first part of *Inamormento* gives so much prominence to chivalric romance narratives because Borso was particularly fond of the genre (Introduzione xx).[11] After Borso's death, his half-brother Ercole I of Este seized power, also with the support of Boiardo himself. As opposed to his predecessor, Ercole was an avid reader of historiographies as well as of Latin literature, in particular of poetry and theatre (Tissoni Benvenuti, "Libri" 239-41; Canova 33). Indeed, the fact that Boiardo gives more relevance to these genres starting from Book Two may be the result of requests expressed by the new Duke. Similarly, as Canova argues, the inclusion of Rugiero's plot starting from Book Two may have also been demanded by Ercole, who was eager to give a new mythical origin for his house (Canova 48).

Nonetheless, despite the dramatic change in readership before and after 1471, Boiardo did not modify the parts of the poem he wrote before that date. In fact, Boiardo's approach to writing this poem was quite peculiar compared to other works he penned. Instead of modifying what he wrote up until a certain point so as to

[10]See Zanato 145-61 for a detailed chronology of *Inamoramento*'s composition. To summarize the chronology proposed by Zanato, Boiardo composed Book One of his poem in its entirety before 1471; the first twenty-six cantos of Book Two were written throughout the 1470s; finally, the rest of the poem was composed in sporadic terms between the 1480s and the 1490s. Recently, Roberto Galbiati has argued that Boiardo perhaps stopped composing his work even in the late 1480s with the sole exception of the last canto (126-29).

[11]Both Canova (30) and Zanato (158) agree with Tissoni Benvenuti's opinion.

correct previous mistakes or adapt previous cantos to the new style of the poem, the author just kept adding new cantos to the narrative (Bologna 248; Canova 48). On the one hand, *Inamoramento* is a more unified and coherent text than critics have argued in the past.[12] On the other hand, however, Boiardo's poem is also the result of this complicated writing process, which means that the final product is a patchwork of different narrative plots and literary styles (Tissoni Benvenuti, Introduzione xi).[13]

In my view, the chaotic compositional process of *Inamoramento de Orlando* disproves Cavallo's argument that Boiardo used literary genres in a targeted way.[14] Specifically, the fact that *Inamoramento*'s composition began under the patronage of Borso d'Este encourages us to reconsider the role that romance played in the earlier compositional history of *Inamoramento*. Since Borso was an avid reader of chivalric romances, it seems unlikely that Boiardo employed romance tropes and conventions only to convey examples of negative behaviours. Indeed, why would Boiardo willingly try to displease Borso by using his patron's favourite literary form so as to provide a fierce critique of romance? If, as Cavallo herself convincingly argues, Boiardo was attached to the idea that literature could help individuals in shaping their personality and teach politicians how to govern wisely, why would Boiardo merely ridicule Borso's tastes in reading instead of drawing inspiration from them so as to educate his patron? In other words, why would the pupil of Feltrino and Tito Strozzi waste such a tremendous opportunity to put into practice the idea of teaching while entertaining

[12]For example, Antonio Franceschetti outright states that Boiardo's poem does not follow any particular narrative structure (174-5).

[13]Indeed, *Inamoramento* features several storytelling inconsistencies. Two notable continuity errors are the reappearance of Marfisa chasing Brunello several cantos after the end of this story arch or the unexplained presence of Brandimarte among the characters imprisoned by Morgana. See Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.8.36, 2.19.1-15 and the corresponding notes by Canova.

[14]In defence of Cavallo, her first two monographs were written before most scholars of Boiardo agreed upon the chronology of *Inamoramento*'s composition I discussed above. Indeed, before Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti proposed to date the earlier cantos of Boiardo's poem to the 1460s (that is, during Borso's reign) it was generally believed that Boiardo started composing his major work in 1471, that is at the beginning of Ercole's rule (Tissoni Benvenuti, Introduzione xi-xiv). See Donnarumma 7-30 for an argument in favour of this latter theory.

that he cultivated as a student?[15]

In short, although Book One of *Inamoramento* may be read as a critique of romance narratives in light of the events of Books Two and Three, we should keep in mind that the first part of Boiardo's poem has been read as an independent text for several years. During the 1460s, when the epic narrative of Rugiero was outright absent from the text, romance was the uncontested literary mode used in *Inamoramento*. In fact, despite the rise to prominence of epic tropes and conventions in Books Two and Three of Boiardo's poem, I contend that romance remains the dominant literary mode also in the second part of *Inamoramento*. Once again, I wish to specify that I do not use the term 'romance' only to discuss the fictional characters and situations typical of the *matière de Bretagne*. Above all, I employ this label to signal the presence of the literary techniques that characterize romance in all of its historical forms. In other words, I use this label in order to signal the presence of a high degree of postponement of endings and definitions as well as of the Bakhtinian chronotope of adventure-time. According to this broad definition of the term, Book Two and Three of *Inamoramento de Orlando* are also examples of romance. Epic tropes and conventions are undoubtedly very frequent in Books Two and Three of Boiardo's poem, especially throughout the plot lines of Rugiero and Mandricardo, which contain frequent references to classical and medieval epic narratives. At the same time, however, I contend that this heightened presence should not be read as a response to (or as a replacement of) the romance tones that dominate Book One. In fact, the latter two Books of *Inamoramento* are still not exempt at all from the romance conventions I described in chapter 2, and in particular the structures of delay

[15]I suppose that one objection against my argument may concern Borso's famously aggressive personality: indeed, due to his poor education, Borso had a problematic relationship with the artists he supported (Geddes et al.). As such, one may suspect that Boiardo, as a sophisticated intellectual, may have written a tongue-in-cheek parody of romance with the purpose of having a laugh at the expense of his uneducated patron. Yet, as far as we know, Boiardo did not have a tense or negative relationship with the then-Duke of Ferrara, but quite the contrary: Borso regularly helped Boiardo during his early years as Count of Scandiano, and frequently wanted him by his side during celebrations or journeys (Zanato 14-18). In turn, Boiardo celebrated Borso for being a magnanimous ruler in *Pastorialia*, one of his earlier Latin works (Boiardo, *Pastoralia* 6.61-4; Cavallo, *Duty* 46).

typical of this narrative form.

As Marco Praloran points out, the final cantos of Boiardo's poem clearly lack what Frank Kermode calls a sense of ending or, in other words, a conclusive event that would give a final and specific meaning to the events told in the poem (Praloran, *Lingue* 105; Kermode 5).[16] This lack of ending also leaves *Inamoramento* without a specific ethical and didactic conclusion. On the one hand, as Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti argues, Books Two and Three of Boiardo's poem do rely upon a more explicit ethical framework that resembles the one formulated by Cavallo (Introduzione xxxii).[17] On the other hand, however, Benvenuti herself concedes that the more moralistic tones of the second half of *Inamoramento* still do not offer any narrative or didactic resolution to Orlando's pursuit of Angelica (or, in other words the main narrative plot of the poem) which remains blatantly unresolved in Book Three (xxxii).

In my view, there is a particular episode that signals quite evidently how Boiardo had little to no desire of giving an ultimate meaning to the narrative even in Books Two and Three. I am referring to the genealogy of Rugiero announced by Atalante, which is supposed to explain the lineage that links the most valiant knight of the poem to the House of Este (Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.21.53-61). Canova explains that, in writing this genealogy, Boiardo commits numerous blatant errors which evidently displeased Duke Ercole (48).[18] As Canova further argues, the gravity of Boiardo's errors is signalled by the drastic change of tone at the beginning of the following canto, as well as by the fact that the poet includes a new and more accurate genealogy only a few cantos later (Canova 48; Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.25.41-56). Roberto Galbiati posits

[16] As Praloran further argues, perhaps the only moment of *Inamoramento* that gets closer to Kermode's sense of ending is the duel between Orlando and Ranaldo at the end of Book One (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.26-28; Praloran, *Lingue* 105). Similarly to Praloran, Canova also sees *Inamoramento* as purposefully open-ended. As he argues, by reading the Boiardo's poem "si avverte un alto tasso 'sperimentale' in senso moderno più che l'ansia di raggiungere un testo classicamente delimitato e canonico" ("one can perceive a high degree of literary 'experimentalism' in the modern sense of the word rather than the desire to compose a text that adheres to classical rules and limits") (59; translation mine).

[17] One of the examples discussed by Tissoni Benvenuti includes the *novella* of Narcissus, which she reads as a warning against vain and superficial love. See Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.17.49-66.

[18] See Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.21.53-61 (and, in particular, Canova's notes) for a more detailed list of Boiardo's mistakes.

that this canto may signal that Ercole's disappointment for Boiardo's work was, in fact, more profound: as a romance narrative conceived under Borso' patronage, *Inamoramento* was clearly against the more realistic tastes of the then-current Duke, who perhaps resented the whole work (Galbiati 118-19).

If we choose to follow Galbiati's argument, then we can also suspect that Boiardo was forced to include these more epic episodes in the poem in the hope of offering a more resolutive and edifying narrative according to Ercole's desires. Rather than giving an ultimate meaning to the poem, these late insertions instead showcase Boiardo's aversion for including a clear-cut message in this protean poem. If Boiardo did intend to insert epic elements in his poem both as a means to lead to a narrative conclusion and as a way of providing final teachings to his readers, then arguably the poet would have used these tropes and conventions in less ambiguous terms. As even the presence of epic literary devices does not seem to convey any sense of ending in the structure of the poem, this literary form in *Inamoramento* ends up being merely one example of intertextual reference among others in the poem.[19]

Generally, due to its open-ended nature and to the fact that Boiardo does not organize hierarchically the intertextual references he offers, I contend that the overarching literary mode of *Inamoramento de Orlando* remains that of romance even at the latter stage of the poem's compositional history. Specifically, *Inamormento* as a whole adheres the countersignifying structure typical of romance, in that this poem mingles rather diverse literary styles together (all of which are deprived of their original meaning or purpose) in a poem that does not wish to reach any narrative

[19] As Cristina Montagnani argues, the references to epic narratives in *Inamoramento* are still mixed up, making them hardly recognizable to the reader. "[l]a fonte è quasi sempre celata, travestita, allusa, frantumata in *puzzles* spesso assai arduo da ricostruire. A tacere del fatto che il registro stilistico nel quale il poeta inserisce la porzione 'altrui' non è quasi mai sovrapponibile a quello di partenza . . . o che il più delle volte non sono i testi classici a essere usati, ma le loro rielaborazioni medievali . . . , e che, infine, di parecchi episodi anche importanti non è possibile indicare proprio alcuna fonte" ("The source is almost always hidden, disguised, hinted at, fragmented in puzzle pieces and, thus, often difficult to reconstruct. Not to mention that the stylistic register in which the poet includes other fragments almost never coincides with the register in which the fragment originates . . . or that, most of the times, the poet does not use classical texts but, instead, their medieval re-elaboration . . . and that, to conclude, we cannot trace the original source for some of the poem's episodes") (Montagnani 247; translation mine).

conclusion or convey any specific meaning.[20]

Even though *Inamoramento de Orlando* openly follows the structure and conventions of romance, I do not mean to dismiss Boiardo's poem as a work of mere entertainment. Indeed, Cavallo's studies on Boiardo's politics still unequivocally prove that *Inamoramento* begs for political readings, especially because scholars of Boiardo have neglected to consider the poet's humanistic background and interest in civic education through literature as a relevant aspect for his major work. In other words, while I contend that we must discuss Boiardo's use of romance as a political tool in more pertinent terms, I nonetheless concur with Cavallo that the intended purpose of Boiardo's poem was educational, and that this educational purpose had a political scope. As such, a reading of this poem in light of Boiardo's political, ethical and intellectual ideas is still fundamental; at the same time, however, this reading must take into more serious consideration the fact that Boiardo's poem quite clearly functions as a romance. How should we reconcile these two perspectives on *Inamoramento*? In other words, what does this romance wish to achieve from a political and educational point of view? Does this poem wish to enrich its readers' objective knowledge of the world? Does it rather wish to encourage skepticism and critical thinking? Above all, does this text successfully reach the goals it sets for itself?

In order to answer these questions, I propose to look in a more broader way at the cultural climate in which Boiardo wrote his poem. While intellectuals in this

[20] As I claim that *Inamoramento de Orlando* should be labelled in its entirety as a romance, I should discuss the use of the category of 'romance epic,' which is so widespread in scholarship on early modern Italian chivalric narratives. Similarly to other scholars, Cavallo proposes to define Boiardo's *Inamoramento de Orlando*, Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* as "romance epics," that is "a hybrid term which recalls the genre's mixed genealogy in both classical and Carolingian epic as well as medieval romance" (Cavallo, *Duty* 235n1). In my view, 'romance epic' is a more accurate definition for Ariosto and Tasso's poems than it is for Boiardo's. Indeed, if we categorize *Inamoramento* as a 'romance epic' we incorrectly assume that Boiardo read literary modes and genres in the same way Ariosto and Tasso did. On the one hand, the latter two authors were active respectively during the High Renaissance (1500s-1540s) and the Counter-Reformation (1545-1563), that is two moments of literary history which gave particular importance to the formulation of precise linguistic and literary rules. This attention led authors and intellectuals to pay more attention to codified literary genre such as epic. It is for this reason that, in the works of the former two authors, romance and epic do hold a similarly privileged status. On the other hand, Boiardo was not influenced by these sixteenth-century intellectual debates: in fact, his poem is more similar to other experimental and peculiar works in fifteenth-century Italian literature, such as Francesco Cieco da Ferrara's *Mambriano*, Luigi Pulci's *Morgante* and Angelo Poliziano's *Stanze per la giostra* (Franceschetti 173).

period were influenced by the secularism and the desire for well-defined rules typical of humanist thought, the European fifteenth century was also informed by more anti-rational currents of thought, such as Neoplatonism or Gnosticism. These currents proposed a vision of the world that vastly differs from both the restricting vision of Medieval thought and from the rationality of early-modern humanist philosophy. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century philosophers who adhered to these currents of thought—such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Marsilio Ficino and Nicolas of Cusa—embraced a more open and, for lack of a better word, undisciplined process towards knowledge. While these thinkers believed in the existence of objective truths such as God, at the same time they claimed that only radically experimental practices could lead them to these truths.[21] In their search for objective truths, these thinkers mixed different approaches to knowledge, such as early examples of scientific rationalism, traditional theological thought and outright irrational mysticism.

In Italy, these anti-rational approaches to knowledge also gained a relevant following. While this current of thought was more prominent in Florence, where Neoplatonism was sponsored by the Medici themselves, Ferrara was also subject to the influence of early-modern anti-rational philosophies. For example, Neoplatonism was taught at the University of Ferrara during the 1480s and 1490s, meaning that it had become accepted by the local academic community in the previous decades (Looney, "Ariosto" 23). Indeed, we also know that Nicolas of Cusa was in contact with a relevant figure in fifteenth-century Ferrarese intellectual life such as Guarino of Verona (Miller). Finally, we can suppose quite easily that Boiardo himself had been exposed to Neoplatonic thought and had been in contact with Neoplatonic philosophers: most

[21]For example, Nicolas of Cusa believed that the search for truth is always dialogic and approximative: as such, truth can be achieved via intuition. In Nicholas's view God is unknowable and undefinable, but he embodies a *coincidentia oppositorum* (in other words, the coexistence of opposite elements) which cannot be understood rationally but only grasped irrationally. Ficino elaborated a more religious thought, which also embraces philosophy and the arts. Ficino saw all of these disciplines as an emanation of God, whose perfection can only be grasped irrationally. Finally, Pico della Mirandola was a firm believer that God granted absolute free will to humankind, and that in order to understand universal truths scholars should study attentively not only the Bible, but also other religions' sacred texts, including ancient ones and those that belong to the Jewish tradition and the Far East. See Vasoli 57-75 for a more detailed summary of anti-rational fifteenth-century thought.

notably, Boiardo and Pico della Mirandola were both grandsons of Feltrino Boiardo (who was also pupil of Guarino da Verona). It is also very plausible that the two cousins had been in contact, since they frequented the same intellectual circles (Cavallo, *World* 256-57).

Even though Cavallo's earlier scholarship frames *Inamoramento* via humanist thought, her more recent studies acknowledge that *Inamoramento de Orlando* shares more than a few remarkable similarities with the methods adopted by fifteenth-century anti-rational philosophies. At the end of her latest volume *The World Beyond Europe in the Romance Epics of Boiardo and Ariosto*, Cavallo herself points out that Boiardo's intent to mingle characters who belong to different cultural, ethnic and religious groups is quite similar to the one that emerges from the religious works of his cousin Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. According to Cavallo, "the embracive outlook implicit in [Boiardo and Pico's] methods of incorporating a wide range of sources to conceive a more comprehensive and original whole is a departure from the conservative and dogmatic thinking in both philosophical and epic writing" (*World* 257). As Cavallo continues, "[t]he freedom exercised by both Boiardo and Pico to draw from diverse literary genres and religious beliefs corresponds . . . to the open-mindedness intrinsic to their respective works" (257).

Cavallo does not go as far as to draw a direct comparison between the synchretic philosophical method of Pico with the mingling of different literary genres in Boiardo's poem: as Cavallo explicity states, she does not intend "to minimize the differences between the metaphysical postulations of Neoplatonic philosophy and the fictional scenarios of romance epic" (Cavallo, *World* 257). I do not intend to minimize these differences either: in other words, I do not wish to claim that, in order to understand *Inamoramento*, we must read this poem strictly via the belief system of Neoplatonism.[22] At the same time, however, I believe that we can only gain a more insightful

[22] As far as I am aware, the only attempt at interpreting Boiardo's works via the categories of Neoplatonism is Francesca Battera's study of *Pastorale*. However, as Zanato points out, this study is unable to offer a comprehensive and convincing Neoplatonic reading of the poem (314-15).

understanding of Boiardo's poem if we choose to explore it from the perspective of fifteenth-century syncretic and anti-rational thought. Indeed, given Boiardo's resistance towards offering definitive answers or univocal meanings in *Inamoramento*, I think that it is only appropriate to look at this poem as a different kind of didactic text compared to the one Cavallo describes in her earlier studies. As Cavallo summarizes, Boiardo's poem "presents a world in which characters are in dire need of greater knowledge about themselves and the world around them, and assumes that such knowledge will lead to the betterment of the self and society at large" ("Pathways" 305). While I do agree with this statement, I also propose to look at *Inamoramento* as a poem in which the characters' search for knowledge articulates in a rather different way than the ones theorized so far. This approach to knowledge is quite distant from the rigid categories of humanist thought and closer to more open-ended and experimental heuristic practices of thinkers such as Pico, Marsilio or Nicolas of Cusa.

As I illustrate in the following section, *Inamoramento* makes two ambitious statements about the issue of knowledge. Firstly, by including numerous contrasting details about love, the poet is implying that his characters are utterly oblivious about what this feeling is and how it works, so much so that even contradicting theories of love can coexist in the same fictional space. Since love is the most fundamental and powerful force in this fictional world, then it follows that these characters are also unprepared to understand reality itself, as well as to establish effective moral frameworks. Secondly, while Boiardo's characters have a knowledge of reality that is at best utterly imprecise, they nonetheless have numerous and equally effective possibilities of increasing their understanding of the world. As Boiardo shows, different heuristic methods (even those that are incompatible with one another, such as blind faith and empiricism) are equally valid to gain a better understanding of the world. In fact, Boiardo often shows how characters can achieve goals and gain better knowledge even by using methods that should lead them to failure.

Before I move on to read *Inamoramento* so as to illustrate the poem's agnostic attitude to knowledge and optimism about its characters' heuristic possibilities, I wish to re-frame the two categories I introduced earlier in this chapter in order to discuss Boiardo's narrative: I am referring, of course, to the concepts of romance and third place. Indeed, by choosing to look at *Inamoramento* in light of fifteenth-century anti-rational thought, these two terms assume a different meaning and importance when applied to Boiardo's poem. First and foremost, approaching *Inamoramento de Orlando* as a text grounded in a syncretic and anti-rational approach to knowledge also allows us to examine Boiardo's use of romance in more pertinent terms. Romance's structures of narrative delay and amalgam of intertextual elements mirrors the open-ended and syncretic nature of anti-rational currents of thought such as Neoplatonism. From this point of view, not only does romance constitute the main narrative structure of Boiardo's poem, but it is also the cornerstone element of the poem's heuristic intent. Far from being merely the source of negative personality traits and disastrous events, romance is the literary mode that allows Boiardo's characters to undergo an unrestricted and unconventional quest for knowledge in which any hypothesis about reality may be true and different paths can lead us towards these truths.

As I propose to read Boiardo's epistemological intent in more anti-rational terms, I also need to offer an alternative and more effective definition of third place than the one discussed so far. Indeed, while Oldenburg's concept of third place could have proved practical in a reading of *Inamoramento* more akin to Cavallo's perspective, this same category is not as effective as I choose to approach Boiardo's poem via anti-rational thought. A third place is, more plainly, a space in which conversations happen and where public opinion is shaped. While Cavallo's reading of Boiardo bears some similarities to Oldenburg's formulation, my claim that *Inamoramento de Orlando* is a space of radical heuristic experimentation of course does not. Hence, how should I define *Inamoramento*'s use of romance?

In my view, the most appropriate label for this poem works is that of Thirdspace. First and foremost, from a purely intuitive perspective, using this more abstract and conceptual term sounds more appropriate to describe a cultural object such as *Inamoramento de Orlando*, or in other words an immaterial space in which potentially incompatible elements converge and interact with each other in both meaningful and innovative ways. Loose semantics aside, I believe that the concept of Thirdspace as formulated in postmodern thought is the most fitting tool for understanding how *Inamoramento de Orlando* uses romance tropes and conventions. In particular, I contend that Boiardo's poem resembles quite closely the definition of Thirdspace offered by urban theorist Edward Soja.[23]

In the 1996 volume *Thirdspace*, Soja envisions the titular concept as a "radical postmodernist perspective" on issues of geography, urbanism and spatiality (3). This practice is "transdisciplinary in scope" since it "cuts across all perspectives and modes of thought" (3). While in *Thirdspace* Soja encourages his readers "to think differently about . . . meanings" at the same time he does not suggest to discard "old and familiar ways of thinking" (1). Rather, Soja proposes to question these ways so as to open up and expand "the scope and critical sensibility of your already established . . . imaginations" (1). In Soja's own words, Thirdspace is

> an efficient invitation to enter a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where . . . imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable. It is a space . . . where one can be Marxist and post-Marxist, materialist and idealist, structuralist and humanist, disciplined and transdisciplinary at the same time (5).

