

BOAZ ARAD: VOZVOZ

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Synchronization of a Moustache

Guy Ben-Ner

1.

In Jacques Tati's film, *Playtime*, there is one scene especially worthy of attention: the well-known Monsieur Hulot arrives at a modern fair bustling with people and commodities: a broom with headlights, a trashcan shaped like a broken Greek column, etc. Stopping at one of the stalls, the seller leads him inside, where he is presented with a new invention: a soundless door. A tempting slogan is printed on the wall: "Slam your doors in golden silence." The sales agent mistakenly identifies Hulot as another man whom he seeks. Hulot, in his inability to communicate, misconstrues the situation. The seller, on his part, loses his patience and manners, going back into the stall with a dramatic slam which is supposed to express his great anger to us, the viewers, and to Hulot. The only problem is, of course, that the door refuses to make a sound, and the anger remains arrested, without an outlet (which makes him sevenfold angrier). Hulot is like a silent film remnant in a talkie (in Tati's case it would be more accurate to say, sound- and murmur-producing cinema, because there is not much talking there), and thus the anger he elicits around him is even greater. Hulot is important in this context, because he himself is a type of a soundless door.

This particular difference between that "silence" and the talking picture within which it is located, generates a violation of order. The silence of the silent film, which is inserted into the historical context of an entire world preserved soundless for us, and which employs visual gestures as compensation for the lack of sound, is much more tolerable precisely for these reasons. A soundless moment in a talking film is much closer to Tati's condition. It is a bubble-like moment, a vacuum; a violation that forces us to experience the lack as a total, non-metaphorical void. It is important to note that the silence was also intolerable for the first moviegoers, as proved by the fact that the cinema, at the very outset, was accompanied by live music (Almodóvar, in his early films, which were silent, used to dub all the characters live before the projector and the audience).

In classical narrative cinema, sound is "there" throughout, from beginning to end, preserving the sacred continuity by means of "sound bridges" precisely intended to bridge the unbearable gap in the transition between one shot and another. The sound is the transparent glue that holds everything together without being seen. Silence will emerge there as room tone, as a recording of a minor acoustic event, but silence as the absence of all sound is a taboo in this type of cinema, a taboo which is even stricter than the one forbidding the actor to look into the camera (a taboo that was breached by the actress reaching orgasm in the pornographic movie, looking at the camera-viewer in order to further stimulate him. But even there, sound has an important function, as the woman's voice is the only admissible evidence of her pleasure, unlike the man whose pleasure has visual evidence).

On the other hand, Tati's silence is neither Harpo Marx's silence (which is interesting in itself, as it preserves a figure from silent film within talking cinema), because Marx's silence is reasoned by the film's narrative and aided by gestures (as radicalized as they may be) that mark it as silence. The silence in Tati's case is unreasoned. It is not explained by his muteness, as in Harpo Marx's case, because Hulot is not mute. He has sound potential, which is realized on occasion in the form of slight yowls. The risk that he might open his mouth constantly looms over the movie. Nothing is guaranteed. It is precisely because of this that Hulot's silence, his autism, irritates those around him. The speech potential is always there, but it is not realized. What is realized in Hulot is a diversified production of noises, sounds and knocks of sorts, but not words.

In fact, what Tati demonstrated is that only against the backdrop of the talking, synchronized film have we become capable of hearing silence in the cinema. It takes an acoustic world, in which Hulot and the door, that slam soundlessly, are a surprise. This scene is, thus, like an object which metaphorically signifies Hulot. At the same time, however, it also signifies a certain relationship between image and sound in the talking film, a relationship that may be defined as divorce or betrayal among spouses (considering that a popular term among sound technicians is the "marriage of sound and image"). To my mind, Tati was one of the great inventors of such marriages and divorces between these spouses, and *Playtime* is diversified evidence of this.

Christian Metz defines sound as an object like any other; an acoustic object (a definition clearly assisted by Lacan). The problem in understanding sound as an object lies, according to Metz, in the fact that we perceive sound as a characteristic, and therefore as requiring reflection about the object producing it. Hearing a sound, the listener immediately asks: "A sound of what?," namely: To what object does it belong? To wit: sound is perceived as a characteristic of another object to which it belongs, rather than as an object in its own right.