[23] At this point, I should explain why, in discussing *Inamoramento de Orlando*, I am not using the concept of 'Thirdspace' as elaborated in Postcolonial theory. Even though the ubiquitous presence of non-European characters in Boiardo's poem (as well as their frequent interactions with European ones) may encourage a Postcolonial reading of *Inamoramento de Orlando*, this text does not function as a "Third Space of enunciation" in Homi K. Bhabha's sense of the word (36). Indeed, Bhabha uses this term to describe a negotiation of meaning and identity between the colonizer and the colonized, which can lead to a form of hybridity (36-8). While the Thirdspace of Boiardo's poem features a similar open-ended process that strives for conceptual hybridity, the entities involved in this process are not the same Bhabha discusses. Indeed, *Inamoramento* was composed before the Age of Exploration and, as such, it precedes the sixteenth- to twentieth-century colonialism to which today's postcolonial theory is a response. Cavallo similarly locates her 2013 study *The World Beyond Europe* "outside the scope of Edward Said's concept of orientalism in its stricter sense," because neither *Inamoramento de Orlando* nor *Orlando furioso* "are . . . products of colonial-minded imperialist systems" (*World* 17).

If one removes from the above quotes the references to urban geography and late-twentieth-century thought, I believe that Soja's formulation could be used, in broad terms, also to describe how *Inamoramento de Orlando* functions as a romance and what goals it wishes to achieve by employing this literary form. Instead of merely creating a space of dialogue between characters who follow different creeds, Boiardo's poem is also a semiotic space of "extraordinary openness," in which outright incompatible intellectual frameworks can coexist simultaneously. In turn, this coexistence allows the characters in the poem to seek unconventional ways of studying and interacting with reality, which enable them to seek a more profound knowledge of the world. Despite the different cultural and intellectual contexts in which Boiardo and Soja lived and world, both authors (each in his own way) were pursuing more two radically innovative approach towards knowledge, which saw conceptual hybridity and experimentalism as their cornerstone.

4.4 *Inamoramento*'s Agnosticism: The Example of *Amore*

Of course, the most effective way to understanding Boiardo's open-ended approach to knowledge and education is to discuss this poem's main topic, that is '*amore*' ('love'). Love is without a doubt the main subject of Boiardo's narrative: indeed, it is the main storytelling motivation in the poem, since most of the events told in *Inamoramento* happen because the poem's protagonists are either chasing a person they are enamored with or are trying to escape the unwanted advances of another character. In other words, love is what determines most of the characters' actions, and thus, if this poem truly aims at being a didactic text, the main lesson this poem should impart must deal with love. How should characters deal with this feeling? Should they distance themselves from it? Should they embrace it? In turn, what readers can learn from the characters' actions?

As already discussed, Cavallo argues that love in Boiardo's poem can be classified

objectively as either positive or negative, and the reader is given the task to learn about how to avoid the latter kind of love while embracing the former one. In my view, the issue of love in *Inamoramento* cannot be discussed in binary ethical terms without trying to understand first how love works in this poem. On the one hand, it is certainly true that the ethical framework characters must adopt in order to become good individuals and respectable members of society derives from how these characters choose to manage their infatuation for other characters. Yet, before trying to establish a precise moral foundation on how to deal with love, characters (and readers as well) must of course understand the true nature of love in *Inamoramento*. In other words, what does *amore* mean in the context of this poem? How do characters in Boiardo's narrative fall in love? Moreover, is love an inescapable condition, or is it rather a feeling that characters can elude? Only after answering these ontological questions about love one can formulate a ethical theory of love in *Inamoramento de Orlando*.

As Boiardo gives so much prominence to the theme of love, readers would expect the author to clarify and explain the meaning of the term '*amore*' at the very beginning of his poem. On the contrary, however, the more the narrative progresses the more this poem proves to be profoundly ambivalent about the issue. Certainly the most confusing element about love in *Inamoramento* is the fact that the narrator describes this feeling alternatively as a positive force or as a negative condition. For example, Boiardo introduces the theme of love as early as in the beginning of the poem as the motivation that leads characters to accomplish great deeds: as the narrator informs us, we are about to hear "i gesti smisurati, / l'alta fatica e le mirabil prove / che fece il franco Orlando per amore" ("deeds no man can measure, / stupendous feats, amazing labors / Love caused Orlando to perform") (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.1.1.5-7; Ross 3).

Later on, however, love is framed in less appeasing terms: for example, when Orlando and Ranaldo must duel at the gates of Albraca because of Angelica, the narrator

depicts love as a force that is even capable of obfuscating "il senno e l'intelleto" (the "mind" and the "intellect") (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.28.2.3; Ross 234). These two statements are certainly at odds with each other, so much so that one may suspect that Boiardo is structuring his argument by starting with a wrong assumption (i.e., love leads to exciting adventures) only to reach the opposite conclusion (that is, love is a source of misery) later in this poem. However, there is no logical argumentative flow in Boiardo's presentation of love since the poet frequently changes his opinion about it. These argumentative reversals are not exclusive to Book One, but they also recur in Book Two. For example, in Canto Thirteen Boiardo suggests that Boiardo is not following Ranaldo and Astolfo to France to defend Charlemagne from Agramante's invasion because he is under the spell of love.

> Sieco non volse Orlando alora gire,
> Né sciò dir la cagion, in veritate,
> Se non ch'io estimo che soperchio amore
> Li deviasse di ragion il core (Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.13.51.6-8).
>
> Orlando would not go with them.
> In truth, I cannot tell you why.
> I think his overwhelming love
> distracted him from what was right (Ross 358).

This declaration, however, is followed only a few cantos later by the famous incipit on the difference between the courts of France and Britain. While in Canto Thirteen Boiardo only hints at Orlando being under the spell of "soperchio amore," in Canto Eighteen the narrator instead openly declares that love is the supreme source of all chivalric glory.

> Fo gloriïosa Bretagna la grande
> Una stagion per l'arme e per l'amore
> (Onde ancor oggi il nome suo si spande
> Sì ch'al re Artuse fa portar onore),
> Quando e bon cavalieri a quele bande
> Mostrarno in più batalie il suo valore,

Andando con lor dame in aventura,
E or sua fama al nostro tempo dura.
Re Carlo in Franza poi tienne gran corte
Ma a quela prima non fo somiliante,
Benché assai fosse ancor robusto e forte
E avesse Renaldo e 'l sir d'Anglante:
Perché tiéne ad Amor chiuse le porte
E sol se dete ale bataglie sante,
Non fo di quel valor o quela estima
Qual fo quel'altra ch'io contava in prima (Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.18.1-2).

There was a time Great Britain was
illustrious in arms and love;
her name is celebrated still.
The glory of King Arthur stems
From when the good knights in his realm
Displayed their worth in many battles
and sought adventure with their ladies.
Her fame lasted to our day.
Later, King Charles held court in France;
his court was no equivalent,
though it was sturdy, confident,
and had Ranaldo and the Count.
Because it closed its gates to Love
and only followed holy wars,
it could not boast the worth, the fame
the former showed, the first I named (Ross 393).

Cavallo claims that these contradictions are proof that Boiardo's narrator is an ironist, and that readers should read between the lines of his declaration (Cavallo, *Ethics* 12-27). I wish to propose an alternative reading of the portrayal of love in *Inamoramento*. In my view, these contradictory statements are not a rhetorical device, but they are instead a honest admission of uncertainty on Boiardo's part. What I mean to say is that love has an utterly undetermined nature in the context of this poem, so much so that even the poet himself cannot tell with certainty how this force acts upon his characters. Indeed, this ambivalence does not only concern whether love is inherently good or bad or what qualifies as good or bad love: in fact, the very origin and essence of love is left unexplained to characters and readers of the poem alike.

In fact, Boiardo's equivocal portrayal of love is made manifest at the very begin-

ning of *Inamoramento*. In the first octaves of the poem, as the author introduces the main topic of the narrative to his audience, love is described in similar terms to how the Latin poet Virgil has portrayed it in his *Eclogues* and *Aeneid*. Indeed, similarly to these two texts, Boiardo frames love as a force that exists outside of the individual, and that upsets those who are unlucky enough to be afflicted by it.

> No vi para, signor, maraviglioso
> Odir contar de Orlando inamorato,
> Ché qualunque nel mondo è più orgolioso
> È da Amor vinto al tuto e suiugato:
> Né forte braccio, né ardire animoso,
> Né scudo o maglia, né brando afilato,
> Né altra possanza può mai far diffesa
> Che al fin non sia da Amor batuta e presa (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.1.2).
>
> Don't think it strange, my lords, to hear
> Orlando [in love] sung.
> It always is the proudest man
> Whom Love defeats and subjugates.
> No strong arm, no audacity,
> No blade well-honed, no shield or mail,
> No other power can avail,
> For in the end Love conquers all (Ross 3).

Indeed, in this octave Boiardo references a notable formulation from Virgil's tenth eclogue: "omnia vincit Amor; et nos cedamus Amori" ("Love conquers all; we also must submit to Love") (*Eclogues* 10.69).[24] In this eclogue, the sentence is pronounced by the elegiac poet Cornelius Gallus in a conversation with a group of Arcadian pastors who are utterly unaware about what love is (10.21). In this context, Virgil also describes love as "indignus," "insanis" and "crudelis," or in other words as "upsetting," "insane" and "cruel" (10.22, 28). This vision of love remains entirely consistent in other works by Virgil, and especially in *Aeneid*: here, love even leads the Carthage Queen Dido to kill herself, as her insane passion for Aeneas is not returned (*Aen.* 4.642-71). On a whole, love in Virgil is a power that exists outside of the individual

[24] As Raffaele Donnarumma points out, the image of Love thwarting all weapons is instead a reference to Giovanni Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and *Ninfale fiesolano* (36).

and that, without any exception, upsets a character's normal state of being. Virgilian '*amor*' leads any person who falls for it to agitation, to frenzy and, in the worst case, to complete ruin and death. As the poet implies, the only solution to escape it is to avoid it altogether.

Since *Inamoramento de Orlando* begins with such a blatant Virgilian reference, one would expect love in this chivalric poem to function in a similar way than the one formulated in *Eclogues* and *Aeneid*. However, later on in the same first canto, the reader is introduced to yet another characterization of love. I am referring, of course, to the episode in which Orlando falls in love with Angelica. When the Pentecost celebration in Paris is suddenly interrupted by the apparition of Angelica and her brother Argalia, all the knights and lords at the court immediately fall in love with the beautiful dame (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.1.23, 28). However, while Boiardo describes only in passing the effects of Angelica's appearance on the other guests, the author instead exposes Orlando's feelings in a lengthy monologue.

"Ahi pacio Orlando!" nel suo cor dicìa
"Comme te lassi a voglia traportare!
Non vedi tu lo error che te disvìa
E tanto contra a Dio te fa fallare?
Dove mi mena la fortuna mia!
Vedome preso e non mi posso aitare;
Io che stimava tutto il mondo nulla,
Santia arme vinto son da una fanciulla.
Io non mi posso dal cor dipartire
La dolce vista de il viso sereno,
Perché io mi sento sancia lei morire
E il spirto a poco a poco venir meno.
Or non mi vale forcia né lo ardire
Contra de Amor che m'ha già posto il freno,
Né mi giova saper, né altrui consiglio,
Che io vedo il meglio e al pegior m'apiglio" (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.1.30-31).

"Ah, mad Orlando!"—in his heart—
"How you let longing lead you off!
Don't you see sin entices you
And makes you disobey our God?
Where is my fortune guiding me?

> I'm caught, and I can't help myself!
> I, whom the whole world could not tempt,
> Am conquered by an unarmed woman!
> I cannot from my heart displace
> the sight of her—her sweet, bright face—
> Because I think I'll die without her;
> I think my soul will disappear.
> Now neither strength nor courage helps
> Against the bridling force of Love.
> Knowing's no help, nor men's advice.
> I see what's best. I pick what's worst." (Ross 7).

In my view, the most striking fact about this dialogue is that Boiardo chooses to frame Orlando's love for Angelica in rather different terms compared to how he described love just a few stanzas earlier. Indeed, Orlando's monologue does not adopt the language and style of Virgil's poetry; instead, it references numerous tropes and conventions of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italian poetry. Above all, here Boiardo includes numerous and conspicuous references to Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (*Rvf*).[25]

The reason why I am stressing Boiardo's intertextual references to Petrarch's lyrics is that this choice is not at all innocuous or inconsequential. If one compares the meaning of the term '*amore*' in Petrarch's works, it becomes evident that this meaning is incompatible and antithetical to the Virgilian portrayal of love Boiardo introduces in the first stanzas of the poem. First and foremost, Petrarchan love is not an external force, but rather a sentiment that exists completely within the individual. Indeed, Petrarch's *Fragmenta* is the first iteration of the modern lyrical subject: in other words, this vision of love assumes that the individual is never in an untroubled state of being, but instead sees the subject as psychologically complex and layered (Friedrich 77-82). In the specific case of Petrarch, this lyrical 'I' is split between the sinful, carnal love for Laura and the pious, religious love for God. In the above-quoted monologue, Boiardo depicts Orlando as being torn by a similar internal struggle: in

[25]More specifically, Boiardo references *Rvf* 1, 206, 264. See also Canova's note to Orlando's speech in Boiardo 1.1.28-31.

this case, the choice is more secular, as the paladin is divided between his chivalric duties and his infatuation for Angelica. Hence, even though Boiardo described love as an external force, Orlando's love seems to be the result of a subjective tension.

Another critical difference between the Virgilian 'amor' and Petrarch's 'amore' is the fact that the latter is not inherently negative. Although love in *Fragmenta* is also the source of negative behaviours, nonetheless Petrarch's idea of love is certainly more optimistic than Virgil's. Indeed, while Petrarch introduces his carnal and secular love for Laura in the first sonnet of *Fragmenta* as sinful, his collection of poems culminates with the final chant to the Virgin, in which the poet finally acknowledges that the Christian love for God is the privileged path towards spiritual elevation (*Rvf* 366). So Petrarch's idea that love can lead to salvation is a trait that sets an even larger divide between this vision of love and Virgil's. Not only does Petrarch believe that love can also be a positive force, but he also shows that fallacious love can be rejected by embracing a different and more righteous form of this sentiment.

As Boiardo discusses love in the first canto of his poem both through the words of Virgil and Petrarch, how does he balance these two opposite visions of the same theme? Does the author of *Inamoramento* choose one perspective over the other? In other words, what does the term 'amore' truly mean in this poem? Is it a metaphysical force that exists outside of the characters and that everyone with a sane mind should completely avoid? Alternatively, is love a psychological affect that one can learn to control and that, eventually, can lead to achieving greater goals? If so, how should one control love? Should one focus on Christian love for God, as Petrarch states at the end of *Fragmenta*? Can positive love be also carnal as presented in the narratives of the Breton cycle?

As one reads through Boiardo's poem, these questions remain without a precise answer. Other than being the most powerful entity in *Inamoramento*, the exact origin of love remains surprisingly ambiguous. As a result, even the true nature and effects of

love on the characters remain open to question. Indeed, these two incompatible visions of love keep coexisting as the narrative progresses, and can be found once again after Angelica falls in love with Ranaldo after drinking from the Stream of Love (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.3.31-50). When Boiardo describes Angelica's love for Ranaldo a few cantos later, he does so by referencing both Virgil's *Aeneid* and Petrarch's *Fragmenta*. Here, the poet frames Angelica's suffering by comparing her to a wounded deer.

> Come cerva ferita di saeta,
> Che al longo tempo acresce il suo dolore
> E, quando il corso più veloze afreta,
> Più sangue perde e ha pena magiore,
> Così ognor cresce ala dongela il caldo,
> Anci il foco nel cor che ha per Ranaldo (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.5.14.3-8).

> . . . [L]ike and arrow-wounded deer
> whose grief increases over time,
> who loses blood and hurts the more
> the faster that it runs away,
> each day the maid grew hotter for
> Ranaldo. I mean, her heart burned! (Ross 46).

Boiardo's choice of simile pushes even further the confusion about how we should interpret the meaning of the term 'love' in this poem. On the one hand, the above verses clearly allude at how Virgil describes Dido's unreturned love for Aeneas in Book Four of *Aeneid* (*Aen.* 4.68-9). On the other hand, however, these same verses are a call back at Petrarch's *Rvf* 209, which is in turn a reference to *Aeneid*'s Book Four. Once again, Virgil and Petrarch employ the deer simile in vastly different terms. The former author uses it to stress the fact that Dido is about to commit suicide because she cannot bear the fact that Aeneas will soon leave Carthage. Above all, the focus on Virgil's simile is on the act of hunting itself instead than on Dido's feelings, thus

stressing once again that love is an external force.[26] While Petrarch also relies upon the deer simile so as to describe his longing for Laura, the tone here is not as tragic as it is in Virgil: instead, Petrarch accompanies the deer simile with a series of images that describe his sentiment for Laura as bittersweet, wistful and, above all, as one that entirely belongs to the poet's inner self.[27]

Once again, how should the reader interpret this simile in relation to Angelica's situation? This question is also more puzzling if one considers how the maid decides to deal with her situation. Instead of succumbing to the pain of love or simply savouring the longing for the object of desire as Dido and Petrarch's lyrical 'I' respectively do, Angelica chooses to take the situation under direct control. As she summons the knight-wizard Malagise, and asks him to capture Ranaldo and take him to her (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.5.18-23). What should we make of Angelica's behaviour? If the love she carries for Ranaldo is driving her insane and truly forces her to kidnap Ranaldo, then perhaps readers should merely pity her behaviour. If, on the contrary, she is the one who is incapable of managing her own feelings, then perhaps her behaviour should incite us to seek control for ourselves if we fall for the same passion. Since the nature of her love remains unclear, any moral response to it is always unreliable.

Similarly, Orlando's love for Angelica remains without any solution in the poem specifically because of the incongruous portrayal of love throughout the narrative. As Cavallo argues, the poem seems to push Orlando towards the direction of a respectful and responsible kind of love, mainly because this outcome is the one embraced by

[26]Virgil's formulation read as follows "Uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur / Urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerva sagitta, / Quam procul incautam nemora inter cresia fixit / Pastor agens telis liquitque volatile ferrum / Nescius; illa fuga silvas saltusque peragrat / Dictaeos, haeret laerti letalis harundo" ("Dido, unfulfilled, burns on and, in raving obsession / Randomly wanders the town, like a deer pierced through an arrow / Hit long range, when off guard, in the Cretan woods, by a shepherd / Armed for the hunt. He has left his steel-tipped shaft in her body, / Not knowing he's hit by his mark. In her flight, she ranges all Dicte's / Meadows and woods. Barbed deep in her haunch is the reed that will kill her") (Virgil, *Aen.* 4.68-73; Ahl 79).

[27]I quote Petrarch directly: "Meco di me mi meraviglio spesso / ch' i' pur vo sempre, et non son ancor mosso / dal bel giogo più volte indarno scosso, / ma com' più me n'allungo et più m'appresso" ("And many times I am amazed to find / that though I move, I've still not moved away / from the fair yoke in vain I've often shaken– / the farther I go, the closer I become.") (*Rvf* 209).

the happy couples in the poem such as Rugiero and Bradamante or Brandimarte and Fiordelisa (Cavallo, *Ethics* 137-155). However, even these overtly positive examples of love do not seem to inspire any practical solution to Orlando's love predicaments. Indeed, how is the latter knight supposed to solve his specific situation in light of these examples? Is Orlando supposed to turn his infatuation for Angelica into a mature love similar to the one that, in Book Three, blossoms between Rugiero and Bradamante? Should Orlando instead repudiate the pagan Angelica and only focus on his duties as a Christian paladin? While both solutions seem acceptable, the poem does not give the reader any hint about which of the two possibilities is the most desirable one for Orlando. In other words, Boiardo persistently discourages us from giving a univocal interpretation to the events told in his poem.

Apart from the specific examples of Orlando and Angelica, every clue on the nature of love that we find throughout *Inamoramento* is easily contradicted by other, contrasting hints. In numerous occasions, love is described in similar terms to the ones employed in the introductory octaves, or in other words as an external and unwinnable force. The most notable proof that love is an inescapable sentiment is the "Rivera delo Amore" (the "Stream of love") from which both Angelica and Ranaldo drink in different moments of the story (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.3.38-40; 2.15.42-66; Ross 28). Boiardo describes this stream as a natural riverbed, thus implying that love is indeed an external force instead of an inner state of being. Above all, the two episodes concerning the Rivera clearly set out the rules for how love works in the context of this poem. As Boiardo narrator first and Pantasilea later state, love punishes those who do not return the love others carry for them (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.3.40; 2.15.54-56).

Even though the presence of the Stream of Love seems to clarify once and for all how love works in *Inamoramento*, there are elements in the story that clearly contradict the above statements. Most notably, the Stream of Love is located near the fountain of Merlin, built by the Breton wizard in order to free Tristan from

the spell of love (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.3.32-4). This artifact goes against the rules of love described above, thus implying that, after all, love is not such an inescapable feeling. In fact, characters often step out of this condition on their own, that is without the help of artifacts such as Merlin's fountain. Orlando himself is the most clear example of this contradicting behaviour. For example, during the first intimate encounter between Orlando and Angelica, the paladin does not seem to show any interest or passion for her (1.25.35-46). Orlando's behaviour is also quite puzzling as far as other dames are concerned. On the one hand, he refuses Leodilla's advances; on the other hand, only a few cantos later, he falls in love also with Origille and thus forgets Angelica for quite a few cantos (1.24.13-17; 1.29.45-56). What makes Orlando's actions even more puzzling is the fact that his feelings for other women do not originate in the Stream of Love, but are entirely subjective. Does Orlando's love follow the same rules as Angelica and Ranaldo's? Is it rather a different kind of feeling? Once again, these questions never receive an answer.

Generally, given the numerous contradictory statements on the nature of love in Boiardo's poem, I contend that the term 'amore' in *Inamoramento de Orlando* does not have a precise and univocal meaning. In fact, I think that the most appropriate way of describing 'amore' in this poem is by calling it a countersignifying sign in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the term. Boiardo's 'love' is a semiotic element that is incapable of holding only one intrinsic connotation throughout the poem or, sometimes, even throughout a single canto. Instead, 'amore' assumes a situational meaning across the poem, it acquires different values according to the context in which we find it. As such, love in *Inamoramento* can be both an external force and a profoundly internal feeling; it can be at the same time an inescapable passion or one that can be eluded quite easily. In short, Boiardo does not adhere to only one of the visions of love mentioned above. At the same time, this narrative does not elaborate a theory of love on its own. Instead, Boiardo includes all these contrasting

ideas together in the same semiotic space.

Why does the author not give a precise meaning to his poem's key concept? My claim is that Boiardo is pushing his readers to embrace this uncertainty as a constructive and productive opportunity: in other words, I believe that treating love as a countersignifying sign is what enables *Inamoramento de Orlando* to function as a Thirdspace in Soja's sense of the term, or in other words as a space of radical heuristic openness. By refusing to give a single, univocal meaning to 'amore,' the poem becomes effectively an Utopic space of coincidence of incompatible theories of love. First and foremost, by including numerous contrasting definitions of love, *Inamoramento de Orlando* encourages its readers to compare and reconsider all definitions of love that originate in previous literary works, from Latin epic up until Medieval lyrical poetry. As love in this fictional world can mean anything, then Boiardo is implicitly stating that we should not hold any dogmatic preconception about our reality as true: in fact, the truth may be also the opposite of what we believe. In sum, Boiardo's agnostic stance towards love shows that *Inamoramento* is not a poem about ethics, but rather one about a pluralistic vision of ontology. In fact, the complex ontology that dominates *Inamoramento*'s fictional setting also allows the characters of this poem to approach and interact with reality in numerous and innovative ways.

4.5 An Open Quest for Knowledge

Inamoramento de Orlando is a poem about love in which the reader never truly understands what love is and how it works. The fact that this issue remains blatantly unresolved and equivocal at the end of the story (so much so that the narrative does not offer any precise ethical or even ontological framework to its readers) may be seen as a fatalistic statement on Boiardo's part. In other words, if readers cannot tell with precision which statement about love is true or false at the end of *Inamoramento*, then is the poem implying that the understanding of reality is not within our reach?

Are the characters of Boiardo's poem condemned to wonder about the fictional world of *Inamoramento de Orlando* without any possibility of discerning its nature?

As I wish to explain in this section, I think that we should not mistake the lack of final meanings in *Inamoramento* as a statement of mistrust for the possibility of knowing the world. On the contrary, the fact that Boiardo mingles different visions of love shows that multiple paths towards achieving a knowledge of the world are equally accurate and effective. In other words, not only is Boiardo creating a semiotic environment in which any definition of love is potentially valid, but he also proclaims that different ways of understanding how reality works hold similar importance. In fact, this profound and unshakable faith in humankind's heuristic possibilities is the second reason why I am defining this romance as a Thirdspace. Indeed, even in the rare occasions in which the poem informs the reader about the existence of objective and indisputable facts, Boiardo still stresses how these facts can be grasped via different and unconventional paths.

Orlando, the titular character of Boiardo's poem, is the most notable example of Boiardo's optimistic attitude towards knowledge. In terms of ability of understanding the world, Orlando is perhaps the most complex and versatile character in *Inamoramento*: more than any other characters in the story, Orlando interacts with the reality around him in very different ways, as he is capable of violence, but also of debating and reasoning. In his quest for Angelica, Orlando is often the victim of dangerous situations, in which he has to face enigmatic creatures, mighty monsters or powerful wizards and enchantresses. In my view, the most remarkable aspect of these encounters is that Orlando tends to adopt diverse solutions to overcome these circumstances, and that all of these solutions prove to be equally effective.

During his initial pursuit of Angelica, Orlando encounters a Sphinx, that is the mythological creature that poses daunting riddles to wayfarers who encounter her and kills those who do not answer correctly (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.5.69-71). This crea-

ture can reveal to the paladin where he can find Angelica, but in order to survive the encounter, the protagonist of the story must also find a way of overcoming this creature. Indeed, Orlando already has the means to outsmart the Sphinx: a few stanzas earlier, a pilgrim gave him "un bel libreto, / [c]operto ad oro e smalto luminoso" ("a lovely book / bright with enamel, gilt with gold") (*Orlando* 1.5.66.5-6; Ross 53). As the pilgrim states, this book is miraculous "[p]erché ogni dubïoso ragionare / su queste carte se dichiara e spiana" ("since every question, every doubt / is answered and explained in here") (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.5.67.5-6; Ross 53).

When Orlando faces the Sphinx a few stanzas later, the creature immediately reveals that Angelica is now in her native city of Albraca; at the same time however, the monster poses to Orlando two riddles: "Qual animal passegia sancia pede, / [e] poi qual altro al mondo se ritrova / [c]he con quatro, dui, tre de andar se prova?" ("What creature walks but has no feet? / Also, what other roams the world / first using four, then two, then three") (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.5.72.6-8; Ross 54). As implied in the earlier stanzas, the answers to these two riddles (that is, the seal and the human being) are contained in the pilgrim's book. However, instead of looking at the book he just received from the pilgrim, Orlando chooses to defeat his adversary with his sword: only after slaying the Sphinx does Orlando realize that he could have surpassed this obstacle more easily by reading the pilgrim's book: "Io fui ben smemorato," says Orlando to himself, "[s]ancia bataglia io potea satisfare, / [m]a cossí piacque a Dio che avesse ' andare" ("I could have looked / the answer up, but I forgot: I guess God made the fight my task") (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.5.76.6-8; Ross 54).

In *Ethics of Desire*, Cavallo makes reference to this episode in order to prove that, throughout Boiardo's poem, Orlando is the subject an enlightening journey. While at the beginning of the poem the French paladin "does not show much capacity for thought," from Book Two onward (and in particular, in the episodes of Falerina's gardens) he becomes a more reflexive person and attentive reader (Cavallo, *Ethics*

103; Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.24-5; 2.8.16-17). More precisely, Cavallo claims that the episode of the Sphinx is coherent with Boiardo's intent of providing *exempla* to his readers. Indeed, this episode implies that the characters in *Inamoramento* (and, in particular, Orlando) should become more attentive readers in order to become more mature individuals (*Ethics* 9-10). In short, Cavallo claims that Boiardo treats his protagonist "as an obtuse reader who is nevertheless capable of enlightenment" (10).

Although it is true that Orlando relies more on attentive reading so as to overcome obstacles in later parts of the poem, I disagree that, at the beginning of the story, the paladin is nothing more than a dull warrior. I wish to dispute this claim by pointing out that Orlando shows his mental abilities as well as a high degree of self-awareness multiple times before the Falerina garden cantos. For example, as pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, Orlando is the one who begins a complex intellectual conversation with Agricane about the nature of the cosmos (Boiardo, *Orlando* 1.18-19). Moreover, Orlando is the first character in the poem who shows a profound self-awareness, as Boiardo chooses to depict the moment in which the paladin falls in love with Angelica via a Petrarch-style monologue (1.1). However, if Orlando is indeed more sophisticated than he may seem at first, why does this character resort so often to brute violence? Why does Boiardo choose to portray his protagonist in such a contradicting manner?

What Orlando's predicaments teach us is that, in *Inamoramento*, there is no single way of dealing with a problem or overcoming an obstacle. On the contrary, in this fictional world characters are free to deal with the same problem or obstacle in multiple fashions, even contradicting ones. For example, the Sphinx episode illustrates that attentive reading is not the only acceptable means of solving a problem. Indeed, Orlando defeats this creature via somewhat unorthodox means from the perspective of Boiardo's most educated readers, and nonetheless these means prove to be as effective as the one offered by the pilgrim. There is not any particular repercussion

for Orlando not reading attentively: instead, the paladin still defeats his enemy, and his journey can continue without any trouble. In fact, in slaying the monster Orlando even defies the reader's expectations, thus displaying that readers should expect more unconventional interactions with the world as the story progresses.

While the character of Orlando exemplifies more than any other the fact that *Inamoramento* is grounded in the idea that different, even conflicting means of interacting with the world can lead to positive outcomes, the episode of the council of Biserta at the beginning of Book Two similarly shows that incompatible intellectual frameworks can lead to a better knowledge of reality (Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.1). As already pointed out earlier in this chapter, Book Two was written during Duke Ercole's reign over Ferrara, and thus it is entirely possible that this introductory canto to this new part of the story has been composed at the beginning of Ercole's tenure. In fact, readers can notice a sharp change of tone in Boiardo's writing: in contrast with Book One, here the narrator hints for the first time at how the poem is supposed to conclude. Indeed, in this canto the readers are introduced to Agramante, the Saracen king of Biserta, who wants to wage total war against France. The tone of the narrative in this canto vastly differs from the one Boiardo employs earlier in the poem: instead of presenting Christians and Saracens as loyal adversaries, this canto seems to foreshadow that the cultural and religious differences between the two groups will be insurmountable. For example, in proclaiming his desire to invade Europe to his councillors, Agramante openly mentions religious motivations: "[s]e amanti ponto me, vostro signore, / [m]eco vi piacia di passar in Franza, / [e] far la guerra contra al re Carlone, / [p]er agrandir la lege di Macone" ("if you have love for me, your lord, / come with me, if you please, to France, / and wage a war against King Charles / to glorify Mohammed's law") (*Orlando* 2.1.37; Ross 254).

From a superficial view, the introduction of Agramante seems to signal the beginning of a more conventional Carolingian narrative, in which Europeans and Pagans

are not simply loyal adversaries but, once again, sworn enemies. As the fight between Christians and Saracens seems to become the new, main focus of the story, there seems to be little room for reflections upon how ontology works in this fictional world or how characters can learn more about the nature of the world that surrounds them. However, this episode expands upon the epistemological aspects of Boiardo's poem that are already evident in Orlando's story arc. While Agramante incites his advisors and commanders to follow him blindly to France, the large majority of the King's counselor are against moving war against Charlemagne: from their point of view, the expedition is doomed to failure. Each of the counselors' opposition to their sovereign's plans is motivated by sound epistemological arguments. For example, King Branzardo summarizes that there are three arguments to suppose that Agramante's war will not be successful: these arguments derive respectively from reason, example and experience.

> "Magnanimo signor," disse il vecchione
> "Tutte le cose de che s'ha scientïa
> Over che son provate per ragione,
> O per exempio, o per esperïentia:
> E cossì, rispondendo al tuo sermone,
> Dapoich'io debbo dir la mia sententia,
> Dirò che contra del re Carlo Mano
> Il tuo passagio fia dannoso e vano." (Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.1.39).
>
> The old man said, "Magnanimous lord,
> all of the things of which one knows
> can be proved true by reason or
> example or experience.
> And so, responding to your speech-
> since I must offer my advice-
> I'll have to say, Fight Charlemagne?
> Your voyage will be cursed and vain!" (Ross 254).

In the following three octaves, Branzardo expands upon each of the three methods of knowledge he listed in the above quotation. Reason leads Branzardo to think that Charlemagne will never retreat and so he will be a hard adversary to beat.

Moreover, the example of Alexander fighting the Persians in a similar situation shows the weakness of the plan. Finally, the experience of a previous unsuccessful invasion of France attempt by Caroggeri confirms that any other attempt will be doomed to fail (Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.1.40-42). These three different assessments of Agramante's chances are supplemented also by the King of Garamanta, whose divine revelations further confirm the arguments proposed by Branzardo (*Orlando* 2.1.57-9; Cavallo, "Pathways" 307). Indeed, when in the later cantos of *Inamoramento de Orlando* Agramante's armies begin their invasion of France, the arguments and prophecies of the old counselors are confirmed by actual events: Charlemagne's army is indeed mighty and, at first, the Saracens are in danger of being defeated. (Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.15; 3.10).

In the first canto of Book Two Boiardo reminds us that, despite the change of tone and subject, *Inamoramento de Orlando* will be a poem about the issue of how to know reality. Indeed, as Cavallo explains, King Branzardo turns "a problem of action (whether or not to invade France) into a question of knowledge" as the poem states "that there are three ways to arrive at knowledge of all things" ("Pathways" 306). Moreover, what the council of Biserta episode infers is that not all phenomena or events in reality are completely unknown to characters (and readers alike) such as love: on the contrary, some truths in this poem seem to be quite self-evident. While Book One insists that love is a powerful force in the world whose nature is left largely ambiguous, Book Two states from the very outset that some truths are indeed knowable, such as the fact that Agramante is destined to be defeated. I am aware that this change of tone seems at odds my argument that Boiardo designed his poem to function as a Thirdspace; at the same time however, I contend that the epistemological nature of Boiardo's poem resembles that of a Thirdspace also because of the rules set at the beginning of Book Two. In particular, I believe that this canto confirms that, in the fictional setting of *Inamoramento*, knowledge is not a fruitless

endeavour, but on the contrary an always productive one, regardless of the methods one chooses to adopt in this pursuit.

As Cavallo stresses in her reading of the council of Biserta episode, the three different pathways to knowledge proposed by Agramante's advisors "all lead to the same conclusion, that the . . . invasion of France would end in failure" ("Pathways" 306). This claim leads Cavallo to argue that, in this canto, Boiardo is setting a "hierarchical relationship" for the above-mentioned methods of knowing the world. In this hierarchy, the "higher faculties of reason and intellect" are secondary to "religious faith," which grants those who are capable of achieving divine revelations to gain a completely accurate understanding of reality (308).[28] Even if Boiardo intended to set a hierarchical relationship between different heuristic methods, I contend that, as a result, the council of Biserta episode describes also a more open-minded idea of how characters can attain knowledge in this poem. Indeed, even though Cavallo claims that the arguments advanced by Branzardo and other advisors are merely approximations or conjectures because they are supported only by discursive reason instead of faith in God, these conjectures still prove to be completely right, as they correctly anticipate that Agramante's invasion of France will not be an easy task. What is also particularly remarkable is the fact that the two heuristic approaches that validate the opposition to Agramante are ultimately incompatible with one another. After all, faith in revelations works in the exact opposite way as discursive and intellectual reasoning: while the former method blindly trusts the words of the divinity, the latter elevates critical thinking and skepticism as the privileged way of understanding the world. Intuitively, these two approaches to knowledge would lead to divergent results, and yet here Boiardo's characters employ both of them so as to reach the same identical conclusion.

In my view, the rewarding use of different epistemological methods in the council

[28]In fact, Cavallo explains that this hierarchical relationship can be traced back to the philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa, thus further confirming that Neoplatonist thought exerted some influence on Boiardo's writing ("Pathways" 308).

of Biserta episode mirrors Orlando's successful use of different approaches to overcome obstacles throughout *Inamoramento de Orlando*. Indeed, the fact that, in the first canto of Book Two, all heuristic approaches point at the same unequivocal result reminds us of the fact that, at the beginning of the poem, Orlando was able to defeat the Sphinx even with a different method than the one he was supposed to use. Once again, the Biserta episode confirms that *Inamoramento de Orlando* is a space of radicals heuristic openness not only because it hosts different, incompatible approaches to and theories of knowledge, but above all because every single of these approaches (regardless of how unorthodox or outlandish it may seem) can lead to a better knowledge of reality.

In my view, the character who confirms Boiardo's positive attitude towards learning is Rodamonte. This character, one of the strongest warrior in Agramante's army, also takes part in the Biserta debate: he is in open dissent with the rest of the council, as he is eager to invade France to prove his bravery. While the previous orators explained their points of view via rather complex epistemological systems which require knowledge of historical facts or metaphysics, the warrior seeks truth only through direct and empirical knowledge. Indeed, in his counter-argument to Branzardo, Rodamonte dismisses the king's speech because the orator is too old to understand how the world works (Cavallo, "Pathways" 306-7).

> Levosse in piedi e disse "In ciascuno loco
> Ove fiamma s'accende, un tempo dura
> Picola prima, e puo' si fa gran foco;
> Ma come vien al fin sempre s'oscura,
> Mancando dil suo lume a poco a poco.
> E cossì fa l'umana creatura,
> Che poi ch'ha di sua età passato il verde,
> La vista, il senno e l'animo se perde" (Boiardo, *Orlando* 2.1.53).
>
> [Rodamonte] stood and said "In every place
> where one ignites a fire, the flame
> is small at first, and then it gains.
> But as it nears the end it wanes

> and gradually it loses light.
> And human beings do the same,
> since when their age has passed its prime
> they lose their courage, sense and sight" (Ross 256).

If intellectual dialectics and divine revelations are, respectively, a decent and an infallible heuristic method, Rodamonte's mere sense-perception does not seem to hold the same status in Boiardo's epistemological hierarchy. As Cavallo summarizes, "one could say that Rodamonte is stuck on the first rung of the ladder of knowledge, while Branzardo ... and the King of Garamanta symbolize the successive stages" (Cavallo, "Pathways" 308). Indeed, the fact that Rodamonte is the only advisor who wholeheartedly agrees with Agramante seems to prove this assessment. At the same time, however, as Cavallo herself admits, even Rodamonte's imprecise and unreliable method of knowledge proves to be effective at times. Indeed, when Rodamonte confronts Rugiero during Book Three, the former knight grasps that the latter is the greatest knight. "Ben chiaramente hagio veduto," Rodamonte states, "[c]he cavalier nonn·é di te migliore" ("I've seen and it is clear ... You are the world's best cavalier") (Boiardo, *Orlando* 3.5.12.6-7; Ross 538). Cavallo remarks,

> Rodamonte still thinks in extremes: the best knight he has encountered becomes the best knight tout court .... Perhaps this tendency to drastic shifts in thinking ... characterizes Rodamonte as someone who is just beginning to learn to think differently and therefore lacks subtleties. At the same time, however, Boiardo makes clear that Rodamonte's new estimation, while extreme, is *absolutely correct*" ("Pathways" 310-11)

Similarly to Orlando's own journey towards a better understanding of himself and the world around him, also Rodamonte's quest for knowledge does not follow a straight path. Both characters (and, by extent, also the readers of *Inamoramento*) are the protagonists of a learning process that is extremely unconventional and yet very productive. Not only does this process lead the characters and the readers to being exposed to different (and, sometimes, even incompatible) theories about reality methods of achieving knowledge; but it also demands them to experiment with knowledge

in a very proactive way. Furthermore, the results of this process are not known *a priori*; instead, they are open to discovery and further experimentations.

On a whole, I contend that *Inamoramento* can be described as a Thirdspace romance both because it promotes a quest for knowledge that does not follow a predetermined path, but that emerges through dialogue, experimentation and trial-and-error, and because of its unconditional optimism for the possibilities of knowing and interacting with reality. Regardless of their differences, both Boiardo and Soja's intellectual projects are animated by a desire for experimenting with heuristic practices, as both authors seek to mingle different approaches to knowledge so as to further our understanding of the world. The result is a metaphorical space of Utopian coincidence of divergent intellectual frameworks. Even though the consequence of mixing different theories and disciplines in the same conceptual space leads to some confusion and ambiguity about same basic truths about reality (in the case of Boiardo, the most confusing element is of course the nature of love) at the same time this mixture also implies that knowledge is easily within the characters' reach. Even the fact that in the dialogue episodes (most notably, the debate between Orlando and Agricane) usually both parts involved learn something from each other signals that the educational process Boiardo's characters and readers undergo is quite open-ended. As different approaches to knowledge are equally effective, then it does not matter how a character engages with the world: any interaction with it leads to a better understanding of reality.

In turn, *Inamoramento*'s open and eccentric epistemological ideas inform the politics of this text. As a text more concerned with ontological and epistemological issues rather than ethical ones, Boiardo demands his characters and readers to seek a better knowledge of the world around them before formulating models of public and private morality. In other words, *Inamoramento* does not aim at imposing specific examples of right public or private behaviours to its readers, but instead encourages them to

seek their own definitions of what it means to cultivate a good personality or what constitutes a good government. While some characters such as Rugiero offer *exempla* of positive behaviour to the readers, these examples do not hold universal truths since the narrative is unable to offer a tenable definition of the fundamental concepts that rule this fictional world, such as love or chivalry. As such Boiardo puts his characters in a continuing and eclectic quest to know the world in order to assess the exact truth of these concepts, which in turn should lead to the betterment of the individual and of society as a whole.

4.6 Ariosto and the Rejection of Thirdspace Romance

Inamoramento de Orlando is yet more proof that romance readily lends itself to political uses, and that these uses can be quite diversified. Other than being an alternative form of communication for subaltern social groups, a propaganda tool for the dominant classes, or a capitalist instrument for commodifying nostalgic artifacts, romance can also work, in the form of a Thirdspace, as an epistemological instrument for acquiring a better understanding about reality and adapting our behaviour. In other words, Boiardo's poem shows that romance can also function as a unique didactic tool for encouraging its readers to cultivate a more accurate knowledge of themselves and the world around them. In turn, acquiring a more exact knowledge can lead to the betterment of the common good, as one can understand how to become a responsible member of society.

All in all, as an example of Thirdspace romance, *Inamoramento de Orlando* enriches our understanding of this literary mode as a political instrument. However, one more question about this text needs to be answered: why Boiardo's poem cannot be described as an example of minor art in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the word? In light of the reading I offered in the previous sections, I believe that this question is quite pertinent. Indeed, so far we have acknowledged that *Inamoramento*

is a countersignifying regime of signs, or in other words the most favourable semiotic environment for enacting a process of becoming-minoritarian. Above all, Boiardo uses this countersignifying semiotics for the outright enlightened political goal of improving society. Although the political preoccupations of Boiardo are historically and culturally distant from the sensibility of Deleuze and Guattari, the author of *Inamoramento de Orlando* still strives for forging a better world, which is ultimately the very goal of minor art; moreover, he does so via a text that presents a high degree of semiotic deterritorialization. Hence, in light of these facts, can the political use of romance in *Inamoramento de Orlando* be considered minoritarian?

To answer this question, we first need to take into consideration one fundamental difference between Soja and Boiardo's Thirdspaces, that is the final goal of their respective heuristic practices. On the one hand, Soja's Thirdspace seeks to challenge all predetermined knowledge and to pave the way for new approaches of conceiving and interacting with the world around us. In doing so, Soja adheres to one of the core tenants of postmodern thought, that is the idea that trying to understand how reality in an objective should not be the final goal of intellectual endeavours. Instead, in a rather Deleuzian fashion, Soja puts more importance on how we can reshape our vision of the world as well as our ways of interacting with it. To quote Soja directly "*Thirdspace* too can be described as a creative recombination and extension, one that builds on a Firstspace perspective that is focused on the 'real' material world and a Secondspace perspective that interprets reality through 'imagined' representations of spatiality." The result of this practice should lead us to conceive the world as a series of '*real-and-imagined places*'" (6).

As opposed to Soja, Boiardo does not employ a similar Thirdspace semiotics in order to reshape reality altogether; instead, he does so for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of truths that, in his view, are very much factual. Although Boiardo's poem is informed by the idea that knowledge can be attained by combining

and exploring different heuristic methods, this narrative is still rooted in the idea that objective and universal truths do exist, and that our main intellectual ambition should be to fathom these truths. In other words, *Inamoramento* is a poem about the eagerness of understanding a reality which, unlike the pluralistic and monadic one described by Deleuze and Guattari, exists independently from the perceptions and the actions of the people who inhabit it. At times, this reality remains unknown to the readers and the protagonist of the poem, as in the case of the true nature of love. While the ambiguous nature of love in Boiardo's poem may be read as a way of puts into question the very ontological nature the reality around us, this reading is contradicted by the fact that objectively verifiable truths do exist in the world of Boiardo's poem. For example, the fact that Rugiero is the model of chivalry or that Agramante's war against Charlemagne is destined to be a disaster are both unquestionable truths stated by Boiardo as a narrator. As pointed out in the previous section, there are of course multiple ways of understanding this fact, such as Rodamonte's empirical yet rough observations or the divine revelations of the King of Garamanta. Nonetheless, Boiardo's rhizomatic search for truth presupposes a final objective answer, regardless of whether this answer is already known or not.