Sound is a characteristic in ideological terms (logically it is an object), and like any characteristic, it is associated with an object. Thus it is sufficient to identify the latter in order to conceive of the sound, whereas the opposite is not true: we can identify a buzz if we know that it belongs to a bee, but not the reverse, says Metz (just as the taste of porridge on Karl Marx's table does not tell us who grew the oats). For instance, we all recognize a photograph as an image, but a recorded gunshot will sound just like a real shot on the street. In other words, the gap between sound as an image and real sound is highly elusive.

Elsewhere Marx maintains that only when the means of production are imperfect do we become aware that they are the products of prior labor. A knife that fails to cut properly, says Marx, calls to mind Mr. A, the cutler – or, if we stick to the porridge from the previous example – only a bad flavor will remind us of the cook's labor or that of the oats grower. To wit: the tool reminds us of the one who produced it only if there is a flaw (according to

Deleuze and Guattari, a machine, any machine, by its very essence, works only when something is flawed, out of order. The link drawn by Marx between the maker and the appliance constructs such a machine, a mechanism). A soundless door initially appears like a good invention, but once it becomes clear that the purpose of a "door" is to be slammed forcefully at times of anger, we find ourselves confronted with a flawed machine. Gold, the golden silence, has turned into straw.

The sound refusing to report where the viewer expects it, where he foresees its emergence – (and sees rather than hears already characterizes cinema as a visual art form, unjustly of course, a-priori establishing their relationship as one between master and maidservant), is a flawed appliance that calls its maker to mind. Sound betrays the expectations and refuses to report at the place designated for it, at the place where it is supposed to release a cry of relief, to express anger. But like a "living-dead," in Tati's work that disappearing sound can always re-emerge in an unexpected place, as a marker of an entirely different content, and might haunt the living with spectral restlessness.

The liberation of sound from the image, whose importance had already been acknowledged by Eisenstein and Co. for their "montage culture," is the liberation from dependence on another object, from being condemned to function as the characteristic of another object; the liberation of the laborer from the capitalist by becoming the owner of the means of production which he uses. Only by obtaining such freedom can sound itself be perceived as a

truly productive object, like an *objet petit a* created at the very moment of its dropping, as it is displaced from the subject, just as the invention of the mobile steam engine freed the factory of its geographical dependence on the object "river," whose flux was the ancient engine of the water wheel, and enabled the concentrations of industry and population in the cities.

2.

Hitler is a cinematic image consisting of a moustache and a voice. These are the two objects defining him as a cinematic object. In 1913, when Kasimir Malevich first painted the black square, Hitler had already worn it for several years on his upper lip. And as for the voice, it had to wait a little longer, until 1927, when the first talking motion picture, *The Jazz Singer*, was released. For the first time, sound and image were recorded on the same medium in full sync (if only for a few minutes). Can one imagine Hitler as we do today, had he been an earlier event, prior to the talking film? No. Hitler is a product of the talkie.

In *Moustache* Boaz Arad deprives Hitler of the one thing you cannot erase without destroying him as an image (apart from his speaking voice) – the moustache (later on, with the systematization of an avenger or a persistent Nazi hunter, he will also treat his voice, will translate it into Hebrew). The title of the work, *Moustache* (תרגום שם העבודה-*Moustache*) (שפם", obviously indicates the missing object, precisely what is absent from the work, what was condemned to be off-screen. In any event, the erased moustache burns in its emptiness, conveying the strong sense of a stinging

aftershave. The disappearance screams out its presence, like a slam without a door. The void, the absence of that which makes Hitler into Hitler, leaves us with a charisma-free bureaucrat. Indeed he continues with his speech, but something of his determination is lost, and it burns above that organ that keeps dropping aural objects. In effect, it is the opposite act of Duchamp's attaching a moustache to the *Mona Lisa*. In Arad's case, the humiliation involves shaving rather than the addition of a moustache (in light of the horrifying images left us from the violent shearing of Jews' facial hair in Europe, there is a type of petty revenge here by a little Jewish barber). Here, Arad transforms the moustache into an *objet petit a*, a part of the subject's body that has been cut from it, and like an *objet petit a* and the void it left behind, it heralds all those substitutes to emerge shortly thereafter in an attempt to satisfy the desire for the lost object. This provides the cue for the carnivalesque moment, where prosthetic moustaches go on and off stage, dancing an annoyingly pleasurable dance on the surface which refuses to absorb them.