Hence, even though Boiardo employs a countersignifying semiotics with the political goal of building a better society, this political use is not the one Deleuze and Guattari envision in their theorization of minor literature. Once again, a minor literary text is a text that leads its readers to question the basic tenants of the reality that surrounds them. Above all, a minor text challenges the very structures of power that operate within a specific society so as to pave the way for creating new and possibly better structures of thought. In other words, while minor art as Deleuze and Guattari envision it is a fundamental tool for eventually shaping a new reality for ourselves, its first function is inevitably more antagonistic and destructive than it is constructive. Even though Boiardo's poem is based on countersignification, it is nonetheless a work

grounded in the idea that objective truths do exist, and that they should be pursued and not discarded in favour of a reality created by ourselves. As such, *Inamoramento de Orlando* fails to deliver the kind of minoritarian politics envisioned by Deleuze and Guattari. In other words, from a Deleuzian point of view, reading *Inamormento* produces a profound deterritorialization, in that the reader faces a world in which knowledge is attainable via any conceivable method. However, as this reading does not lead to any becoming-minoritarian, this deterritorialization remains relative and never becomes absolute. As such, the deterritorialization enacted by Boiardo's poem opens itself to a reterritorialization into meaning.

Similarly to *Star Wars*, also *Inamoramento de Orlando*'s narrative has been continued in a sequel that, eventually, grew in importance compared to the original text. The fact that Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* ('*The Frenzy of Orlando*') has surpassed in popularity Boiardo's poem has to do with the fact that the latter text offers a more conclusive narrative compared to the former. On the one hand, Ariosto offers clear conclusions to the narrative plots left open by Boiardo, as well as more precise answers to the epistemological questions Boiardo leaves unanswered. Most notably, Ariosto finally reveals that Orlando's love for Angelica is of the Virgilian kind, in that it eventually leads the French paladin to complete insanity and in need of rescue. Indeed, in the famous episode that gives the title to the poem, Orlando goes mad once he discovers that Angelica has fallen in love with the pagan knight Medoro (Ariosto 23.100-24.13). In the middle of this narrative, the author steps in to explain in rather unambiguous terms that love is a form of madness.

> Chi mette il piè su l'amorosa pania
> cerchi ritirarlo, e non v'inveschi l'ale;
> che non è in somma amor, se non insania,
> a giudizio de' savi universale:
> e se ben come Orlando ognun non smania,
> suo furor mostra a qualch'altro segnale.
> E quale è pazzia segno più espresso

> che, per altri voler, perder se stesso?
> . . . . . .
> Ben mi si potria dir: – Frate, tu vai
> l'altrui mostrando, e non vedi il tuo fallo. –
> Io vi rispondo che comprendo assai,
> or che di mente ho lucido intervallo;
> et ho gran cura (e spero farlo ormai)
> di riposarmi e d'uscir fuor di ballo:
> ma tosto far, come vorrei, nol posso;
> che 'l male è penetrato infin all'osso (Ariosto 24.1, 3).
>
> Who in Love's snare has stepped, let him recoil
> Ere round his wings the cunning meshes close;
> For what is love but madness after all,
> As every wise man in the wide world knows?
> Though it is true not everyone may fall
> Into Orlando's state, his frenzy shows
> What perils lurk; what sign is there more plain
> Then self-destruction, of a mind insane?
> . . . . . .
> You might well say: "My friend, you indicate
> The faults of others; yours you do not see."
> But I reply: "I see the matter straight
> In this brief moment of lucidity,
> And I intend (if it is not too late)
> To quit the dance and seek tranquillity.
> And yet I fear my vow I cannot keep:
> In me the malady has gone too deep" (Reynolds 2:29).

As the second octave of this quotation strongly suggests, Ariosto believes madness is perhaps the sole certainty about the world. Indeed the issue of knowledge in Ariosto's poem is ultimately more pessimistic than it is in *Inamoramento de Orlando*. As Cavallo explains,

> Ariosto challenges Boiardo's optimistic faith in knowledge in two fundamental ways: first he suggests that what is referred to as knowledge is often no more than unfounded belief bolstered by subjective emotional states; second, he shows that objective knowledge does not necessarily have positive consequences, but, on the contrary, can actually bring about the undoing of both the self and the social fabric ("Pathways" 305).

As a result, Ariosto shows extreme disdain for romance as a heuristic tool. Indeed, the modality of knowledge that Boiardo privileges the most is often the subject of

ridicule throughout *Orlando furioso*. Yet, perhaps the episode of *Furioso* that displays a very pessimistic vision of romance as an instrument of knowledge is Astolfo's journey to the Moon, which constitutes the most overtly romance episode of the entire poem (Ariosto 34.70-87). Indeed, during his chaotic travels, Astolfo (one of Charlemagne's knights) ends up encountering Saint John the Evangelist in the Earthly Paradise. The Saint informs him about what happened to Orlando and tells him that the only way to save the knight is to recover his wits, which ended up stranded on the Moon (34.60-67). In the aftermath of this conversation, Astolfo is brought by the Saint to the satellite, which Ariosto describes as a planet that looks exactly like Earth (34.70-72). However, Saint John soon reveals to Astolfo that the Moon is where all the behaviours or useless objects produced on Earth end up being.

> Da l'apostolo santo fu condutto
> in un vallon fra due montagne istretto,
> ove mirabilmente era ridutto
> ciò che si perde o per nostro diffetto,
> o per colpa di tempo o di Fortuna:
> ciò che si perde qui, là si raguna (Ariosto 34.73.3-8).
>
> Between two mountains of prodigious height
> The traveller to a deep valley went.
> What by our fault, or Time's relentless flight,
> Or Fortune's chances, or by accident
> (Whatever be the cause) we lose down here
> Miraculously is assembled there. (Reynolds 2:330).

As such, the description of the Moon rapidly turns into a long list of useless items that are consigned on Earth's satellite (Ariosto 34.73-84). Among these items, Astolfo finds things that are more notably a waste of time, such as "[l]e lacrime e i sospiri degli amanti / l'inutil tempo che si perde a giuoco" ("[t]he tears of lovers and their endless sights / the moments lost in empty games of chance") (Ariosto 34.75.1-2; Reynolds 2:330). Yet, other items that populate the Moon are less obvious examples of waste: indeed, the satellite also collects "le corone antiche" ("crowns, by monarchs worn, long past") or "quei doni / che si fan con speranza di mercede / ai re, agli avari

principi, ai patroni" ("treasure . . . made in the hope of mercy and reward, to patrons, avaricious princes, kings") (Ariosto 34.76.5, 77.2-4; Reynolds 2:331). Regardless of the importance they previously held, all these items are now consigned together into a semiotic space which deprives them of any original function and significance. In other words, the Moon in *Furioso* works as an immense junkyard or, more precisely, as an anachronistic Junkspace. As such, the most overtly romance episode of Ariosto's narrative rejects the idea that romance can be an instrument of knowledge and demotes it to a mere aggregation of semiotic material that has lost any meaning.

5

Performing Romance: The Emilian *Maggio* Tradition and *Star Wars: Galaxies*

5.1 Performance Adaptations and Minor Art

So far, this thesis has demonstrated that romance is quite evidently a political literary form. Throughout history, romance is often appropriated by different social and cultural groups in order to further their own worldviews and agendas: this concept of romance is made evident by discussing two vastly different political uses of romance outside of those proposed by Frye and Jameson. Indeed, as explained in chapters 3 and 4, the political goals of *Star Wars* and *Inamoramento de Orlando* are, respectively, accelerating the commodification and consumption of nostalgic artifacts and putting different intellectual perspectives in competition with one another in order to understand objective truths about reality.

Although this survey has expanded our understanding of the political uses of romance, at the same time this work has yet to address properly the concept of minor art in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the term: in other words, this analysis still has to offer convincing arguments about whether romance can function also as minor art. As emerged from the close readings of *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars*, neither of these two texts favours a process of becoming-minoritarian. On the one hand, both texts

can be defined as countersignifying romances or, in other words, as romances that rely upon a countersignifying regime of signs. As Deleuze and Guattari argue in their writings, countersignifying regimes are made of deterritorialized semiotic material. As such, these regimes mark the first condition for a minoritarian use of the arts, that is a high degree of deterritorialization. Indeed, both *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* have the potential of enacting a process of becoming-minoritarian thanks to their countersignifying semiotics, as their mingling of different kind of semiotic material goes in the direction of an immanent and monadic vision of reality.

On the other hand, however, both romances do not use this semiotic deterritorialization for the purpose of leading the audiences towards a process of becoming-minoritarian: instead, they end up creating processes that confirm majoritarian structures of thought. In other words, these two texts are in open contrast with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor art, since the specific goals these texts set for themselves largely differ from the idea of questioning existing structures of thought on a fundamental level. To follow Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, both Lucas' film and Boiardo's poem are tamed war machines, in that they both follow the countersignifying regime of signs but at the same time they use it for non-minoritarian and, in some cases, even hegemonic purposes.[1]

Moreover, while both texts offer a profound deterritorialization of semiotic material, at the same time they open themselves up to being reterritorialized. Indeed, the two sequels of *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars*—that is, *Orlando furioso* and *The Empire Strikes Back*—are blatant examples of this majoritarian drift. Both these sequels are indeed re-elaborations over their original texts which undermine any minoritarian use of them. On the one hand *Empire* reshapes the countersignifying regime of signs of *Star Wars* into an example of postsignification, whereas Ariosto's *Furioso* openly antagonizes the idea that romance can be an effective heuristic tool, which is at the

[1] I already discussed the issue of the tamed war machine in section 3.4.

core of *Inamoramento de Orlando*.

The fact that this survey still has not been able to include outright minoritarian uses of romance proves that minor art and, by extent, absolute deterritorialization are not simple and straightforward goals to achieve. However, since the two countersignifying romances I discussed do not end up favouring minoritarian usages begs the question of whether romance is a valid example of minor art. In other words, is romance simply limited to the spectrum of hegemonic-subaltern politics? Does this form simply use the countersignifying semiotic environment it creates only for majoritarian goals? On the contrary, can romance be used effectively as minor art? If so, what does mark a minoritarian use of romance? Before answering these questions, I wish to look back for a moment to what the requirements are for minor art according Deleuze and Guattari. As already pointed out in section 2.1.4, minor art requires a profound deterritorialization of a language or semiotic system, a micropolitical scope and a collective form of enunciation. While romances such as *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* do offer a profound deterritorialization of semiotic systems in the form of countersignifying regimes of signs, they nonetheless lack the latter two requirements of minor art.

In other words, what is lacking in *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars* is a non-hegemonic interaction with the semiotic material these two texts deterritorialize: in order to be truly minoritarian, both texts need to create an interaction with the semiotic environment they create that both enables a collective form of enunciation and an understanding of reality on a micropolitical level. As far as *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars* are concerned, we need to find a way to include micropolitical and collective interactions with the semiotic material both texts offer. Only this way both these texts can further the deterritorialization of semiotic in a way that effectively challenges repressive structures of thought. As I explain in this chapter, a very effective way of introducing a micropolitical and collective of these two texts is via performance

adaptations of them

Let me offer a detailed explanation of each of these two terms—that is, performance and adaptation—by starting with the former of the two. In the context of the arts, performance is a term that intuitively evokes forms of expression such as theatre, dance or opera. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari do often include examples of performative arts in their writings. For instance, *A Thousand Plateaus* often relies upon examples drawn from numerous performance practices in order to explains what becoming-minoritarian means: these examples range from Glenn Gould's piano performance to a southern Italian folk dance known as Tarantella, from Robert De Niro's method acting to Antonin Artaud's experimental theatre.[2] Of course, the essay that addresses the issue of becoming-minoritarian in performance is Deleuze's "One Less Manifesto" which was originally included in the 1979 volume *Superpositions* alongside Carmelo Bene's theatre piece *Riccardo III* as a response and a comment to this latter text. Laura Cull, a leading scholars of performance studies from Deleuze's point of view, sees "One Less Manifesto" as "*the* critical text for all those interested in Deleuze and performance" (Introduction 4). Indeed, the theory of performance I propose in this chapter will also include an attentive reading of Deleuze's essay.

However, in order to understand the relevance of the performative arts in Deleuze and Guattari's politics, we first need to acknowledge the fact that the very concept of performance goes beyond the performative arts. Indeed, if we choose to follow Richard Schechner's extensive definition of the term, performance ends up marking "a 'broad spectrum' or 'continuum' of human actions ranging from ritual, sports, popular entertainments [...], and everyday life performances to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles" (2). In other words, as Cull clarifies, from Schechner's perspective performance "becomes and umbrella term that incorporates theatre as a sub-category" (Introduction 2). Not only is this broad definition of

[2]See Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 8, 158-63, 274, 306 for the above-mentioned passages.

performance present in Deleuze and Guattari's thought, but it is above all a critical component of their ontology and political theory. As David Puncher points out, in Deleuze's philosophy theatre "is not simply a metaphor or a communicative device, but lies at the heart of Deleuze's project, determining its terms, constructions, and arguments" (524).

Indeed, the term 'performance' is key to Deleuze and Guattari's functionalist ontology. In particular, performance is key to understanding how to go beyond repressive structures of thought and shape a new reality for ourselves. While the term 'performance' appears quite sparsely throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari discuss it as early as in the introduction to the volume (*Plateaus* 12-3). Here, the term 'performance' is established in opposition to the concept of 'competence.' The latter term is associated with arborescent structures of thought, in that it signals the "idea of pretraced destiny, whatever name is given to it—divine, anagogic, historical, economic, structural, hereditary, or syntagmatic" (13). In contrast, the former term effectively describes how rhizomes function.

> All of tree logic is a logic of tracing and reproduction. . . . The rhizome is altogether different, a *map and not a tracing*. . . . What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields. . . . The map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged 'competence' (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 12-13).

This broader idea of performance expressed in *A Thousand Plateaus* is of course linked with the more restricted definition of performance in the arts, and indeed both the broad concept of performance and the narrow definition of performance in the arts inevitably influence one another. First and foremost, interrogating performative practices in the arts and media via the broad concept of performance that Deleuze and Guattari introduce in the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* can help us in better understanding how the performative arts work and what they can

accomplish. To quote Cull once again,

> [t]he Deleuzian concept of . . . becoming . . . holds great promise for the analysis of how performance impacts upon an audience, offering an alternative to the over-emphasis on interpretation and the construction of meaning that derives from Performance Studies' embrace of semiotics, critical theory and psychoanalysis (Introduction 8).

Secondly, and perhaps above all, performative practices can help us in producing the kind of change Deleuze and Guattari invite us to enact in the world around us. As Cull further argues, "Deleuze's thought not only adopts the language of performance, but intervenes critically in the field with the production of a new vision of performance as a vital philosophical and political force" (Introduction 2). In short, performance in Deleuze and Guattari is "a self-conscious activity" and "a kind of philosophy" in itself (Cull, Introduction 3; *Theatres* 4). Indeed, performative arts are a critical part of Deleuze and Guattari's thought because they create an environment for experimenting new interactions with the world other than the ones currently adopted. In other words, artistic performance (and, especially, the experimental performative practices Deleuze and Guattari discuss in their works) is an activity that may encourage practitioners and audiences to seek out new and creative interactions with the reality around us.

This second way of understanding performance in Deleuzian terms ultimately describes the kind of activity that can be undertaken via minor art. Indeed, these new interactions can lead us to question coercive concepts such as authorship or hegemonic politics, and in turn seek the collective enunciation and micropolitical intent that are necessary for minor art to thrive. Hence, performance is as key to becoming-minoritarian as semiotic deterritorialization is, in that it is an effective way of seeking the micropolitical intent and collective form of enunciation theorized by Deleuze and Guattari. As an artistic and social practice that enables one to interact with reality potentially in unconventional terms, performance is also necessary to

explore new ways of organizing reality around us.

Even though performance (both in the broadest sense of the term and in its application in the arts) is quite evidently a vital component of Deleuze and Guattari's ontology and politics, Deleuzian scholarship on the topic is still surprisingly lacking. In the introduction to the 2009 *Deleuze Connections* volume devoted to the performative arts, Cull lamented a lack of interest for Deleuze's "One Less Manifesto." Indeed, while on the one hand Cull legitimately defines this essay as "*the* critical text for all those interested in Deleuze and performance," on the other hand Cull laments that this essay has been discussed rarely by scholars of Deleuze and has not been published in English in its original form (Cull, Introduction 4).[3] Although at the time of my writing a complete English translation of Bene and Deleuze's *Superpositions* has yet to be published, finally in the past few years studies on the relationship between performance and Deleuze and Guattari's thought have started to acquire momentum (Cull, *Theatres* 2-3).

However, despite this increasing interest, performance studies from a Deleuze and Guattari's perspective are still in their infancy, and thus there are numerous unexplored lines of research yet to pursue. My choice of texts for this chapter is indeed oriented towards expanding the scholarship on performance from Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, as these texts are two examples of performative practices that, in my view, have yet to be discussed thoroughly via Deleuze and Guattari's thought. These texts are the folk musical theatre tradition of the Emilian *Maggio* and the online role-playing video game *Star Wars: Galaxies*.

The lack of interest in folk theatre and videogames among Deleuzian scholars is certainly a shortcoming, and yet a somehow understandable one. Indeed, Deleuze was both quite wary of folk theatre and utterly uninformed about video games. On the other hand, however, even recent Deleuzian studies on performance seem to have

[3] An evident proof of this lack is the fact that the term 'performance' is missing from Bonta and Protevi's 2004 glossary of Deleuze and Guattari's thought.

embraced Deleuze's limited view on these topics, as they have not offered yet convincing readings of performance works outside of those discussed by Deleuze. Studies like Cull's have helped us in discerning the Deleuzian concept performance via modern and contemporary theatre practices that Deleuze himself appreciated—such as Bene, Artaud and the Living Theatre—as well as through examples of theatre which Deleuze did not discuss directly but that are still akin to the kind of theatre he promoted.[4] Although this line of research certainly holds importance in the context of Deleuze and Guattari's studies, at the same time I argue that such restricting focus on modern and contemporary theatre may lead us to ignore the broadness of the concept of performance, which instead invites us to explore applications of it also outside of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century avant-garde scene.

While I believe it is important in and by itself to discuss two cases of performance such as folk theatre or video games that have not been covered yet by Deleuzian scholarship in pertinent terms, what drove me to choose these two specific performative practices is the fact that both of them are adaptations of the two texts I analyzed in the previous two chapters. Indeed, the *Maggio* tradition heavily draws inspiration from the Italian chivalric poems of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries, as numerous plays that follow this form of theatre are essentially re-tellings or re-elaborations of episodes from works such as *Inamoramento de Orlando*, *Orlando furioso* and *Gerusalemme liberata*. Similarly, *Galaxies* recreates the *Star Wars* fictional universe (with a particular emphasis on the first movie) in the form of a role-playing videogame. The reason why I am stressing the derivative nature of the *Maggio* tradition and *Star Wars: Galaxies* is that adaptation (and, more in general, any kind of derivative work such as a sequel, a prequel or a spin-off) is a vital component for performative practices that wish to enact a process of becoming-minoritarian.

Of course, in order to suit the concept of adaptation in the Deleuzian discourse we

[4]These examples include the works Georges Lavaudant and of the collective theatre group Goat Island. See Cull, *Theatres*.

need to move away from the *au courant* idea of adaptation as a work that faithfully translates an existing text into another media or format. Indeed, current studies of adaptation favour alternative approaches to the topic, which are arguably more in line with Deleuze and Guattari's thought. For example, in her theory of adaptation Linda Hutcheon proposes that "proximity and fidelity to the adapted text" should not be "the criterion of judgement or the focus of analysis" of an adaptation (6). On the contrary, Hutcheon posits that "[a]daptation is repetition, but repetition without replication. And there are manifestly many different possible intentions behind the act of adaptation. . . . '[T]o adapt' is to adjust, to alter, to make suitable" (7).[5]

In light of Hutcheon's approach to adaptation studies, it becomes evident that that adaptation is, in fact, a machinic practice in the Deleuzian sense of the term: in other words, adaptation is yet another example of interaction that bodies and assemblages entertain with one another. Indeed, if we were to consider adaptations only as faithful translations of an adapted text, we would end up treating them as a matter of competence in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the term: that is, we would see adaptation as an act of following an already established path set up by the text of origin. As Hutcheon instead argues, we should consider an adaptation as an assemblage that acts upon another assemblage (that is, the adapted text) so as to somehow modify it and reshape it into something new.

In the previous chapters, we already encountered examples of derivative works that act upon their text of origin so as to change their nature in a fundamental way. Indeed, both *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Orlando furioso* exerted an enormous influence respectively upon *Star Wars* and *Inamoramento de Orlando*, to the point of even changing the impact the source material had upon their original audiences. However, even though *Empire* and *Furioso* are perhaps the most influential example of

[5]In fact, even contemporary practitioners have embraced this expansive idea of adaptation. Indeed, two blatant example of how far-reaching is today's concept of adaptation are the television series *Game of Thrones* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, which offer to their audiences retellings that vastly differ from their respective source material.

derivative works that originate from Lucas' 1977 film and Boiardo's poem, these works are most certainly not the only texts that aim to change these two texts of origin. Indeed, one should not forget that, due to their immense popularity, *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars* are both particularly inclined to be appropriated, adapted, retold and continued.

As already discussed in chapter 3, Lucas' franchise encompasses numerous tie-in product which include narrative sequels and prequels in the form of films, novels, television series, comic books and video games. The most recent iteration of these tie-in products is the so-called 'sequel trilogy' of *Star Wars*, which continues the saga beyond *Return of the Jedi*. Similarly, Boiardo's poem has been subject to numerous sequels and re-writings. After the poet's death in 1494, *Inamoramento* has been continued in at least five bootleg sequels independent from Ariosto's *Furioso* (known in Italian as *gionte*) as well as to complete re-writings of the original work (called *rifacimenti*). Even though these derivative works have not been as popular among scholars and critics as *Furioso* and *Empire* were, all of them act upon the work they adapt so as to modify it, sometimes even to the point of drastically changing our perception of the original work. For example, Francesco Berni's *rifacimento* of *Inamoramento* is a reinterpretation of the original poem form a strong allegorical perspective which, despite its distance from Boiardo's original intent, arguably has influenced contemporary readings of Boiardo's poem.[6] Inevitably, these modifications have always a political impact which, in some cases, is also quite manifest. For example, the 2017 *Star Wars* sequel *The Last Jedi* re-reads the *Star Wars* mythos from the point of view of contemporary identity politics by challenging the idea that Force powers derive from blood ties.