In *Marcel, Marcel* (the same Marcel who gave the *Mona Lisa* a moustache) – the moustache is cut away from the body, while its wearer continues his speech, becoming a fly buzzing around the face that has lost the one quality unifying it as an image. The fly goes into the mouth, the nostrils, becomes the tongue of a chameleon that swallows flies, wipes the eyes like windshield wipers, and finally – flickers like a recording light in a video camera indicating that the loop is about to begin again. An accurate work. The speaking mouth drops objects like bombs from an airplane, and slightly above it – another

apparatus produces-drops moustache objects (moustaches, all the moustaches in the world; Stalin and Herzl, Lenin and Marx, and Raffi Nelson). A hysterical act of history. A moustache schizophrenia as only Deleuze and Guattari could have imagined. Like the steam engine versus the river, the erasure generates an entire population concentration and an industrial zone above, below, and in the mouth.

André Bazin once wrote about Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*, that it was the Jewish comedian's revenge on Hitler for stealing his moustache. Chaplin, as the little Jewish barber, takes his revenge. Marx remarked about Hegel's recurrence theory, that while historical phenomena indeed repeat themselves, Hegel forgot to mention that what is repeated always returns as a farce of the original serious event. One may argue with Marx as well as with Hegel in the case of a time reversal, when the tragic event (Hitler) repeats the comic event (Chaplin's Jewish tramp), depriving it of the comic. The film is thus an attempt to re-steal the moustache and return it to its original owner. To give the farce the last word, but as sound. What does he mumble there under the moustache?

What is the connection between all those moustaches and their absence, and the voice, its erasure and re-attachment in Arad's works? What makes it possible to take the voice of the *other*, the non-Ashkenazi, and operate it as your own (*Until When?*), and elsewhere, forthwith to operate your own voice in an attempt to pronounce your name, "Boaz Arad," with a "Mizrahi" (Sephardic) accent on the letter *Ayin*, an accent which is destined to fail

because you are an Ashkenazi (*The Annunciation*). First the erasure, then the synchronization of a foreign object with an origin that accepts-rejects the implant according to circumstances. Prior to that, he also makes sure to teach Hitler Hebrew so he can apologize. The tactic is identical (erasure of the voice/moustache, followed by its reemergence as a prosthesis). Every synchronization is precisely such a prosthesis attempting to convey the illusion of fullness.

But something else happens in *The Great Dictator* apart from the association between comedy (Chaplin) and tragedy (Hitler), between history and farce. Beyond the battle for the moustache rights, it is the first movie in which Chaplin speaks. And when Chaplin himself says: "...Then it suddenly struck me. Of course! As Hitler I could ... talk all I wanted to. And as the tramp I could remain more or less silent. A Hitler story was an opportunity for burlesque and pantomime," one realizes how history furnishes a gifted mummer with an opportunity to make his first step in the transition from silent film to talkie; to burlesque. It is a historical moment in which Hitler becomes Chaplin's springboard. Chaplin operates here on his own, like all the Marx Brothers together. It is a similar solution that generates a bridge on which the mime artist can cross to the other, acoustic bank, a transition that for so many stars became a personal tragedy.

But the incredible thing about *the Great Dictator*, it ought to be noted, is not Charlie as Hitler (Hynkel) speaking German-sounding gibberish. The gibberish is a brilliant solution for someone who has not previously spoken on

celluloid, although it is so precisely because it keeps Chaplin as we know him, as a silent figure, a mummer. We manage this transition precisely because of the meaninglessness of the spoken language. Just like silence, it allows for pantomime, for the body language which Chaplin spoke so well, because the void of meaning (like any void) strived to be filled. And it is filled with body language. The law is entropic. It is rather Hitler-Hynkel, the part which gave "burlesque" a chance, that remains faithful to the figure of the Jewish mime.

And what about the famous tramp? I am referring to Charlie's speech at the end of the film, which is a charged political speech turned to the outside world, then facing one of the most terrible wars in modern history. The tramp (due to misidentification) acquires a voice, and delivers a political speech to the nation, to the world. Is this the moment when Chaplin loses all proportion, as Buster Keaton argued? It is precisely the sound attached to the figure that erases the historical figure for us. Here sound does not disappear where it is expected to appear, but rather appears at a place and form which we hadn't anticipated. It is precisely the synchronization that deconstructs the perfection. Who on earth wants to experience Chaplin talking?

3.

Michel Chion perceives Hitchcock's *Psycho* as a film revolving around the problem of sound-figure synchronization: Norman's mother appears throughout the film as a disembodied voice. Like all the other characters in the film, the viewer too is motivated by the desire to link a body to this horrifying voice; to rediscover the mother, anew. The solution at the end of the film,

where the mother's voice finally finds its carrier in the last scene – Norman's body – provides an uncanny satisfaction to our wish for a harmonious link between sound and figure, between mother and son, on a vocal basis. In any event, in *the Great Dictator*, it is precisely the moment when the figure of the tramp connects with its voice that we experience as a moment that violates the harmony to which we have become accustomed. Perhaps because we suddenly see Charles Chaplin, the man, and lose sight of the figure portrayed. All of a sudden he is the artist who turns directly to us, the viewers. Like looking into the camera and breaking the imaginary wall separating the fiction on screen and the viewer in the theater. This is what Buster Keaton refers to when he talks about Charlie's sin of pride.

In *Gefiltefish* Arad lip-syncs his mother's voice preparing stuffed fish in the kitchen. Arad's place is taken by a ventriloquist's dummy, also starring in two other videos he created ("*until When?*" and *The Annunciation*), which together form a beautiful trilogy, an epitome of refinement in his oeuvre. All three films address the issue of synchronization, the "unnatural" link between body (mouth) and the voice dropping from or attached to it, as if it were a metaphorical carrier of the affinity between begetter and begotten, between one generation and another, one race and another. As with Norman and his mother in *Psycho*, in *Gefiltefish* too, the mother's voice is attached to the son's body, until one image is created of the two, and the place of the stuffed birds in Norman's office is taken by a parrot perched on Arad's shoulder (unsurprisingly, having previously hosted a rooster on his head), which

assumes the role of a signifier in the mother-son relationship. A parrot, namely a talking, imitating bird condemned to repeat others' words.

The son contains his mother's voice. He becomes pregnant with it. Just as the fish in the film – on its way to being stuffed – is revealed to the mother and her son as a "she-fish," a "she-fish" that was a-priori stuffed with eggs. Thus an entire generation is lost on the altar of the Ashkenazi delicacy, just like the hen that eats an egg in a cannibalistic act between one generation and the next (*"until When*), and like the dummy which first emerges as a painful substitute for a life devoid of "fertility" (*"until When Alone*), a substitute for the child, who is also a "little self," and the stuffed fish – a last remnant of tradition, possibly the last thing still carrying it out. Nonetheless, through all the images and the attitude to ethnicity and race in these three pieces, one may still insist on and identify the mechanical act propelling this entire chain of images in the bodiless voice attached to the body like a prosthetic device. The mother's voice attached to the lips of the son, the parrot; Arad's voice attached to the dummy; Zohar Argov's voice attached to Boaz Arad's lips; and Arad's voice trying in vain to pronounce his name with a Mizrahi accent (as if he were trying to paint a moustache for himself, having shaved off his original moustache; to synchronize a moustache).

We are further told in Arad's film that the "Mizrahi" are disgusted by gefilte fish, meaning that they hate the Ashkenazi through the gefilte fish, through this object that signifies the disgusting pleasure of the *other* (the Ashkenazi), and it soon becomes clear to us how relationships may be channeled via such

an object, and that this Ashkenazi fish, like Hitler's moustache, is a type of object that absorbs our desires, is impregnated by them, and multiplies. Later, when the fish is cooking, the mother has time to discuss an African sculpture in her home, one with several figures embracing around a tree, which she defines as "a family united around the trunk (*geza*)."* **[Footnote : * In Hebrew the word *geza* denotes both "trunk" and "race"]** Arad doesn't let this slip go unnoticed: his voice immediately follows, synchronized, as aforesaid, to the ventriloquist's dummy, speaking about "deep-rooted Ashkenazis," in order to intertwine "trunk" and "roots," among other things – and on the other hand – to point at a trunk of a very different kind, around which the Ashkenazi family is united – the stuffed fish. Like Norman, Arad does not let the mother get away with any slip of the tongue.