In sum, adaptations (or, more in general any kind of derivative work such as a sequel or a spin-off) are performative actions in and by themselves: indeed, these

[6]For example, Cavallo mentions Berni at the beginning of her reading of *Inamoramento* as didactic and allegorical text (*Ethics* 3-4).

kinds of works act upon the text of origin in order to modify their original message, scope and usage. As an adaptation can influence a text of origin to such a large extent, is it possible that an adaptation can change its text of origin so as to enact a process of becoming-minoritarian? In other words, is adaptation an effective way of shaping a text into an example of minor art? In "One Less Manifesto" Deleuze makes clear from the very incipit of the essay that he considers Carmelo Bene's *Riccardo III* as an effective example of minor art because this work *is* an adaptation of Shakespeare *Richard III* (Deleuze, "Manifesto" 239). As Deleuze explains, Bene's piece intervenes upon Shakespeare's original text in order to change it in a profound way so as to transform an example of major literature into a minor one.

> [I]sn't there a great incentive in subjecting authors considered major to a minor author treatment in order to rediscover their potential becomings? There would appear to be two contrary operations. On the one hand, one ascends to 'the major' .... [O]peration for operation ...one can conceive the opposite .... When you see how the traditional theater treats Shakespeare, his magnification-normalization, one calls for another treatment that would recover the active force of the minority (Deleuze, "Manifesto" 242-43).

I will return to "One Less Manifesto" in section 5.3, where I will discuss into more detail why Deleuze considers Bene's *Riccardo III* as a minor version of Shakespeare's original work. For the time being, I merely wish to stress that Bene's theatre piece is, in Deleuze's view, an example of minor art because it combines quite effectively performance and adaptation to further the political goal of challenging repressive structures of thought.

After clarifying my use of the terms 'performance' and 'adaptation,' I am now ready to explain why I argue that romance can be pushed towards the condition of minor art via adaptations that include a strong performance component; and more specifically, I can now clarify why I am proposing the *Maggio* tradition and *Star Wars: Galaxies* as effective tools for pushing *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* towards a minoritarian condition. First and foremost, both of these adaptations

act upon their texts of origin so as to change, modify or somehow influence them. Secondly, the kind of changes these adaptation enact upon their respective text of origin are, in my view, quite similar with each other, as well as very much akin to the kind of change Deleuze sees as minoritarian. Indeed, the most significant change that both the *Maggio* tradition and *Star Wars: Galaxies* enact upon their text of origin is enabling readers and audiences of Italian chivalric romances and Lucas' saga of performing within the story worlds established by these two narratives. On the one hand, as a form of folk theatre, the *Maggio* features amateur actors in the role of Boiardo and Ariosto's characters. On the other hand, the videogame *Galaxies* allows players interact to first hand with the fictional setting of *Star Wars* by letting them perform as a character within this setting. In sum, both *Maggio* plays and *Star Wars: Galaxies* discourage us from being passive readers or spectators, and instead incite us to interact with the narratives they adapt.

I am not claiming, of course, that adapting a film or a literary text so as to allow readers and audiences to perform within a fictional setting is *per se* the enactment of a becoming-minoritarian. Similarly, I am not arguing that all forms of performance and adaptation constitute an example of minor art. At the same time, however, I contend that both plays in the *Maggio* tradition and *Star Wars: Galaxies* easily lend themselves to minoritarian uses *because* they are adaptations rooted in performance. Indeed, enabling performance within a text means opening up new and creative interactions with this text. In the case of *Maggio* plays and *Galaxies*, these new interactions also involve dealing with the profoundly deterritorialized semioitic environment of the Italian chivalric tradition and of *Star Wars*. Both texts keep the high degree of semiotic deterritorialization of their texts of origin, but at the same time they allow their users to directly interact with this semiotic material. As I wish to illustrate in the following sections, these texts grant a high degree of performative freedom to their users, to the point of even allowing non-hegemonic interactions

with the original material. In turn these non-hegemonic interaction can further the deterritorialization of semiotic material enacted by Boiardo's poem and Lucas film towards a process of becoming-minoritarian.

5.2 The Tradition of the Emilian *Maggio*

I begin the close reading section of this chapter by discussing first the *Maggio* tradition in light of Deleuze's "One Less Manifesto." Indeed, the Deleuzian approach to video games that I will introduce later in this chapter will be a re-elaboration of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy to a form of expression that they were not familiar with. On the contrary, theatre is an artistic form that the two authors (and, in particular, Deleuze alone) openly discussed from the perspective of minor art. As such, theatre is both the most straightforward way of understanding how performance can lead to becoming-minoritarian and the foundation for understanding video games from the point of view of minor art.

First and foremost, I wish to devote a few pages to explaining what is exactly the tradition of the *Maggio*, both because most of my readers will be unfamiliar with it and because the tropes and conventions of this tradition will be key to understanding its potential minoritarian usages.[7] In short, the Emilian *Maggio* is a form of folk musical theatre which has developed for centuries in rural communities of the Apennine Mountains between Modena and Reggio Emilia. While the earliest documented performance of a *Maggio* play dates back to 1792, it is easy to suppose that this tradition must have been developed earlier than the eighteenth century.[8] Indeed, as Tullia Magrini points out, numerous conventions of this tradition closely resemble those of Medieval popular theatre ("Identità" 7). Moreover, as a cultural tradition that has been preserved for the most part in an oral form among subaltern social and

[7]Recordings of *Maggio* plays can be seen in Cavallo's 2003 documentary *Il Maggio emiliano: ricordi, riflessioni, brani.*

[8]See Aravecchia 99-100 for a description of the documentation pertaining the 1792 performance.

cultural groups, its developments have not been registered by hegemonic and official culture (8). Despite its prolonged history and the radical social changes that these communities have been subjected to, the *Maggio* has endured up until today, as this theatrical tradition is still practiced and followed in several Emilian communities.

'*Maggio*' in Italian is the word for the month of May and, as the name of this tradition implies, plays that belong to this performance practice are usually represented during the summer months. Due to its link with the fertile season, it is quite straightforward to consider the *Maggio* as a vestigial example of primordial seasonal rites (Magrini, "Identità" 7, 19). *Maggio* plays are not performed in a indoor theatre, but rather outdoors: partly for this reason the staging of these performances is organized in a way that vastly differs from the naturalist conventions that are still dominant in today's mainstream performance practices. While the latter tradition prescribes a clear separation between the actors and the audience, the former is much closer to the conventions of medieval folk theatre, in that the actors perform within a circular stage: in other words, the audience of a *Maggio* is positioned all around the stage, meaning that the separation between public and actors is almost non-existent during a performance.

Located around the borders of the stage are also several tents or pavilions, which in scholarship are known as *maisons* or *loci deputati* due to their similarity with similar items from Medieval plays. These pavilions symbolize the locations in which the story takes place, such as castles, courts, dungeons, rivers, seas or even entire countries. Moreover, these pavilions serve two purposes: on the one hand, they communicate to the audience where a certain scene is taking place.[9] On the other hand, they also help signalling which characters are currently in the scene. Indeed, since the stage of a *Maggio* is so bare and unadorned that it does not have any curtain, the actors who are seated at a pavilion during a scene should not be considered on stage even

[9]It is important to specify that the action does not take place inside the pavilions, but rather on the portion of space immediately adjacent to a pavilion (Magrini, "Identità" 10).

though the audience can still see them (Magrini, "Identità" 7-10).

Due to the fact that *Maggio* plays are staged outdoors, these performances are often disturbed by events that inevitably happen in a crowded and open-air setting: members of the audience eat, chat with each other, arrive after the beginning of a performance or leave before its conclusion; at times, they even greet the actors who are performing in the play. Although all of these incidents would be seen as unacceptable disturbances in a playhouse, they are instead rather normal occurrences during a *Maggio* performance, so much so that cast, crew and other audience members do not pay attention to them. In fact, the performance of a *Maggio* itself features numerous on-stage events that belong outside of the play's diegesis. For example, crew members usually roam the stage during a performance in order to offer water or wine to the actors.

Howerer, the most conspicuous extra-diegetic stage presence in a *Maggio* play is that of the prompter, known in the jargon of this tradition as the *campionista*. Indeed, the *campionista* is always present on stage: although this person does not play any character in the story, he or she constantly prompts the lines to the other actors for the entire duration of the performance. In some *Maggio* theatre companies, the prompter is also the organizer and director of the play, and thus he also gives directions to the actors while they perform. As such, the *campionista* is a somehow awkward stage element from the point of view of naturalistic performance, and yet the audience of a *Maggio* is expected to ignore the presence of this figure completely during a play.

Acting in the *Maggio* tradition is also performed in rather unconventional ways compared to today's widespread theatre or filmic conventions. First and foremost, there is a surprising liberty in the choice of the roles the actors are supposed to play. It is quite common to see young actors playing elder kings or hermits, or actors in their sixties playing young characters. Women do act in the *Maggio* tradition, but

the roles of women warriors—such as Mafrisa or Bradamante—is always played by men wearing wigs due to the prowess required in the combat scenes. Apart from these choice of roles, the acting itself in a *Maggio* play is very distant from the conventions of naturalism.

Actors on stage (who are known as *maggerini*) do not play their part following a naturalist acting style: in other words, their acting is not supposed to represent behaviours and emotions in a realistic way. Rather, the *maggerini* on stage perform always in a rigid posture and sing their lines on the tune of a small string orchestra, which accompanies continuously the narrative of the play through a humdrum background music. As a consequence, actors perform in a very monotonous and anti-naturalistic style, as they use the same singing tone in every moment of the play. In more plain terms, the movements of a *maggerino* are as clumsy and woody as those of a puppet. Another non-naturalistic elements in a *maggerino* performance is the showy gesturing, which is made necessary by the fact that every member of the audience (even those who cannot look at the actor head on) must be able to understand what is happening on stage. Indeed, this gesturing follows very stylized conventions: for example, a *maggerino* points at his eyes with the fingers every time the verbs 'vedere' or 'guardare' (i.e., 'to look' or 'to watch') are mentioned in the script (Magrini, "Identità" 16-19).

The script is another element of the *Maggio* tradition that vastly differs from naturalistic theatre conventions. Instead of being written in prose, a *Maggio* play is composed in verse: more specifically, a *Maggio* play comprises four-verses stanzas (known as *quartine* or *campetti*, which are at times alternated with *octaves* (that is, eight-verses stanzas) for the most dramatic and lyrical moments of the play, such as separations or the death of a character. Indeed, the stories told in a *Maggio* play usually follow a formulaic and cyclical storytelling structure typical of folk tales, which alternates dialogue scenes, sword fights and lyrical moments. The story beings

in an idyllic situation, which is soon disturbed by the villain of the story who wins a temporary victory. This turn of events forces the hero of the play to escape from his home and undergo a series of adventures. During these vicissitudes, the hero can prepare himself to challenge and defeat the villain, thus re-establishing the initial idyllic situation (Magrini, "Identità" 22-24).

Finally, one of the most evident features of the *Maggio* theatre is its profound bond with the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century chivalric poems written by Boiardo, Ariosto and Tasso. As already pointed out in the previous section, numerous plays in the *Maggio* tradition are or abridged versions of *Inamoramento de Orlando*, *Orlando furioso*, *Gerusalemme liberata* or other Renaissance Italian poems such as Andrea da Barberino's *I reali di Francia* (Aravecchia 105). Even the plays that do not adapt or rewrite episodes from these poems do often borrow characters or locations from them. Moreover, these plays are written in a formulaic, archaic and literary Italian language which mimics the highbrow language of the early modern Italian chivalric poems such as *Inamoramento*, *Furioso* and *Liberata*. This highbrow language is of course very much divorced from the languages commonly spoken in these rural communities, such as contemporary Italian or the Emilian dialects. Finally, the costumes used in most *Maggio* plays (including those that are not set in the Middle Ages) mimic the style of the armors worn by medieval and early modern knights.

Treating the *Maggio* as merely an example of archaic folk culture would be extremely limiting. On the one hand, the *Maggio*'s primeval nature and presence in rural communities may tempt us to follow Frye's framework and classify this tradition as a naive form of theatre as opposed to the sentimental ones that exist in more refined societies. On the other hand, however, a closer scrutiny of this phenomenon proves Frye's dualistic opposition wrong once again. Indeed, the particular fascination of the *Maggio* tradition for the fifteenth and sixteenth-century Italian chivalric epics and romances (which clearly belong to the official and hegemonic culture) shows

that this subaltern form of theatre has never been completely divorced from official culture. Rather, the *Maggio* tradition has always been open to exchanges and contaminations with hegemonic culture, and these elaborations have always produced compelling results. Far from being an archaic, static and plain form of cultural expression, the *Maggio* itself is the result of an attentive theatrical work and a lively debate among practitioners about the nature and the directions of this tradition.

As far as this thesis is concerned, the *Maggio* tradition is also of particular interest as an example of romance. Earlier in this chapter, I already pointed out a first, manifest point of convergence between the *Maggio* tradition and the literary form of romance, since the former tradition employs characters, situation and, in a more general sense, the feeling and tone of the Italian chivalric romance poems. While at first this convergence may only seem limited to these superficial elements, I wish to stress that the *Maggio* tradition does not simply preserve the outer appearance of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century chivalric romances. Indeed, I am convinced that the *Maggio* tradition should be considered an example of romance not simply due to its use of the same settings, characters and situations of Boiardo and Ariosto's poems, but above all because it uses and amplifies the literary techniques that constitute the core of romance as a form of artistic expression. I am referring, of course, to the structures of narrative delay and the chronotope of adventure-time, which this form of folk theatre also employs in order to create a countersignifying regime of signs. In fact, the *Maggio* tradition builds upon these two literary conventions in a way that produces an accentuated example of countersignifying romance.

First and foremost, a *Maggio* play features a high degree of narrative delay. On the one hand, it is true that all plays in this tradition adhere to a strict narrative structure which offers as self-conclusive plot with a clear beginning and ending. At the same time, however, a *Maggio* never features a streamlined narrative: indeed, the mid-stage of the play includes numerous subplots and parallel narratives which

are intertwined following the *entrelacement* technique typical of chivalric poems. As a result, despite its rather simplistic narratives, the performance of a *Maggio* play can last for four to six hours, or in other words for the space of an entire afternoon. However, perhaps the most notable point of coincidence between the *Maggio* tradition and the chivalric romance one is that both of these traditions rely upon Bakhtin's chronotope of adventure-time. In fact, *Maggio* plays use this chronotope to a larger extent than the poems of Boiardo and Ariosto do.

Similarly to Boiardo's poem, the *Maggio* tradition incorporates and assimilates semiotic material from an extremely wide range of sources. On top of relying upon the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century chivalric romance tradition, *Maggio* authors from the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century drew inspiration also from other literary sources such as classical epic and tragedy, biblical texts, and early modern plays such as those by Shakespeare and Metastasio. However, as opposed to canon romance authors such as Boiardo or Arioso, *Maggio* poets do not limit their intertextual sources strictly to texts that originate in hegemonic culture, but also welcome diverse sources of inspiration. Indeed, there have been examples of *maggi* based upon less cultivated sources such as sermons delivered at a local church, events told via oral history and even newspaper stories (Magrini, "Identità" 22). From the mid-twentieth-century onward, the *Maggio* tradition has started to include also elements from mass and pop culture: indeed, more recent *Maggio* plays are based upon television shows, Hollywood movies—such as Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus* or Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*—and contemporary best-sellers like Wilbur Smith's *River God* ("Identità" 22; Aravecchia 107-08). As a whole, the intertextuality of the *Maggio* tradition features an even broader network of references than the one found in the chivalric romance tradition.

Moreover, similarly to romances such as *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars*, the *Maggio* tradition does not incorporate these semiotic elements in order to preserve their original characteristics and purpose: instead, it assimilates them with the inten-

tion of depriving these elements of any purpose and meaning they originally held. In other words, a *Maggio* borrows elements from other semiotic environments in order to mingle them in a countersignifying semiotic space, in which the earlier meaning or purpose of these elements is outright ignored. Indeed, proof of this fact is the unrealistic and abstract way in which time and space are represented in a *Maggio* play. In my view, the staging of a *Maggio* play is perhaps the most conspicuous example of why we can define this tradition as an example of countersignifying romance. Indeed, the stage of a *Maggio* does not configure itself as a Cartesian geometric space, in which dimensions and proportions are depicted in a realistic way. Instead, the stage of a *Maggio* play overlaps different spaces together, as it includes numerous parallel actions, which are depicted within the same space even though they are happening in very distant fictional locations or in time frames that do not coincide exactly with one another (Magrini, "Identità" 27-9). Therefore, the theatrical space of a *Maggio* play (or, in other words, its stage) is without a doubt a smooth space in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the word, thus making the *Maggio* tradition also an example of countersignifying romance.

5.3 The *Maggio* Tradition as Minor Theatre

In sum, the *Maggio* tradition deterritorializes semiotic material from other texts and narratives in a way that is quite similar to the one observed in early modern chivalric romances. In doing so, it offers an even more profound unsettling experience to its audiences compared to the one a chivalric romance such as *Inamoramento de Orlando* offered to its first readers. Indeed, not only are the intertextual sources from which *Maggio* authors draw inspiration more heterogeneous than the ones Boiardo and Ariosto referenced, but above all the *Maggio* tradition is constantly open to include even more sources to its repertoire. As new generations of *Maggio* writers appear on the scene, they add new material to the a body of works that, despite

maintaining a rigid narrative and dramatic structure, is always open to adapt new texts to this folk theatre form. These narrative additions coexist alongside older texts, and as such the *Maggio* works as a deterritorialization of semiotic material that offers an always new unsettling experience to new audiences. Indeed, romances such as *Inamoramento de Orlando* or *Star Wars* were able to offer an unsettling experience only to their contemporary readers and audiences who were very familiar to the kind of narratives Boiardo and Lucas deterritorialized in their own works. In contrast, the *Maggio* tradition as a whole always deterritorializes new texts, and as such, keeps giving the same countersignifying treatment to always new kind of narratives.

However, as pointed out numerous times throughout this thesis, deterritorialization cannot be considered *per se* as a synonym of minor art. While deterritorialization marks the first and necessary step towards minor art, this deterritorialization must be used in a specific political way in order to lead readers and audiences towards a process of becoming-minoritarian. In turn, this political use is marked by a collective form of enunciation and by a micropolitical vision of the reality that surrounds us. Hence, in order to understand whether the *Maggio* tradition furthers the semiotic deterritorialization enacted by romances such as *Inamoramento de Orlando* towards the condition of minor art, I need to discuss the *Maggio* tradition in light of the two above-mentioned Deleuzian concepts. In other words, does this form of folk theatre encourage its audiences to antagonize macropolitical structures and, consequently, to perceive the world form a micropolitical perspective? Does it also present a collective form of enunciation that challenges the concept of authorship and evokes a new people? In sum, is the *Maggio* tradition an example of romance we can finally call minor?

I will begin my analysis of the *Maggio* tradition from the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the minor by discussing the second requisite of minor art, that is the micropolitical dimension of these texts. On a purely narrative level, the

Maggio does not feature any recognizable micropolitical intent: in other words, the narratives of the *Maggio* tradition do not make evident the arbitrary nature of existing power structures in the same way as, for example Kafka's storytelling does. Due to its reliance on fixed plots and stock characters, the *Maggio* tradition presents a rather conventional, dualistic and stereotyped vision of the world. Indeed, as already pointed out, the stories told in *Maggio* plays tend to be about conflicts between a group of unmistakably positive characters who embody all the traditional values of nobility and chivalry—that is, strength, kindness, loyalty to their partner and to the sovereign—and a group of villains who, on the contrary, are overbearing impostors. The motives of the conflicts among these groups of characters usually involve family intrigues and dynastic struggles and, in some cases, also religious wars between Christians and Pagans (Venturelli 81-2). From this point of view, the world depicted in the *Maggio* tradition is certainly more stereotyped and two-dimensional than the one found in *Inamoramento de Orlando*. Above all, from a Deleuzian perspective, the conflicts represented in a *Maggio* play are unmistakably macropolitical, in that they involve conflictual relationships among hegemonic institutions such as kingdoms or organized religions, as well as the depiction of individual characters according to class, gender and race.

The fact that the *Maggio* tradition bases its plots so frequently on dynastic struggles or wars of religion is without a doubt the greatest point of distance between this form of theatre and the minor theatre Deleuze theorizes in "One Less Manifesto." In this essay, Deleuze indeed criticizes forms of theatre that focus solely on the representation of conflict, regardless of whether the conflict is on the scale of individuals or on that of societies and institutions. From Deleuze's point of view, representing conflict constitutes the opposite of what minor theatre strives for. Indeed, instead of challenging existing power structures, a theatre that seeks to represent conflicts perpetuates the very same macropolitical logic that is at the root of these power

structures.

> [W]hen one speaks of a popular theater, one always privileges a certain *representation of conflicts*, conflicts of the individual and society, of life and history, contradictions and oppositions of all kinds that cut across a society as well as its individuals. . . . But why do conflicts generally depend on representation? Why does theater remain representative each time it focuses on conflicts, contradictions, and oppositions? It is because conflicts are already normalized, codified, institutionalized (Deleuze, "Manifesto" 252).

As the stories told in the *Maggio* tradition focus almost exclusively on these kind of conflicts, their narratives alone do not invite the audience to question existing structures of thought and, as a result, they end up reinforcing them.

According to Deleuze, Carmelo Bene's *Riccardo III* qualifies as minor theatre in part because, in contrast with a typical *Maggio* play, it refuses to depict reality from the point of view of dualistic conflicts: in fact, Bene's play challenges this portrayal of political dynamics in Shakespeare's text. Not only is the original *Richard III* a play that, similarly to the *Maggio* tradition, concerns itself with macropolitical power struggles, but also depicts these struggles in aggrandizing terms. With its length of over 3,600 verses (making it the longest play in Shakespeare's canon) and its fifty-seven characters, the play is a grandiose depiction of the Duke of Gloucester's rise to the throne of England (as well as its subsequent fall) via betrayals, machinations and murder. Bene's adaptation of this tragedy challenges the magnificence of the original play by including only broad, minimal and yet recognizable elements of Shakespeare's drama. In Deleuze's own words, Bene adapts Shakspeare through an act "of subtraction, of amputation" (Deleuze, "Manifesto" 239).