4.

Arad's Hitler is more aggressive than Chaplin's. In the former we discover that Hitler is also capable of speaking Hebrew. Of apologizing. And the brilliant moment at the end, that brings both ends of the film together into a loop is the moment when the oppressor adjusts his wayward bangs. Like the erasure of the moustache, it is a scrutiny of how the oppressor looks without the oppressor, without the moustache under which so many speeches dropped from his speech organ – and Hitler was indeed a walking speech organ, a sophisticated sound machine that exploited the emergence of the talking film long before Chaplin did.

What I am trying to say is that the event called Hitler could have happened only in the era of talking film. The event called Chaplin, on the other hand, is a remnant of the silent movie, barely managing to make the transition. This may be the place to rephrase Bazin's assertion slightly: Charlie's revenge has nothing to do with the imitated moustache, but rather with the battle over the voice, the right of precedence over sound, and possibly even the battle between talking and silent cinema. Chaplin himself, in the aforementioned quote, refers to it as a springboard. (Historically, the transition to the talking film deals the multi-lingual European cinema a death-blow, a cinema which in the silent era had crossed the lines easily, thus lifting American cinema and the English language, due to the size of the English-speaking population – namely, for economic reasons – to the top of the world.)

Thus, instead of stealing an image (a moustache), as in Bazin, we can talk about stealing a voice, as in *The Little Mermaid* who loses her voice in order to go on land, or in Orson Welles' *Touch of Evil*, where, at the end of the film, Quinlan's voice is snatched away from him, recorded on tape by Vargas in order to frame him.

Vis-à-vis *Gefiltefish*, Arad's version of *Psycho*, scrutiny of Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* (1998) reveals that Van Sant makes every possible mistake with regard to his presuppositions, and crudely so. Hitchcock's *Psycho* is largely a film about the viewer's identification with the figure on screen. As analyzed by Kaja Silverman, the viewer in *Psycho* is required to shift from one identification to another, often within binary oppositions (from identification

with a victim to identification with a murderer), and he pays the full price of his identification with a figure that disappears on him halfway through the film, like a failed investment; like the money that Marion steals, which sinks into the sea along with her body (as a symbol of the viewers' investment in Marion, which went down – the investment, not Marion – together with the money).

From all of the above it seems that there is a real understanding of the film in the case when a certain director decides to remake it, as if he had a musical score, out of total identification with the director's point of view. To go shot by shot and reconstruct the Hitchcockian view. To identify. Van Sant's first failure involves the variations, as little as they may be, that deviate from Hitchcock's patterns. These variations are the moments in which everything collapses.

And it collapses not only because of their content (such as Norman's masturbation, which doesn't exist in Hitchcock's version, and is totally inconceivable, as noted by Slavoj Žižek – for had he masturbated and arrived at sexual satisfaction, he wouldn't have had to murder Marion. Precisely by virtue of the fact that when he doesn't masturbate, he murders). It collapses even earlier, by the very introduction of the variations, as a principle.

Introduction of a variation is an introduction of interpretation. One cannot identify, be absorbed in one's object of identification, and at the same time – while using interpretation – remain outside.

On the other hand, the component which enables Van Sant to comment on the original is color, which is absent in the original. (It is important to note that black-and-white was Hitchcock's choice in this film, shot at a time when color

already dominated cinema). How interesting can Van Sant's dilemma be? In the opening scene, for example, what color bra should be given to Marion? Her entire character may be altered with such color comments, but the ability to comment about a scene, a character, an event, only through the choice of color is not exploited. It slips away. Van Sant in fact employs the color palette typical of Hitchcock's color films (such as *The Birds*), thus opting for the dull solution that answers the question: "How would Hitchcock's *Psycho* have looked had it been shot in color?" There is nothing flawed about this appliance to make us wonder about its maker.