"[I]f Carmelo Bene often needs a primary play," Deleuze further explains, "it is not to make it a fashionable parody or to add literature to literature. On the contrary, it is to subtract literature, to subtract . . . a part of the text, and to observe the results" ("Manifesto" 239-40). Indeed, in his piece Bene cuts off the 3,600 verses of the sixteenth-century play to a script of about seventy pages or, in other words, to

a one-hour play.[10] Likewise, the teeming ensemble of characters in the original work is reduced in the adaptation to only Richard himself and six secondary characters, none of which are direct antagonists of Richard. The new cast only includes Richard, played by Bene himself, and six consorts of the male characters who Richard betrays and kills in the original play. As a result, the adaptation blatantly ignores the conflicts between the House of York (relevant characters to this conflict such as the Duke of Clarence or Edward IV do not appear at all in this version of the play) and instead focuses solely on Richard's relationship with the women of the play and, above all, on the doing and undoing of this character through Bene's performance. To quote Deleuze directly,

> What is amputated here, what is subtracted, is the entire royal and princely system. Only Richard III and the women are retained. . . . And Richard, for his part, is less interested in power than in reproducing or reinventing a war machine . . . . Richard III . . . will make himself, or rather unmake himself, according to a line of continuous variation ("Manifesto" 240).

Hence, why should we use the concept of the minor in order to discuss a folk performance adaptation of the Italian chivalric romance tradition that, while furthering the deterritorialization of semiotic systems, ultimately aims at being a theatre of representation? If we choose solely to look at the narrative component the *Maggio* tradition, we may assume that this form of theatre offers only a macropolitical and stereotyped vision of reality. At the same time, however, storytelling only one of the components of this form of folk theatre, which also comprises other performance elements such as the acting or the staging. As Deleuze announces in the above quote, the performance aspect of Bene's work is of course a relevant aspect of why *Riccardo III* functions as minor art. On the one hand, the absence of a conventional conflicts on a narrative level in this play does antagonize majoritarian and macropolitical perceptions of reality. On the other hand, however, a minor theatre work must also push

[10]See Bene and Deleuze 13-83 for the original script of Bene's *Riccardo III*. A television version play has been also produced for the Italian public television.

its audience towards becoming-minoritarian via its performance practices. While the *Maggio* tradition is clearly distant from the condition of minor theatre on a narrative level, it is remarkably close to that same condition as far as performative practices are concerned.

Bene's theatre also challenges the idea that performance practices should offer a realistic and mimetic representation of reality. As Cull explains, Bene's theatre can be best described as a "self-differing . . . performance," because it includes strongly anti-mimetic events happening on stage (Introduction 6). Other than the coherent plot and the depictions of cultural and social conflicts, these elements include all the conventions of representational theater—such as the mimetic acting and the realistic staging of a play—that, according to Deleuze, "insure [sic] . . . the coherence of the representation on stage" ("Manifesto" 241). For example, in *Riccardo III* the actors' costumes and stage props often fall off or fall over in a way that impedes "any attempt by the audience to interpret the performance as singular image" (Cull, Introduction 6). Moreover, the way actors utter their lines is also part of this minoritarian intent: for instance, in Bene's play performers repeat the same sentences over and over with different inflections and accents, to the point of making their any meaning of those words completely lost (Deleuze, "Manifesto" 246; Cull, Introduction 9).[11] As such, Bene deterritorializes every kind of language and semiotic system that is active on stage—in other words, the spoken language, the gesturing, and the *mise-en-scène*—by depriving these systems of their original meaning, thus transforming Shakespeare's play into a countersignifying regime of signs. In sum, Bene's play works as minor theatre because it subtracts all "stabilizing elements" typical of naturalistic theatre practices (Deleuze, "Manifesto" 238). Instead of relying upon these stabilizing elements, a minor theater such as Bene's is built upon what Deleuze calls "continuous variation," which pushes the audience towards acknowledging the arbitrariness of

[11] I quote a passage from Bene's play that perfectly exemplifies this practice: "... Lo può, lo può lo può; ma certo, certo che lo può! Che cos'è che non può?!... Che non può *Lei*?!... Lo può lo può!..." (Bene and Deleuze 24).

existing structures of thought and, hopefully, to antagonize them.

As already pointed out in the previous section, the *Maggio* tradition indeed offers a kind of performance that, due to its limited resources and anti-naturalistic conventions, creates a continuous ontological variation along the lines of Bene's experimental theatre. Although the narrative of a *Maggio* play is quite conventional and stereotyped, the events that happen on stage do not frame the plot in the same rigid way. On the contrary, these conventions encourage the audience to distance themselves from what is happening on stage. Specifically, the constant presence on stage of people who do not belong to the narrative are a source of distraction from the events told in the play. These presences of course include the stage hands, the prompter, and also the actors who do not take part in a certain scene but are nonetheless visible to the audience while seated in their pavilion. Indeed, when the *maggerini* are not present on the scene, the audience can still see them rehearsing their lines, talking with other cast or crew members, or otherwise behaving completely out of character while wearing the stage costume.

The actors' performance itself is also far from immersive, since it is based upon static posturing, bland gesturing and monotonous singing: in fact, some *maggerini* even sing completely out of tune.[12] Similarly, the poor and unadorned staging constantly reminds the audience that they are witnessing a work of fiction. Moreover, the fact that the audience sits around a circular stage does not encourage the perception of what is happening on stage as a singular image as, for example, the typical front stage in the Western tradition does. In other words, the performance elements of a *Maggio* play break the internal logic of the narrative, thus challenging the ultimate meaning of what is happening on stage. This challenge is brought to an even further level if one considers that the performance of a *Maggio* play is often disturbed by unpredictable external events, such as members of the audience interacting with the

[12] As Magrini points out, the music is an element that creates a profound sense of detachment for the story in any kind of theatre ("Identità" 20).

actors or performances being interrupted by bad weather.

When approaching the *Maggio* tradition, however, we should not mistake this performance practice as a willingly anti-mimetic form of expression as, for example, Bene's theatre is. Indeed, as far as the *Maggio* practitioners' intentions are concerned, there is no wish to provoke the audience or challenge its expectations and worldviews. Unlike avant-garde forms of performance, a *Maggio* play wishes to produce a realistic and mimetic text, even within the strict limits of its conventions and resources.[13] The intended audience of a *Maggio* play does acknowledge and accept this intent, so much so that it openly ignores the extra-diegetic elements present on stage or the anti-naturalistic performance conventions. This aspect is also inevitably present if we consider the *Maggio* tradition as a form of adaptation of other works, including the early modern chivalric romances. Indeed, authors and actors in the *Maggio* tradition choose to draw inspiration from an existing text, they generally do not wish to modify, reinterpret or antagonize this text. On the contrary, the main purpose of these adaptations is to homage and celebrate this text as well as to make it accessible to its community. In contrast with Hutcheon's vision of adaptation as a an act of modifying an existing work, an adaptation of an existing text in the form of a *Maggio* play wishes to offer a faithful translation of the original work.

So, despite being an archaic theatre practice with frugal means available for its staging, a typical *Maggio* play nonetheless aspires to be a form of realistic and representational storytelling via performance. Authors adapt an existing text not to offer a different version of it, but rather because it captures easily the imagination of its public. When a text is adapted via the conventions of the *Maggio* tradition, it is transformed in a story with recognizable good and bad sides, cheap thrills, over-emphasized action scenes and pathetic moments. Apparently, the anti-mimetic performance component of this form of expression does not contrast the meanings and affects listed

[13]For example the stage directions of the *Maggio* play *L'arme e gli amori*, author Marcello Sala reccomends his performers to "evitare effetti comici non voluti" ("avoid undesired comedy effects") since the *Maggio* tradition at the time of Sala's writing had to face an audience who was used to television.

above, but instead wishes to convey and reinforce them. Since the original intent behind a *Maggio* play largely differs from Deleuze's agenda, is the theory of minor theatre a truly valid approach to interrogate this folk performance practice? Can the anti-mimetic conventions typical of this tradition be considered a challenge to theatre as a form of power even if the *Maggio* practitioners do not wish to employ them in such a radical way?

In my view, the fact that a micropolitical intent is neither evident on a superficial experience of a *Maggio* play nor it is sought out by the authors and the equipe of a *Maggio* performance is a secondary concern from the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor art. As already pointed out in section 2.2.1, approaching a text via Deleuze and Guattari's functionalist aesthetics means that we cannot ignore or downplay the fact that a text is also experienced by readers or audiences outside of its originally intended public. In other words, Deleuze and Guattari's functionalism encourages us to experience a work of art (as well as to experiment with it) even to the point of going against its original meaning or purpose, so as to understand how such work can affect us (Baugh 35). For this reason, the fact that the intended audience of the *Maggio* tradition experiences this form of theatre as a straightforward narrative is of relative importance when it comes to discussing the possible minoritarian uses of this form of theatre. In fact, when the *Maggio* tradition goes beyond the limits of in its own community of origin is experienced by audiences who come from outside that community, it leads to unexpected and compelling ways of experiencing it.

Indeed, while a *Maggio*'s intended audience experiences plays in this tradition as a straightforward narrative despite the anti-mimetic conventions and the chaotic interruptions, the same kind of theater inevitably produces a different kind of experience to audiences who are not used to these conventions or interruptions because they are more accustomed to naturalistic acting and staging. Moreover, audiences with a high level of education can perceive the presence of extra-diegetic elements on stage as

elements that bear striking similarity to avant-garde and experimental theatre, and thus are affected by these elements in very different ways. Hence, what effects does *Maggio* produce upon audiences outside the community of origin of this theatre form?

When the *Maggio* tradition welcomes audiences from outside its community, it produces rather different effects than those originally intended. While the bare-bone staging, the anti-naturalistic conventions and the chaotic performances do not affect the members of the audience who belong to the rural communities in which the *Maggio* originates, members of the audience who are foreign from those communities cannot help but being affected by the awkward events happening during a *Maggio* performance. Proof of this fact is the frequent association of *Maggio* conventions with Modernist theatre practices and, in particular, with Bertold Brecht's epic theatre and the *Verfremdungseffekt*, or the estrangement effect.[14] Indeed, theatre scholars and critics have pointed out that the anti-mimetic convention, repetitive acting accompanied by music and frugal staging of a *Maggio* play discourage the audience (especially outsiders and educated people) to identify emotionally with a single character. On the contrary, these audiences are encouraged to perceive what is happening on stage in self-reflexive terms rather than emotional ones (Magrini, "Identità" 30; Giusti 5-6).

Although the similarities between the *Maggio* tradition and Brecht's theatre are indeed quite remarkable, I contend that associating the former practice with epic theatre is not a completely correct comparison. Brecht's theatre does share similar performance conventions with the *Maggio* tradition, but at the same time the two practices differ in terms of the effect that they produce (or wish to produce) on the audience. Brecht's epic theatre is founded on the belief that non-representational

[14]In his writings on theatre, Brecht theorizes the *Verfremdungseffekt* as the presence in the stage or in an actor's performance of a strange and peculiar element that distance the audience from the narrative that is happening on stage. Common examples of this estrangement effect are actors interrupting their naturalist performance by singing a song or offering reflections that are completely extraneous to the play. The main purpose of estranging the members of the audience from what is happening on stage is to encourage them to reflect in a more critical way upon the narrative they are witnessing, as well as to take a moral and political stance on its events. In short, the *Verfremdungseffekt* is an attack against the passive fruition and the emotional attachment to a theatre play, which are instead the linchpins of traditional and naturalist theatre. See Brecht 136-47 for the author's explanation of the concept of *Verfremdungseffekt*.

theatre can lead its audiences to develop an enlightened consciousness about history, politics and morality. At the same time, however, the author is not granting its audience the liberty of developing its own opinion about these matters; on the contrary, the author infers what kind of political vision the audience should agree with. In other words, Brecht's theatre is avant-garde and yet majoritarian because it neither challenges the concept of authorship nor antagonizes the very institution of theatre, but instead aims at teaching audiences about existing macropolitical conflicts instead of encouraging them to see reality from a micropolitical perspective.

In fact, in "One Less Manifesto" Deleuze discusses Brecht to clarify the minor characteristics of Bene's theatre.

> Brecht wants [contradictions and oppositions] to be 'understood' and for the spectator to have the elements of possible 'solution.' This is not to leave the domain of representation but only to pass from one dramatic pole of bourgeois representation to an epic pole of popular representation. Brecht does not push the 'critique' far enough (Deleuze, "Manifesto" 252).

This point marks a remarkable distance between Bene's art and other examples of avant-garde performance, such Brecht's epic theatre. While both Brecht and Bene aim at producing an unsettling aesthetic experience by not following the conventions of naturalistic performance, they do so for completely different goals. In contrast with Brecht's theatre, Bene's works produce an unsettling experience for the purpose of antagonizing all kinds of existing power structures, including the potential use of theatre as an instrument of power. In other words, Bene's minor theatre does not wish to depict existing conflict because it is instead interested in establishing new, more radical ones.

> As a substitute for the representation of conflicts, Bene proposes the presence of variation as a more active, more aggressive element. . . . A conflict that is not yet normalized depends on something more profound [than Brecht's theatre]. It is like lighting coming from somewhere and announcing something else—a sudden emergence of creative, unexpected, and subrepresentative variation (Deleuze, "Manifesto" 252).

In my view, the *Maggio* tradition has more elements in common with Bene's minor theatre as theorized by Deleuze than with Brecht's epic theatre. Indeed, on top of featuring an anti-mimetic form of performance, a *Maggio* play does not employ these elements in order to convey or infer an authorial message. In fact, the *Maggio* tradition lacks a strong authorial voice in a way that is congenial to Deleuze and Guattari's politics. As Deleuze and Guattari posit, minor art encourages a collective form of enunciation which opposes to the idea of authorship which is at the heart of how Western culture tends to experience artistic texts. As opposed to Brecht's theatre, the *Maggio* tradition is a form of romance that gives little to no importance to authorship as intended in hegemonic culture. Indeed, performance practices in hegemonic culture which tend to ignore the fact that performative works such as theatre or cinema are ensemble works, and instead give more credit to individual members of this ensemble, such as a theatre piece's playwright or a film's director. In contrast, the primary audience of a *Maggio* play does not treat this work as the effort of an single author, but rather as the work of an equipe, in which the author of the text only has the role of a facilitator of a collective work instead of that of an indisputable arbiter. In the words of Tullia Magrini,

> the role of the author in this kind of culture is not that of producing a work of art that, due to its individual worth and intrinsic qualities, aspires to last in time and prove its worth. Rather, the author's role is that of making a certain text available so as to organize a play, which constitutes the apex of a community's cultural life. Indeed, in this case, it is the very existence of the play and the need for representing it that give sense to the poet's work (Magrini, "Identità" 32; translation mine).[15]

Due to its anti-mimetic performance elements and its lack of strong authorial intent, I claim that the *Maggio* tradition can work as an unintentional and yet very

[15]The original passage reads as follows: "Il ruolo dell'autore in questo mondo culturale non è quello di produrre un'opera d'arte, qualcosa che per la sua spiccata individualità e per l'intrinseca qualità aspiri ad una permaneneza nel tempo destinata a testimoniarne il valore. Il suo compito è piuttosto quello di rendere disponibile un materiale la cui prima funzione è di consentire la realizzazione del Maggio, inteso come manifestazione culminante della cultura della comunità. Poiché in questo caso è l'esistenza dello spettacolo e la necessità della sua rappresentazione che dà senso al lavoro . . . ."

effective form of minor theatre when experienced by audiences other than the primarily intended one. Instead of establishing the worldview of an individual author, the *Maggio* tradition is an art form that challenges the very idea of authorship more than any other example of romance I discussed so far. Hence, on top of offering a profound deterritorialization of semiotic systems, the *Maggio* tradition fulfills also another critical condition of minor art by offering itself to its audiences as a collective form of enunciation. Although the *Maggio* alone does not wish to offer a micropolitical vision of reality, audiences who wish to engage with a *Maggio* play in this fashion are free to do so.

From this point of view, a *Maggio* play pushes the romance narratives of Boiardo and Ariosto to a monadic condition, or in other words they turn them into becomings in which both majoritarian and minoritarian bodies coexist at the same time. Audiences can experience both a stereotyped, two-dimensional and conventional version of chivalric romance narratives performed in such an anti-naturalistic way that showcases the fictional status of these stories. The stage of a *Maggio* performance includes both actors playing knights such as Orlando or Astolfo who sing in a highbrow literary Italian next to other actors whose character is not present in the current scene and thus speak in the more plain Emilian dialect to members of the audience while dressed in the same knight costume. Finally, audiences can witness actors playing characters who do not belong to their own age group or gender, thus leading them towards a process of becoming-woman, as well as becoming-elder or becoming-young. In other words, the *Maggio* tradition takes the deterritorialization enacted by the romances it adapts to an even more extreme condition. Indeed, this form of theatre forces different visions to reality to coexist at the same time and thus potentially leading us to challenge existing categories of thought—such as class, culture or gender—in a profound way and without offering any alternative vision of reality. To borrow Bogue's definition of minor art, the *Maggio* tradition does indeed turn "the generic into the

imperceptible, the clichéd into the collective" in a way that favours the creation of a new world and a new people (109). Or, to be more precise, it lends itself easily to these uses.

Interrogating the *Maggio* tradition via Deleuze's theory of minor theatre confirms that adaptation in the form of theatre performance can contribute to untapping romance's minoritarian capabilities. Indeed, adapting existing romance narratives (such as the early modern Italian chivalric poems) by using non-hegemonic and collective performance practices (like those of the *Maggio* tradition) can lead to two effective results. On the one hand, these kinds of adaptation push the semiotic deterritorialization typical of romance even further, in that they establish a countersignifying regime of signs that mingles Boiardo and Ariosto's characters with events and characters originating in other textual sources. In fact, in terms of performance practices, the *Maggio* tradition also deterritorializes acting and staging conventions by relying upon anti-mimetic performance practices. On the other hand, the lack of a strong authorial voice in the *Maggio* tradition means that these deterritorialized items do not automatically reterritorialize into meaning, but instead are offered to the audience in a way that allows them to question existing structures of though.

5.4 Rhizome and Algorithm in *Star Wars* Videogames

The last part of this chapter will discuss digital gaming as a performance practice. Indeed, videogames do belong within Schechner's definition of performance as a continuum of practices: although games (and, especially, digital games) are first and foremost systems of rules, the act of playing them is quite evidently a performative act. In the seminal book *Homo Ludens*, Joan Huizinga famously defines play as the establishment of a "magic circle" or, in other words, a temporary world separated from the real world (10). This definition, however, also contemplates the concept of performance, in that this temporary world is "dedicated to the performance of an

act apart" (10). Alexander R. Galloway uses similar terms when discussing digital gaming. According to Galloway,

> *video games are actions.* Without action, games remain only in the pages of an abstract rule book. Without the active participation of players and machines, video games exist only as static computer code. Video games come into being when the machine is powered up and the software is executed; they exist when enacted (2).

If we choose to treat videogames in terms of performance, then digital gaming is, without a doubt, the privileged form of performance adaptation of the *Star Wars* saga. Over the years, the *Star Wars* franchise has produced numerous adaptations of the original films in the form of videogames. The release and success of the first trilogy of films (1977-1983) happened in the same years that saw the rise to prominence of the videogame industry, first in the form of coin-op, arcade games and, later on, in that of the home videogame market. These earlier and somehow primitive games allowed player to relive famous sequences from the movies in terms of gameplay. For example, the 1983 coin-op game *Star Wars* puts the player in the cockpit of a X-Wing starfighter during the final Death Star battle, whereas the Atari 2600 title *Jedi Arena* (also released in 1983) simulates the lightsaber training Luke undergoes on the *Millenium Falcon*.

Of course, technological advancements lead to the development and release of more elaborated videogames, which in turn enable the player to perform within the *Star Wars* fictional world in more elaborated ways. For example, the *Battlefront* series (2004-2017) allows players not only to play as spacefighter pilots, but also to take part in complex war campaigns in which they can pilot different land or space vehicles, wielding a wide variety of weapons and even play as famous characters from the saga such as Luke Skywalker, Boba Fett or Chewbacca. Similarly, while *Jedi Arena* gave players merely the possibility of wielding a lightsaber, games such as the *Jedi Knight* series (1997-2003) offered a full-fledged narrative in which the player is supposed to

undergo traning in the ways of the Force and forge his or her own path as either a Jedi Master or a Sith Lord.[16]

Altogether, digital gaming offers plenty of opportunities to perform in and interact with the fictional world of *Star Wars*. Above all, from the perspective of this thesis, *Star Wars* videogame adaptations are of vital importance because they offer a privileged way of interacting with the countersignifying semiotic environment that the 1977 movie establishes. Hence, how do these games fare from a Deleuzian perspective? Since a theatre adaptation of the Italian chivalric romances such as the *Maggio* tradition lends itself to be experienced as an anti-mimetic theatre which simultaneously opposes the concept of authorship and embraces a micropolitical vision of reality, do videogame adaptations of *Star Wars* also enable players to re-experience the original Lucas' film in a minoritarian way? On the contrary, do they end up reinforcing existing power structures and coercive worldviews?

First and foremost, I should point out that performance in digital gaming presents remarkable differences with theatrical one: while the latter implies a clear separation between actors and audiences, it is evident even on a superficial view that the act of playing a videogame merges these two roles into one. Indeed, in narrative games the player both witnesses the story as designed by the game developers while also playing a role in the events of the story. On a closer scrutiny, however, performance in digital gaming is even more complex, especially from an ontological point of view. In the 2015 volume *Parables of the Posthuman*, Jonathan Boulter describes digital gaming as "a radically strange experience, an uncanny experience, completely unlike any other experience of play. It is the intimate conjoining of self and machine, of human and other" (1). "[T]his conjunction," Boulter continues,

> radically alters a traditional view of what it means to be a human. Gaming, the practical event of gaming, works to extend the human and its conception of itself; gaming enacts . . . a practical realization that the human is a fluid,

[16]See Krzywinska and MacCallum-Stewart 357-58 for a history of *Star Wars* videogames.

> dynamic, unstable, discontinuous entity (1-2).

This radical and compelling perception of gaming is very much akin to Deleuze and Guattari's vision of reality as an ever-changing construct, an existience as a condition of perpetual variation.