How does Van Sant come to be mentioned here all of a sudden? Because Boaz Arad's *Kelev Andalusoki* is, for me, a diametrically opposite, magical, exact example of intervention in an existing film and of toying with the resulting possibilities. Arad chooses to dub Luis Buñuel's and Salvador Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou*. Sound functions in his work as color should or could have functioned in Van Sant's. There are several examples of intervention in the sound of existing films; some of them are quite extraordinary: Tarkovsky, in *The Mirror*, attaches a fabricated sound to documentary news footage of the Red Army crossing Lake Sivash (silent photography, soundless in the original). The sound places that historical memory in a physical reality, accompanied by the sounds of heavy footsteps in water and mud – and the soldiers' suffering which becomes unbearable, is pulled out of the distant historical into the private and concrete, becoming a metaphor that fuels the entire film. There are other, less commendable examples, such as Woody Allen in his early film, *What's Up, Tiger Lily?*, where he attaches his own

soundtrack and American dubbing to an Asiatic spy movie whose rights he had purchased.

In Arad's case, real magic occurs, and the sound begins to activate the film differently. Arad respects the film to which he clings, much more than Van Sant's attempt to pay homage to Hitchcock: in the very attempt to force the film, Arad leaves it as it is. It is precisely the logic introduced by sound that operates illogically, in a surrealistic manner faithful to the original. Arad makes a significant move here. After the image's betrayal of sound, after its dissociation from its "source" object, sound may be matched with an image that does not belong with it, and the children born to this strange couple are like the interest borne of an investment. For example: just as in Buñuel and Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou* death is visually characterized as a fall on a woman's bare back (how surreal), in Arad's *Kelev Andalusoki* the dispersal of a human gathering on the street is characterized as the scattering of fallen autumnal leaves in the wind (by adding the sound of blowing wind to that scene). Like real magic, the rustle of the wind which is but an acoustic object, makes people scatter as if they were autumnal leaves. In another moment the link is almost physical, for example when the young woman disperses the remains of the "deceased", his belongings and clothes on the bed, Arad arranges the objects with the sound he chooses for them. He places it just like she does, and just like the objects. One, and another one, and yet another one. But the climax is when an undifferentiated sound of children horsing around and cheering is pinned on the famous image of the ants coming out of the hole or from the wound in the hand. Arad transforms the hand into a

playground, and the ants – into kindergarten children. The association is further enhanced when Arad puts the sound through the very same route that the image in the film undergoes, and matches them together: when the hand with the ants on it appears in long shot, the sound is also heard distant; when the shot is close-up, the sound too becomes a recording in close-up, which conveys the realistic-material feel to this inconceivable image, yet calls to mind so many other things as well. Furthermore, Arad also returns to an old weapon – he teaches the film to speak Hebrew. How petty, again, and how enchanting, again. The sound in *Kelev Andalusi* functions like the Mona Lisa's attached moustache: a brilliant desecration that spawns a new masterpiece on the back of an earlier masterpiece, a ready-made.

In this context, another, especially magical moment in Buñuel and Dalí's film, poses a different challenge: "Toward three in the morning," as the caption indicates (another joke of the two on times which their film, in fact, refuses to respect), a third figure appears at the door, ringing the bell. *Un Chien Andalou*, as we recall, is a silent film. There is a door, yet it slams soundlessly. There is a bell, but it doesn't ring. What's the solution? Immediately after the man rings the bell, in the next shot, we shift to the other side of the door, where two hands sticking out shake a metallic cocktail bottle as a visual solution intended to simulate a nonexistent sound. A personification of a bell-ring. In *Kelev Andalusi* Arad attaches to this magical silent moment a metallic rustle, which sounds like an old children's piggy bank. I can imagine Arad deliberating between two possibilities while editing the sound: synchronization of a bell ring, which would take the personification

of the original a bit too far, or physically clinging to the photographic object and the sound it is supposed to produce. Arad, as aforesaid, opts for the latter, not to spoil their image, as it were, but in fact – in order to discuss this thing called image-making. In any event, the fact that I contemplated the laborer who produced it (Arad) is precisely because the tool he made had not functioned. There was a charming flaw there. The bell squeaked gracelessly, reminding me of the bell maker.