In fact, later in his study Boulter frames the relationship between the player and his or her avatar (or, in other words, the player's embodiment in the game world) via the categories of Deleuze and Guattari's thought. "[T]he player-avatar relation," Boulter explains,

> is more than simply one between a single human and an onscreen digital entity. . . . [B]ecause games are created as a collective effort [of a game company] . . . the avatar . . . is always already pluralized, always already bears the traces of a variety of subjectivities. In this way an avatar . . . is essentially a network, a plurality, a multiplicity. . . . We can say, perhaps with only slight hyperbole, that the avatar in a way realizes the utopian project of Deleuze and Guattari: it is a material instantiation of the idea of the rhizome, in an almost perfect sense (35-6, 39).

Boulter's characterization of digital gaming as a rhizomatic experience may at first sound encouraging as far as the goal of this thesis is concerned. After all, the concept of the avatar as discussed in *Parables of the Posthuman* is effectively an enactment of the third characteristic of minor art, or in other words an art that expresses itself collectively so as to challenge the concept of individual authorship. The fictional world of *Star Wars*, as already pointed out, fulfills the first requirement of minor art, in that it presents itself as a highly deterritorialized semiotic environment which welcomes signs and elements from other texts by depriving them of any meaning or characterization. Hence, what are the implications of this rhizomatic and delirious performance from the point of view of absolute deterritorialization? What does happen when one performs within the deterritorialized semiotic environment of *Star Wars* as a an avatar, or in other words as pluralized and rhizomatic entity? Does this encounter lead us to an experience of perpetual variation akin to a *Maggio* play?

In other words, does any videogame experience of the *Star Wars* fictional universe always lead to a becoming-minoritarian?

While *Parables of the Posthuman* is founded on the idea that the relationship a player entertains with his or her in-game avatar is rhizomatic, Boulter's theory of digital gaming is much more pessimistic about the potential micropolitical uses of this experience. On the one hand, Boulter claims that the avatar is "an implicit critique of . . . traditional conceptions of the human" (39). On the other hand, Boulter also argues that the avatar (and, specifically, the avatar commercial and blockbuster games such as Master Chief in the *Halo* videogame series) cannot be considered as "the site of a critique of philosophically reactionary thought" (39). Indeed, despite offering a rather liberating experience from the limits of individual identity, digital gaming usually poses rather strict limits to this rhizomatic experience. As Boulter explains, "[t]he player is subject to rules guiding his extension into cyberspace; he is limited by the narrative parameters of the game" (34).

These two limits to digital gaming—that is, its rules (also known as its mechanics) and, in some cases, its narrative—can be described in more simple terms as the algorithmic logic. As Lev Manovich explains, when playing a digital game, "the player is given a well-defined task—winning the match, being first in a race, reaching the last level, or attaining the highest score" (222). In turn, if the game also includes a narrative, then the game itself often frames the path towards the completion of this task as a narrative. "Everything that happens to [the player] in a game, all the characters and objects she encounters," Manovich explains, "either take her closer to achieving the goal or further away from it" (222). The algorithmic logic typical of digital gaming is perhaps the greatest enemy to the possibility of gaming as an experience of perpetual variation because, as Colin Cremin argues, this logic inevitably transforms gaming into a process of Oedipalization. Specifically, Cremin agrees with Manovich that "[v]ideogames are about achievements structured by goals;" and since

"[g]oals are defined by what you lack rather than possess, . . . [a]ll videogames can, in this respect be described as Oedipal. They weld desire to lack" (Cremin 123).[17]

The videogames belonging to the *Star Wars* franchise are, by a large extent, not immune to this algorithmic logic. Indeed, while all the *Star Wars* games I listed earlier allow players to interact with the fictional world of Lucas' film via avatars (or, in other words, via rhizomatic entities) all the same require the players to complete a pre-established goal so as to reach a victory condition. The 1983 *Star Wars* arcade game demands its players to destroy the Death Star just as Luke does at the end of the 1977 movie, and even rewards extra points if the player rehearses the scene exactly as in the movie, that is by not shooting anything other than the exhaust port during the trench run. Games such as *Jedi Arena* or *Battlefront* let players compete on different sides in a battle which ends with a clear winner and loser. In the *Jedi Knight* series, the player always becomes a powerful force user by reaching the final level of each game. In other words, videogame adaptations of the *Star Wars* saga have not encouraged minoritarian interactions with the deterritorialized fictional world of the original movie because they all adhere to an algorithmic logic. As such, these game have systematized every aspect of the into more or less strict algorithmic experiences, thus forcing the player to re-experience the world and the narrative of *Star Wars* from a strictly majoritarian perspective.

Briefly, while videogames (including videogame adaptations of *Star Wars*) do offer the possibility of a deterritorialization, this process does not seem to lead towards a becoming-minoritarian because the act of play is always reterritorialized into meaning via the logic of the algorithm. At best, in terms of political critique, games that follow

[17]Another crucial aspect of the algorithm logic in videogames is the fact that players must learn and interiorize its logic in order to reach what, in the jargon of game design is called a 'win state.' Indeed, Manovich explains that "[a]s the player proceeds through the game, she gradually discovers the rules that operate in the universe constructed by this game. She learns its hidden logic—in short, its algorithm" (222). Galloway expands upon Manovich's formulation by pointing out that the need for a player to learn the game's algorithm leads to only one way of interpreting a game (91-2). This fact leads Galloway to argue that "video games do nothing but present contemporary political realities in relatively unmediated form. They solve the problem of political control . . . by *making it coterminous with the entire game*, and in this way video games achieve a unique type of political transparency" (92).

an algorithmic logic can offer an example of Brechtian alienation by willingly leading the player to question the ontological or ethical aspects of his or her actions in the game (Boulter 46). However, as discussed in the previous section, Brecht's alienation does not constitute a form of minor art because, instead of enabling the audience (or, in this case, the player) to understand reality on a micropolitical level, it merely makes manifest the macropolitical structure of reality.

Since the logic of the algorithm seems to be such an ubiquitous presence in digital gaming, are videogames condemned to follow and perpetuate only majoritarian worldviews? Although the previous paragraphs may lead us to answer positively to this question, I am optimistic about the minoritarian potential of videogames. What animates my optimism is the fact that, while videogames are often designed with an algorithmic logic in mind, they nonetheless can subtract themselves easily from that logic or, at least, tame it to the point of not constraining the player's experience excessively. Indeed, while Manovich argues that videogame culture is most often associated with the logic of the algorithm, at the same time he claims that computer culture as a whole is characterized by the alternative logic of the database.

> Many new media objects do not tell stories; they do not have a beginning or end; in fact, they do not have any development, thematically, formally, or otherwise that would organize their elements into a sequence. Instead, they are collections of individual items, with every item possessing the same significance as any other. ... The user's experience of such computerized collections is, therefore, quite distinct from reading a narrative or watching a film or navigating a cultural site (Manovich 218).

Although the database logic is certainly more evident in items such as an online library catalogue or a encyclopedic website such as Wikipedia, this logic is ubiquitous in computer culture, so much so that all products of this culture adhere to this logic. As Manovich continues, "[r]egardless of whether new media objects present themselves as linear narratives, databases, or something else, underneath, on the level of material organization, they are all databases" (228).

Of course, videogames are no exception to this rule. Indeed, a videogame is first and foremost an ensemble of digital objects—sprites, textures, levels, lines of code—that primarily exists in the form of a database. In turn, this database assumes the form of an algorithm constructed by the programmers and, subsequently, mobilized by the player. While the player usually experiences the game solely in an algorithmic form, this specific algorithmic experience is by no means the sole or privileged way of accessing the game's database: as Galloway claims, "[m]odifying games is almost as natural as playing them" (Galloway 112). As a result, players can use and create new versions of the game (known in the gaming culture jargon as 'mods') that can be completely independent from the one originally intended for the game. Even the players who are less versed in design or programming can alter their gaming experience in simple and yet significant ways: indeed, videogames commonly feature cheat codes that enable the player's avatar to be immune to the enemy's fire or to traverse the game's space by flying and crossing the walls.

To summarize, the act of playing a videogame produces a deterritorialization of the subject into a rhizomatic individuality known as the avatar. While this rhizomatic experience is soon reterritorialized into an algorithmic logic, videogames also do offer concrete means of escaping this logic, to the point of altering the intended game experience in substantial ways. The fact that digital gaming does not have to be constrained by the algorithm that the game designers create means that minor videogames are a more concrete possibility. Above all, since *Star Wars* videogames can also defy the logic of the algorithm, then perhaps performing in the fictional space of *Star Wars* as a video game avatar can take the player towards a process of becoming-minoritarian. Hence, how can we turn a *Star Wars* gaming experience into a minoritarian one?

Before trying to understand which *Star Wars* videogame is a fitting candidate for the title of minor videogame, we first need to answer a crucial question: what does it

mean to perform in a minoritarian way in a videogame? So far, we acknowledged that the experience of playing a videogame is a process deterritorialization of the subject, and that the modifiable nature of digital gaming can lead this deterritorialization even further. Yet, how exactly can one rely upon these characteristics so as to encourage a becoming-minoritarian? What are the characteristics of a digital gaming experience that encourages its players to challenge existing power structures on a fundamental level and to construct a new reality from scratch? In sum, what is a minor videogame? While the writings of Deleuze and Guattari provide quite a lot of examples of what constitutes minor aesthetic experiences in literature, theatre, visual art, music and cinema, none of their writings openly address the issue of minor digital gaming. In the past twenty years, video game studies scholars have tried to supply for this lack by adapting the categories of thought Deleuze and Guattari offer in their collective writings to the form of videogames. The results of these endeavours are quite varied and, in fact, inconclusive.

For example, Galloway proposes to use the term "countergaming" to describe videogame mods that "usurp gameplay or eliminate it entirely" (Galloway 107). Although this approach to digital gaming does resemble Deleuze and Guattari's idea that minor art should deprive a text of its elements of power, the examples Galloway offers in his reading cannot be described as minor videogames. Most of these games do not wish to critique existing power structure, and those that do are simply trying to convey a specific political message formulated by the author of the mod.[18] Galloway's approach serves as yet another reminder that minor art (including minor video games) is not simply an art that employs anti-mimetic and anti-representational techniques: after all, if a videogame employs these techniques so as to enforce an authorial intent, then this videogame is not being used in a minoritarian way. On the contrary, a

[18]One of the game mods Galloway mentions is *Velvet Strike* which, according to the project's website is "a collection of spray paints to use as graffiti on the walls, ceiling, and floor of the popular network shooter terrorism game *Counter-Strike*. *Velvet-Strike* was conceptualized during the beginning of Bush's 'War on Terrorism'" (Schleiner). Evidently, this mod wishes to convey a specific political message.

minor videogame grants the player the freedom of escaping repressive structures of thought, including authorship itself.

Perhaps a more accurate definition of minor videogame comes from Colin Cremin, who proposes a theory of minor videogame in terms of the effect produced upon the audience. From Cremin's point of view, in a minor videogame

> [t]he action ... that bridges [the situation and its resolution] is not encoded to a particular viewpoint. It evokes a moral ambiguity that invites rather than compels the [player] to take flight from an arborescent discourse or major text. The text disrupts or draws to attention to the player's libidinal investments in the language of domination (144).

Cremin's definition certainly adheres quite closely to Deleuze and Guattari's terminology and ambitions. However, the main issue with this formulation is that, by Cremin's own admission, no game currently fulfills these requirements; in fact, Cremin merely provides a list of titles that "only ever hint" at the possibility of a minor videogame, arguably because all of these titles adhere to a strict algorithm logic that prevents the player from experiencing the game world in an unmediated way (Cremin 144).

Hence, we are once again at a loss. What *is* exactly a minor videogame? My proposal for a more viable definition of the concept moves from both of the formulations I discussed above. My claim is that a minor videogame should provide a disruptive experience as Galloway argues, but also use these disruptive elements to provide what Cremin calls an escape from all arborescent structures of thought. Ultimately, I believe that a blueprint for a theory of minor gaming that includes both these aspects comes once again from "One Less Manifesto." Simply put, I contend that a minor videogame is a videogame that adapts an existing major text and uses performance elements so as to subtract the stabilizing elements from such major text and creates a perpetual sense of variation in the player's experience, one that aggressively challenges the original text as well as the medium chosen for the adaptation as instruments of power. As far as the *Star Wars* franchise is concerned, the game that

adheres remarkably close to this definition is *Star Wars: Galaxies*.

5.5 *Star Wars: Galaxies* as a Minor Videogame

Released in June 2003 and discontinued in December 2011, *Star Wars: Galaxies* was a videogame developed by Sony Online Entertainment and released by LucasArt. The game played similarly to *World of Warcraft* and *EVE Online*, and thus can be best described as a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG for short). What is exactly a MMORPG? Let me first define the latter part of the definition. A role-playing video game offers the experience of exploring and interacting with a complex and detailed fictional world: while roaming throughout this world, the player-controlled character is supposed to undergo a main quest and a series of side-quests which lead them to grow their skills and abilities. Role-playing games put particular emphasis in the relationship between players and their avatar, since they encourage players to find their own way of expressing themselves in the game world. For example, players can choose to privilege only certain quests or areas of the game map and completely ignore others; similarly players can choose between numerous possible interactions with other characters in the game. Above all, several role-playing games give their players the opportunity of personalizing their character's gender, race, age, traits, skills and appearance (Nitsche 391). Hence, role-playing game is perhaps the kind of digital gaming experience that, more than any other, presents a strong performance component. Moreover while all digital gaming experiences deterritorialize the player's identity into a rhizomatic avatar, arguably role-playing games push this deterritorialization even further by enabling players to perform potentially as a person of a different gender, race and age group.

The first choice *Star Wars: Galaxies* requires from its players is indeed the creation of an avatar. The character selection screen includes enough variables to give each player an unique gaming experience. For example, the player can play as either a

human or as one of the numerous alien races that populate the *Star Wars* universe. For example, one can choose to play as a Wookiee like Chewbacca or as a Rodian, that is the race of Greedo, the bounty hunter who is sent to kill Han Solo in the 1977 film. After choosing their race and appearance, players can personalize their attributes—health, strength, quickness and so on—which in turn determine which profession they are best suited for. These professions include roles that one would expect from a typical action-oriented role-playing videogame—such as marksman, medic, or brawler—as well as classes that sound a bit odd or uninteresting in a videogame (and, especially, a *Star Wars* videogame) like artisan or entertainer.

In order to understand the peculiar choice of playing roles in *Galaxies*, I need to address the massively multiplayer online component of this game. As opposed to single-player role-playing games, massively multiplayer ones allow a large number of users from all over the world to play in the same game map simultaneously. As a shared gaming experience, MMORPGs such as *Star Wars* put less emphasis on win states or victory conditions; instead, they focus more on player interactions, that is on how players can express themselves in this game world, as well as how can they interact with each other. In MMORPGs, players forge relationships with other players, create stable communities and venture together to explore and interact with the game map. In other words, MMORPGs are thriving, lived-in virtual worlds that, both encourage player interactions while also granting a high degree of freedom to the players. As a result, the experience of playing a MMORPG is less structured than those offered by single-player RPGs and, above all, it further encourages the performance component that is already present in the latter videogame genre. In other words, while a certain focus on performance is present in all role-playing videogames, performance is a crucial component of all MMORPGs (Nitsche 389-91).

On the one hand, MMORPGs do not offer a strict algorithmic experience to their players, in that they instead encourage world- and community-building. On

the other hand, however, an algorithmic logic is still present in these games. For example, similarly to single-player RPGs, MMORPGs include a series of quests and side-quests that the players should face (often in a collaborative way) so as to improve their characters' abilities and acquire more valuable weapons and items, which in turn allow them to face more difficult quests. Of course, MMORPG players are free to ignore these quests entirely, and choose to live a virtual life in the game world and meet other players. At the same time, however, there are algorithmic limitations that MMORPG players cannot choose to ignore. For example, the background narrative of these games often involves two or more different factions which are at war with each other (Nitsche 391). When creating their avatar, a MMORPG player is usually asked to pick one of these two factions: in turn, this choice determines the style of play as well as the kinds of interactions a player can have with other players in the game. For example certain classes of characters are exclusive of a single faction; similarly, players can interact peacefully with players who belong to their own side, whereas they are forced to fight against players who chose an enemy faction. As such, despite their loose algorithmic logic and their focus on player's performance, MMORPGs are not necessarily synonyms of minor gaming since they also include profoundly majoritarian elements.

However, as opposed to other MMORPGs such as *World of Warcraft*, the game mechanics of *Galaxies* is designed to offer a radically different experience to players, one that downplays the algorithmic aspects of the game and focuses on letting players shaping a world and a society according to their desires and needs. To quote Raph Koster, who was the Creative Director of *Star Wars: Galaxies* between 2003 and 2005, the main goal of the project was to "create a living society" which got rid of "advancement paradigm" typical of both single-player and multi-player role-playing games (Koster, "Society Part One"). As already pointed out, other MMORPG such as *World of Warcraft* give particular attention to quests and side-quests and, as a

result, they end up favouring those who choose to play as combat-oriented characters over different play styles. In other words, while ideally a player can choose simply to log-in in the game server and chat and mingle with other players, users who play the game in more conventional terms are rewarded with a more fulfilling experience: for example, these players end up exploring larger sections of the game map, take more quests and see their characters grow in power. Koster's main goal for *Star Wars: Galaxies* was that of rewarding all the game's players, regardless of their playing style or goals. Indeed, during Koster's tenure, the main idea behind *Galaxies*' game mechanics was the concept of "interdependent gameplay" or, in other words, the idea that all players brought a vital contribution to the game's world and society (Burke).

"The entire game," Koster explains, "was built around the idea of weak-tie interdependence: the idea that people you don't know well at all are in fact crucial to your survival" (Koster, "Society Part One"). To be more precise, players' professions were divided into three groups, that is the combat professions, the crafting professions and the support professions.[19] The first group included roles that conform more closely to the play-style of other single- and multi-player RPGs: these characters are the bounty hunters, the rifle men and the commando, and they usually take part on battles as Imperial or Rebel agents, or even as guns for hire. However, in order to be successful in their fights, the combat professions require the support of players who have chosen a non-combat profession.

Indeed, the second group of players (that is, the crafters) includes professions such as artisans, weaponsmiths and droid engineers: these players survey the game map for basic resources and research new technologies. Above all, these players build "all non-basic goods in the environment," or in other words the items that other players need to play the game such as "clothing, housing, pharmaceuticals" and so on (Yee 190-91). The introduction of this group of players marks a great point of difference between

[19]See W. S. Bainbridge 141 for a more detailed list of professions in the game.

Star Wars: Galaxies and other MMORPGs released around the same time. Indeed, in an MMORPGs such as *World of Warcraft* the items players use have not been crafted by other players: they are either programmed into the game or are generated randomly by the game itself. These kinds of items do not exist in *Galaxies*: here, "[a]ll transactions, and the resulting supply, demand, and pricing of specific goods, are user-driven" (190-91).

Finally, players of *Galaxies* can choose a support profession such as doctor, dancer or musician. Similarly to the crafting professions, support ones hold in this game a crucial importance that is simply downplayed or absent in other MMORPGs. Regardless of their profession of choice, all player characters eventually get tired or injured while interacting with the game world. In other MMORPG games, the characters can regain their full health with potions, health kits or by talking with non-playable characters (NPCs) which are located across the game world. Once again, these items do not exist in *Galaxies* and so players can only be cured by player-controlled doctors and relax by listening to music performed by player-controlled musicians.

So, while other MMORPGs demand their players to become mighty and powerful in-game characters so as to progress in the game, *Star Wars: Galaxies* mainly encourages them to become members of a complex and interconnected society and discover their role in it.[20] This role does not have to be necessarily that of a powerful warrior or a skilled marksman, but also that of a charming dancer or even a humble artisan. By creating a digital gaming environment that welcomes different styles of play, *Galaxies* presented itself as an effective alternative against the strict and narrow algorithmic logic typical of digital gaming and, especially, of role-playing videogames. To quote Timothy Burke, *Star Wars: Galaxies* "had a vision of player interdependence deeply buried in its core design, so that these were not merely separate specializations of

[20]Koster details this goal in a 2005 interview: "I've been increasingly interested in seeing how the different groups [of players] interact, in part because so many of them dislike each other. ... For me, MMO design isn't just about putting together a game, although obviously that's critical. But it's also about learning a little about that kind of thing" (qtd. in Pearce).

gameplay, but were all required to interact with one another in profound ways."

While *Galaxies* is an unconventional game because it grants more freedom of choice to its players, are the features discussed so far enough to call this game an example of minor digital gaming? In short, the answer is no. On the one hand, the game's compelling and unique mechanics forces the player not to be the hero of the game, and potentially leads them to reflect about their role in society. These aspects are certainly a departure from the strict algorithmic logic of commercial videogames, but at the same time they are still rooted in majoritarian worldviews. On the one hand, this focus on the interdependent economic system is not made for the purpose of furthering minoritarian goals, but rather to recreate a capitalistic system (Burke). On the other hand, *Star Wars: Galaxies* does still feature a similar structure as other MMORPGs. For example, players are still supposed to take on a series of quests and side-quests in order to progress their character's statistics. Even non-combat characters develop their skills and abilities as they keep performing the same in-game actions: musicians improve by practicing music, and artisans become better at their job by crafting more items. These examples alone prove that, despite being marginal, an algorithmic logic still defines a player's interaction with this game world. Moreover, from a narrative point of view, *Galaxies* still presents a rather conventional narrative of the *Star Wars* saga: indeed, the Galactic Empire and the Rebel Alliance are the two main factions in the game, and players are free to join them and relive the main narrative of the saga.

Even though *Galaxies* does still feature an underlying algorithmic and majoritarian logic, there are numerous elements of this videogame that enable minoritarian usages for players who wish to pursue them. I contend that *Galaxies* is a potentially minoritarian videogame version of *Star Wars* because of how it borrows, adapts and frames elements from Lucas' saga. On the one hand, it is true that, by Koster's own admission, *Galaxies* aspires "to mimic the events of [*Star Wars*] as much as possible,"

not only on a large scale (making the conflict between Rebels and Empire a central part of the narrative is perhaps the most notable example of this aspiration) but also on a smaller one, that is by allowing players to replicate situations and events from the movies (Koster, "Flagging"). On the other hand, however, the consequences of these game design choices (which were motivated by the desire of offering a faithful MMORPG experience of the movies) is that of creating a text with a loose sense of authorship and, above all, one that unintentionally subtracts what Deleuze would call the elements of power of Lucas' saga.

The developers' storytelling and gameplay choices in designing the game gave more importance to elements from the 1977 film than to its sequels, prequels or crossover narratives. For example, a defining trait of the game is that it is set temporally between the events of *Star Wars* and those told in *The Empire Strikes Back* (Koster, "Jedi"). In other words, players of the game are interacting with a version of the *Star Wars* universe in which the Death Star has already been destroyed in the Battle of Yavin (that is, the spaceship dogfight at the end of the 1977 movie) but which also does not include any relevant plot element from the sequels. Most notably, *Galaxies* takes *Star Wars* to a *status quo* before the dramatic revelations of *Empire*, before Luke's confrontation with Vader and the subsequent reveal that the two characters are father and son.