The voice as an object, as an object dropping from the speech organ, as something that invokes a mechanism of passion, desire, and **attachment**, the voice and its synchronization – all these structure a fundamental process in Arad's series of works. This process is not always in the foreground, but it is always there, always present. And the voice in Arad's works has a partner as well. It is the moustache (a voice and a visual image), that which takes its place above the speech organ which occasionally drops vocal objects. I have already discussed this moustache a little.

The nice thing about Buñuel and Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou* is that even though it historically preceded Arad's **Kelev Andalusoki**, it nevertheless succeeds – by virtue of what magic, I do not know – in providing Arad's works with a prophetic gesture. In a spectacular scene, during the confrontation between the man and the young girl in the film, the man erases his mouth with a single gesture (dumbness; silence). The woman – in response – puts lipstick on her lips, as if to make sure or to accentuate the fact that hers are still there. The man then erases her armpit hair, only to make himself a mustache above the

vanished mouth ("You're crazy, you stole my armpit" she tells him in Arad's dubbed version, wondering why the "arm" has a "pit"). Beyond the beauty of the image, of the mouth erasure (in a silent film) and weaving a mustache from the armpit hair (when the image's efficacy in this case operates on the sense of smell, for the armpit hair takes its place, as beard-mustache, directly under the strategic locus called nose, bringing with it the forgotten smells of its homeland, the armpit, from before it migrated to the face). Thus, beyond the beauty and efficiency of the image, and with the stroke of one or two acts, the two amiable surrealists manage to intertwine some of the motifs setting Arad's sequence of films into motion: Erasure of a mouth, silence/muteness, erasure of hair, and borrowing a moustache from another source. And once again, most of all, the link between sound (or the lack thereof) and mustache (or the lack thereof). One needs a voice to speak; one needs to mumble something under the mustache; one needs a mustache in order to mumble something or, if mute, one that would at least signify a potential, or geographically mark a place whose coordinate has disappeared, and without which he may become a desert. A mustache without a mouth below it, a mustache under which you cannot mumble, is like a door that cannot be slammed.

Epilogue and Introduction

It wasn't easy for me to write the above. I know Boaz too well to be able to call him "Arad" throughout this essay, without blushing. He is my best friend, and was once, a long time ago, my teacher as well. We talk about football and other things, such as art and politics. Boaz suffers from the redundant talk of commentators during a game of soccer. Turning off the volume and making

the game into a silent movie is not a valid option, because then you miss the silence in the game, when there is no talking, and all of a sudden the mere sound of the ball's striking or a player's moan does to the match what Tarkovsky made of his historical footage. So, all we can do is wait for the magical moments with a fishing net in hand, and try to catch them. With tennis it's easier. Not only the spectator, but the players also require the cue of the ball's hitting in order to know when it reaches them, and at what speed. A study may well reveal that tennis players are the most musical of sportsmen. And tennis commentators, to begin with, don't have much to tell us.

Boaz is one of the people I appreciate most, with one of the strangest artistic biographies. In order to handle this problem of an all-too-close object of writing, in order to slightly distance my testimony, I tried to adopt a tactic I learned from a good friend, a tactic that involves synchronization of a foreign voice into my speaking mouth. And when this didn't work, I hid behind a painted mustache. This way, as Lacan maintains, truth comes in the guise of fiction. The truth of the face is the mask. While writing this essay I tried to avoid use of Lacan, because in some strange way he has become a private language between Boaz and me, an unofficial language, perhaps somewhat perverse, a language which I tried to overcome here in order to depart from our private circle.

Still, I maintain that I am entirely objective: Boaz's body of work in question is important and brilliant and unique. And I haven't even touched them all. There are several works created in collaboration with Miki Kratsman, which could

have fit into my silence and mustache talk. There is also the magical *Canal Street* (where, in the current context, sound goes in the opposite direction of the image); and I still have a lot to say about the works which were only illuminated here from a single and very specific angle. Beyond all this, I have put in earplug, so that even if you leave the room in anger and slam the door, I won't hear the sound of its slamming...

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Slavoj Žižek ?????@@"