There are two consequences to this choice of setting: the first consequence follows an intentional game design philosophy. The fact that, by playing *Galaxies*, one can experience a videogame version of *Star Wars* that precedes the events of *Empire* establishes and encourages a collective form of storytelling. As M.J. Clarke points out, in *Star Wars: Galaxies* the developers are not simply creating a story for the players to live and experience, but they are instead "creating the platform and direction from

which the story could develop" (204).[21] Indeed, the choice of setting the timeline of *Galaxies* before the events of *Empire* invites player not to give excessive attention to Lucas' narrative and, instead, encourages them to pursue their own *Star Wars* narratives. Hence, as it willingly grants players the freedom to generate their own version of *Star Wars*, *Galaxies* can be defined in Deleuzian terms as a text that offers a collective form of enunciation.

The second consequence of *Galaxies* ignoring the events of the later *Star Wars* movies is perhaps unintentional, and yet profoundly subversive. Indeed, the fact that players get to live in a version of the *Star Wars* narrative that ignores Luke's family ties is of particular importance from a Deleuzian perspective. As I pointed out in section 3.6, the revelation that Vader is Luke's father is without a doubt the event that drastically changed any approach to the original *Star Wars* film. While *Star Wars* presented itself to its 1977 audiences as a profound deterritorialization of semiotic elements originating in other narratives, *Empire* reterritorialized these same elements in a conventional Oedipal narrative. Far from being merely the backdrop of an Oedipal conflict between Luke and Darth Vader, *Star Wars: Galaxies* gives once again more attention to the fictional world of the saga and its bizarre mingling of elements originating in different narratives.

From a Deleuzian perspective, the removal of the Oedipal elements from a major text is certainly the quintessential example of subtracting the elements of power from a major text in order to push it towards a minor condition. Indeed, by choosing to discard the events of *Empire*, *Galaxies* liberates the *Star Wars* narrative from the Oedipal connotations it acquired from 1980 onwards. Without this connotation, *Star Wars* ceases to be a postsignifying romance or, in other words, a romance that

[21] In fact, Clarke calls *Galaxies* as an example of what Janet Murray's concept of procedural authorship. Murray defines her concept as follows: "[a]uthorship in electronic media is procedural. Procedural authorship means writing the rules by which the texts appear as well as writing the texts themselves. It means writing the rules for the interactor's involvement, that is, the conditions under which things will happen in response to the participant's actions. It means establishing the properties of the objects and potential objects in the virtual world and the formulas for how they will relate to one another. The procedural author creates not just a set of scenes but a world of narrative possibilities" (Ch. 5).

incorporates elements from other regimes for the purpose of naming and defining them. On the contrary, *Galaxies* reclaims a countersignifying usage for *Star Wars*: in other words, by playing *Galaxies*, one can experience *Star Wars* once again as a countersignifying romance, that is as a romance that welcomes elements from different texts and genres—i.e., Western narratives, space opera serials, Samurai dramas—for the sole purpose of depriving them of any original meaning and function. In sum, the fictional universe of *Star Wars* as adapted in *Galaxies* is made merely of deterritorialized semiotic material that does not have to follow a precise narrative plot or videogame algorithm.

While *Galaxies*' peculiar choice of setting encourages to experience *Star Wars* once again as a countersignifying regime, of course this choice alone cannot prevent players from reliving the *Star Wars* narrative exactly as they experienced it in the movies. The character profession design choice described earlier in this section in part encourages the players to explore more unconventional roles in the *Star Wars* universe, but of course this system does include character roles that resemble those of main characters from the saga: most notably, a player who chooses the marksman profession can become eventually a smuggler like Han Solo or Chewbacca. At the same time however, the path towards shaping a character who is able to accomplish the same feats as Solo or Fett is quite long and irksome, so much so that, paradoxically, experiencing the game as a medic, artisan and entertainer is perhaps more interesting.

I would like to clarify this aspect by relating my personal experience with *Galaxies*. The first time I played this game I created a human marksman character in the hope of experiencing the fictional world of *Star Wars* as a figure similar to Boba Fett, the bounty hunter who captures Solo at the end of *The Empire Strikes Back*. While I was looking forward to playing an action-packed game that would allow me to be an infamous gun-for-hire in the galaxy, my expectations were soon disappointed: any newly created character in *Galaxies* starts with very low abilities, and so my first

hours of gameplay consisted in tiring and boring fights against the Womp Rats of Tatooine, followed by frequent visits at the Bestine Medical Center and the local Canteen, so as to recover my health and mental energies. Instead of playing as Boba Fett, I ended up controlling a weak character similar to Luke at the beginning of the first movie, before he departs on his hero's journey.[22]

In my second experience with the game I attempted a different and apparently more boring style of play. First and foremost, I decided to play as a Rodian, that is the race of Greedo, the bounty hunter who Han blasts with his pistol in the Canteen scene. The profession I chose for my character was that of an artisan, one that has no real equivalent in the movies apart from supporting characters such as Luke's step-parents. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this playing experience is that I did not notice any relevant difference from when I played as aspiring bounty hunter. My first session consisted in surveying the planet of Tatooine for minerals and other raw materials, which were necessary in order to forge a weapon and make my first profit: the locations of these resources in the game map were very distant from one another, and so my first hour or so in the game ended up being spent searching for these resources. Once I collected them, I returned to Mos Espa, where I spent some time in a bar chatting with other players. In other words, the mechanics designed for *Galaxies* do create a minor version of the *Star War* universe, a version that does not treat any player as the main hero of the story because it offers similarly tedious experiences.[23]

Although *Galaxies*' profession system does encourage a less heroic play style by offering an unremarkable experience regardless of which kind of character one decides

[22]In his review of *Galaxies*, Burke similarly remarks that the game is "more about being Uncle Owen and less about being Luke Skywalker."

[23]Burke recounts a similar experience to the one I describe above. "The rhythms of gameplay for most players," Burke explains, "bore little resemblance to the narrative structure of the films or of subsidiary *Star Wars* media, including computer games like *Knights of the Old Republic* (BioWare 2003) or *Dark Forces* (LucasArts 1995). Most adventures in *SWG*, especially in the game's early history, have had a routinized, humdrum quality to them—hunting creatures in the wilderness and skinning their hides, or surveying for minerals and placing mining devices–rather than the high-stakes galactic civil war or the moral focus on the Jedi ethos that the fictional universe of *Star Wars* highlights."

to play, there are features of this game that outright preclude players from having a majoritarian experience when playing *Galaxies*. For example, players are forbidden from adopting the identity of any of the characters from the movies (Jenkins 164). While this feature has been included in order to avoid breaking the immersion of the game, it also contributes to pushing the players towards experiencing the *Star Wars* setting in less conventional ways. However, what is in my view the most evident example of how *Galaxies* can work as a minor videogame is how this game manages the Jedi and Sith professions. Although the game allows its players to become a Force-sensitive character such as a Jedi or a Sith, the game developers actively discourage players from seeking this path by making it extremely difficult to achieve. As Koster explains, "the process of becoming a Jedi [was] effectively a personality test," one that involved performing a randomly-generated list of actions in the game ("Jedi"). Koster continues:

> [t]here would be a large pool of possible actions a character could undertake, divided into four categories ... Every player would randomly roll up a different set of actions they needed to undertake. Their personal list would include some items from each of the four categories so that it was always balanced across playstyles. (Koster, "Jedi").

So, while every player would know that they could become a Jedi, "[n]obody would know how to become a Jedi" thus making the occurence of a Jedi character in the game extremely rare (Koster, "Jedi"). Once again, this choice was motivated by a desire to favour narrative immersion and balanced gameplay, both endeavours that apparently do not encourage a minor use of this text.[24] At the same time, however, I argue that this choice *does* contribute to encouraging a minor experience with the *Star Wars* setting. Indeed, the requirements for becoming a Jedi in the early version of the game were so demanding that players simply chose other play styles and professions

[24] Jedi are indeed uncommon figures in the fictional universe of *Star Wars* because, as Obi-Wan and Vader explain in the 1977 film, most of them have been hunted down and killed by the Empire. As for the balanced gameplay issue, Koster clarifies that Jedi "are a discontinuity. They are too powerful. They are an alpha class. Not a problem is a single-player environment, but what do you do with them in a multiplayer setting" ("Jedi").

for their characters without too many complaints (Koster, "Jedi").

Hence, *Galaxies* gives players the perhaps unique opportunity of experiencing an Utopic version of *Star Wars*, one that never turned into a family saga or a profoundly authorial text. Indeed, this videogame forces players to live in a version of this romance narrative in which the Oedipal dynamics introduced in *Empire* are removed entirely. Moreover, the fact that players are forced to play as characters that would be considered at best marginal in the movies invites them to disregard other macropolitical conflicts in this text, such as the war between Rebels and Empire or the religious struggle between Jedi and Sith.[25] With these conflicts removed, the players are now free to approach *Star Wars* both as a profound deterritorialization of elements from other texts and, moreover, as an unsettling version of Lucas' narrative or, as Deleuze would say, a high degree of variation in performance.

Moreover, one should not forget that MMORPG environments such as the one *Galaxies* establishes foster a complex network of gameplay and social interactions, so much so that "careful planning is practically impossible" regardless of whether one designs or plays these games (Nitsche 389). Such a lack of planning is in and by itself very much akin to minor performance practices such as Bene's theatre and, arguably also the *Maggio* tradition, which do not present themselves as coherent, naturalistic and immersive experiences. However, what makes *Star Wars: Galaxies* an even more blatant example of minor performance is the fact that, despite its ambitious goals, this game often fails to deliver the degree of narrative immersion and complex world-building it promises. As Burke effectively summarizes, "if immersion means 'a feeling that the player has become part of or within a familiar or known fictional universe,' [*Star Wars: Galaxies*] has little immersiveness." Indeed, the description of how *Galaxies* appeared at its release is somehow closer to Galloway's concept of counter-gaming (and, arguably, even to Bene's theatre) than to the developers' desire

[25]In fact, as W.S. Bainbridge points out, the extremely rare occurrence of Jedi and Sith characters means that religion (which plays a prominent role in Lucas' saga) is utterly downplayed in the game (145).

of giving an accurate and believable version of the *Star Wars* fictional universe.

> In the first six months of the game's development, you could walk up in broad daylight to a uniformed recruiter for the Rebellion in most major cities and receive a mission while Imperial players did the same around the corner. In the early months of the game, major cities were filled with rag-tag bands of identical-looking players shooting at each other while NPCs walked around disinterestedly—hardly the image of the films' pitched battles between desperate, furtive, idealistic Rebels and remorseless, fascistic and militaristic Imperials. Neither faction had any sense of distinctive connection to the fiction behind it. Early on, gameplay quests undertaken for the Rebellion or the Empire led to bizarrely wooden encounters with badly simulated major characters from the films (Burke).

The description of the game Bruke offers in the above quote (as well as the one I provided in the previous pages) refers to a version of the game that existed between 2003 and 2005. After 2005, when it became evident that the project conceived by Koster's team could have never been viable, Sony Online Entertainment decided to take a different direction. During its eight-year run, *Galaxies* was subject to several drastic changes in design and game mechanics. The practice of offering continuing support and updates to these kind of videogames is quite common as far as far as MMORPGs are concerned due to the fact that they end up being played for decades: however, the changes introduced to *Galaxies* after 2005 reshaped this game into a far more conventional *Star Wars* experience. For example, Han Solo and Chewbacca would introduce new players to the basic mechanics of the game in a brief tutorial section (Burke). Most notably, players could now choose to play as either a Jedi or a Sith from the very outset, thus discarding the original idea of creating a dynamic and interconnected virtual society. In Deleuzian terms, the deterritorialization offered by the first version of *Galaxies* had been reterritorialized. However, as opposed to the reterritorialization enacted in *The Empire Strikes*, there has been an alternative, further deterritorialization towards minor art.

I was not able to play either the pre-2005 version of the game nor the post-2005 one. In fact, I never played an officially supported version of the game, since Sony

shut down *Galaxies*' servers in December 2011. Since then, devoted fans of the game decided to recreate an unofficial version of in a server unaffiliated with Sony or LucasArts. The project, called *SWGEmu*, takes the distance from the post-2005 version of the game: programmers attached to this project decided to rewrite the game's source code so as to offer a version of the game similar to the one players could play between 2003 and 2005. Without a doubt, this version of the game provides an even more unsettling and minor experience of the *Star Wars* fictional setting.[26] As an amateur project, *SWGEmu* is developed by a small team of fans who, although competent, cannot devote the same attention and care for detail to the project as Sony's developers and technicians could. As a result, by playing *Galaxies* in the only version possible today it is quite frequent to encounter immersion-breaking bugs, poorly implemented textures or complete server outages and wipeouts. In other words, not only is *Galaxies* now back to being the potentially minor videogame Koster's team designed, but the only viable way of playing it today is as a hacked and player-driven game that furthers this minor condition due to its imperfections and bugs, which inevitably cause a perpetual variation in digital performance. If digital gaming is always a perplexing digital experience that is rapidly reterritorialized into meaningful actions, a game such as *Star Wars: Galaxies* ensures that this perplexing experience continues towards deterritorialization at least a bit longer than usual.

[26]See "What is SWGEmu?" for details on the project.

6

Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis, I set out two goals for my nomadology of romance. The first objective of my work was to expand our current understanding of romance as a political literary form. In other words, one of my preoccupations in discussing examples of romance as different as *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* was to enrich our list of possible political uses of this literary tradition. If, as Jameson argues, the presence of romance signals periods of imminent and profound social upheaval, it seems odd that romance only acts politically as either a form of communication among subaltern groups or as a tool hegemonic classes use to dismiss subaltern categories of people. Hence, can romance act politically in different fashions? If so, what are other possible political uses of romance?

The close readings offered in Chapters 3 and 4 validated my suspicions. Indeed, by looking at both Boiardo's poem and Lucas' film via the categories of Deleuze and Guattari's thought, it becomes evident that these texts provide two diverse and compelling examples of political uses of romance devices that are alternative to the ones listed above. On the one hand, *Star Wars* relies upon the devices of romance—that is, structures of delay and countersignification—so as to create a Junkspace, or a space of accelerated commodification and consumption of nostalgic artifacts. As such, in the case of Lucas' film, romance acts politically as part of the broader

project of postmodern capitalism. On the other hand, *Inamoramento de Orlando* relies upon the same romance tropes and conventions so as to create a Thirdspace, or in other words a conceptual space where contrasting intellectual frameworks coexist so as to enable radical heuristic experimentations. Hence, both *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* are excellent tools for understanding how to discuss romance politically, not only because they are the products of complex historical periods, but also because they have been used in peculiar political ways.

Offering a survey of possible political uses of romance was one of the two goals of this work, but of course my second and most important objective was to discern whether romance can constitute an effective example of minor art in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the term. While I can state outright that the former goal has been achieved, my final remarks on this latter aspect of my study require some clarifications. These clarifications are particularly needed due to the objective difficulties one encounters in understanding what marks an clear-cut example of minor art. As already stated, *Inamoramento de Orlando* and *Star Wars* are quite clearly not examples of romance as minor art. As I argued in my close readings, both these texts fail to enact a process of becoming-minoritarian on their own due to the fact that neither Boiardo nor Lucas want to challenge majoritarian worldviews. On the one hand, Lucas employed his movie franchise for the purpose of promoting himself as an author instead of challenging the very concept of authorship; on the other hand, Boiardo employs romance as a Thirdspace for the purpose of seeking hidden yet objective truths about reality, and not for the goal of creating a new mental reality for his readers as instead Deleuze and Guattari incite us to do.

As an alternative to the majoritarian uses of romance in *Inamoramento* and *Star Wars*, I proposed to discuss two performance adaptations of the works of Boiardo and Lucas in the hope of finding texts that employed romance tropes and conventions so as to challenge repressive structures of thought. Indeed, as I illustrated in Chapter 5,

the *Maggio* folk theatre tradition and the MMORPG videogame *Star Wars: Galaxies* produce effects that Deleuze and Guattari would have arguably defined as minoritarian: more specifically, both texts use romance devices so as to create a sense of perpetual variation upon certain kinds of audiences and players. While these two latter works mark a more minoritarian use of romance tropes and conventions, I imagine that some my readers may be understandably skeptical about whether this minoritarian use can translate into the profound intellectual and societal changes Deleuze and Guattari auspicated.

After all, while I proposed to look at these two examples of romance in light of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of minor art, my approach to and fruition of these forms of expressions is, quite clearly, out of the ordinary. A reader of Deleuze and Guattari like myself can drive up to the Apennines in order to see a peformance of a *Maggio* play and experience it as a theatre adaptation of Boiardo and Ariosto's narrative that creates a sense of perpetual aesthetic variation; but does my peculiar way of perceiving these kind of plays hold that much influence on a large scale? Will my encounter with the *Maggio* tradition ever influence the way other members of the audience perceive this art form? Of course, a similar argument can be made in the case of *Star Wars: Galaxies*. If I decide to play this game so as to experience a version of the *Star Wars* narrative that is deprived of all Oedipal conflicts and consists only in a full deterritorialization of other intertextual semiotic material, how many other players will decide to install a discontinued videogame on their computers, hack it so as to make a modified version of software work, and follow me in this specifically counterfactual vision of Lucas' fictional world?

What I mean to say is that it is easier to argue that *Star Wars: Galaxies* and the *Maggio* tradition are examples of minor romance than it is to see how these two minor texts can push a vast majority of audiences and players to rebel against repressing structures of thought. In fact, if taken to the extremes, this realization represents a

serious threat to the entire project of minor art as a truly revolutionary instrument. How many readers approach Kafka in order to seek a becoming-minortiarian? How many instead regard him as one of the most important voices of Modernism? Similarly, how many people watch Bene's performances so as to find a theatre of perpetual variation, and on the contrary how many seek to understand the genius author behind these performances? These questions lead to more fundamental doubts about the concept of minor art. Does minor art truly exist if we still discuss Kafka and Bene as authors? From this point of view, perhaps even the two minor romances I discussed in Chapter 5 are better examples of minor art, since both of them lack a strong authorial voice.

The more one quests for minor art, the less concrete or viable examples of it emerge. In fact, I wish to contend that, on a close scrutiny, right now *nothing* is minor art in the way Deleuze and Guattari describe it. A truly effective minor text is, after all, a text that enacts (or, at least, fundamentally contributes to) a radical revolution of thought, that is what Deleuze and Guattari call absolute deterritorialization which enables the construction of an entirely new reality. Since there has not been an absolute deterritorialization yet but only relative ones, then arguably there has not been a truly effective minor art yet either. As already pointed out, even the very art practices Deleuze and Guattari discuss and promote as minoritarian are such only to a certain degree. In other words, there is art that pushes some readers, audiences, players towards a condition of becoming-minoritarian, but never to the extent of leading them towards absolute deterritorialization.

If minor romance and, in even broader terms, minor art do not exist yet, will it ever exist? Does the fact that minor art seems so difficult to grasp mean that minor art is, quite simply, an unachievable and Utopic goal? In other words, is minor art a practical, philosophical and theoretical impossibility? I do not want my reading of minor art to come out as much more pessimistic than intended. After all, since

Deleuze and Guattari's intellectual collaboration is based upon the very idea that we should seek a radical revolution of thought and an absolute deterritorialization, then I believe that they considered this goal as attainable, which in turn would make minor art a kind of aesthetic experience within our reach.

In light of the analysis offered in this thesis, I can offer two ground-rules for how to quest for minor art. Firstly, we should always remember that minor art is an highly individuated experience. At first, this idea may seem to be based upon a vision of subjectivity that Deleuze and Guattari challenge throughout their collective writings; however, this idea is also quite akin to the ideas of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. From a Deleuzian perspective, art functions in machinic terms in that it produces specific effects on those who experience it. *Star Wars: Galaxies* and plays in the *Maggio* tradition offer me a highly minoritarian experience through romance because of my social and cultural background, level of education and interests, but of course these forms of expression do not produce the same effects upon different individuals or groups of people. Similarly, while the works of Kafka and Bene may function as minor art for readers and audiences with a similar background as Deleuze, these same texts have different effects upon different individuals or cultural categories. What ensues from the fact that minor art depends upon usage and effect is that there cannot be a single, univocal example of minor art; rather, there can be multiple minor artistic experiences. The plural nature of minor art is arguably the reason why, in their writings, Deleuze and Guattari refrain from clarifying what they mean exactly when discussing this concept.

Hence, how can one find a minor artistic text that works for oneself? This question leads me to formulate the second ground-rule of minor art. Minor art requires a profound and unrelenting discipline. Discipline means, on a more practical lever, that we need to search thoroughly for minor art. In the case of the two examples I proposed in this thesis, one has either to travel to remote hamlets in the Apennines or

learn how to hack a game in order to have a minor experience. In other words, Deleuze and Guattari are giving each one of us (either as individuals or members of social and cultural groups) the responsibility to search for the kind of artistic practice that will enable us to question existing structures of thought on a fundamental level. However, I mean to use the term 'discipline' also in the sense of rigorous intellectual practice: pushing oneself to approach a text as a minor art form requires more attention and involvement more than the ones that aesthetic experiences normally demand from us. The fact that *Star Wars: Galaxies* and the *Maggio* tradition do not constitute *per se* an example of minor art allows me to emphasize the idea that a text works as minor art only if one chooses to use it in a minoritarian way. The duty of a potentially minor work of art is merely that of facilitating this minoritarian usage, but it is ultimately the highly difficult task of those who approach this text to untap this minoritarian usage.

As all aspects of minor art seem to be entirely pluralistic and rhizomatic, I contend that one element may easily be a constant in any quest for minor art: I am referring, of course, to romance. My hope is that this thesis convincingly argued that romance is an excellent semiotic environment for experimenting with radical artistic practices so as to seek minor art. Its high degree of semiotic deterritorialization always enables an unsettling aesthetic experience, and its reliance on structures of delay easily prevents this experience to reterritorialize into meaning. As such, romance can be an creative playground for experimenting with new forms of reality, for creating a new world for ourselves. Of course, it is up to us—as readers, writers, audiences or players—to seize this opportunity, to experiment with this environment in order to find a kind of minor art that will work for ourselves. Minor art and, by extent, absolute deterritorialization do certainly require an extremely demanding and rigorous intellectual apprenticeship, so much so that we probably will not be able to see their full and widespread enactment in our lifetime. But if we will, maybe romance will

not play a secondary role in it.

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