**THE BECOMING, ETERNAL RETURN AND GUIMARÃES ROSA’S 'THE THIRD RIVERBANK '\*\***

**"(…) Ainsi le moi personnel a besoin du Dieu et du monde en général. Mais quand les substantifs et adjectifs se mettent à fondre, quand les mots d'arrêt et de repos sont entraînés par les verbes de pur devenir et glissent dans le langage des événements, toute identité se perd pour le moi, le monde et Dieu."                                             Deleuze, Gilles, Logique du sens, premiére série des paradoxes, du pur devenir, pg 11.                                     "(...) Thus, the personal Self needs God and the world in general. But when substantives and adjectives begin to melt, when the words of stopping are dragged by the verbs of pure becoming, thus sliding into the language of events, all identity is lost by the 'Self', by the world, and by God."                                  Deleuze, in 'Logic of Sense', First series of Paradoxes, On the Pure Becoming. (Free translation).**

**Deep immersed within the space-time illusion, males and females meet, loving one another, bringing children to their world. But then it comes a day when both partners understand that from the heavenly feeling of the beginning nothing left but hatred.**

**"You going to leave, so you must get out, and you never come back!",**

**angrily talks the mother as her husband leaves home. On a margin of the São Francisco river, the son watches him going away. Not for another home, another love, or other children, not even in search for other human beings. On a small canoe, the narrator's father rows towards the middle of that huge current, and stays there for hours, days, months, years, decades, for a lifetime.**

**He will never ever leave that "third margin", a nonsensical place for our so narrow rational understanding, because it means a quitclaim from the Self coordinates, a dive into the "pure becoming" *[pur devenir]* about which Deleuze mentions in the above quote.**

**On a margin of the endless and mad becoming, those parents, wearing the usual family masks, had performed their husband and wife roles pretending, as so common among married people, theirs were forever unchangeable identities.**

**Thus, when the father leaves his family to live in the middle of the river, his own identity is lost and disintegrates. A strong water flowing unmasks all the apparent firmness of earthly things, whose fragments keep on forever splitting into even smaller ones.**

**In the middle of the river everything is perpetually changing, getting incessantly to be another thing, therefore becoming always different rather than keeping any identity at all. Nothing indeed has a definite being.**

**Everything incessantly becomes something other. There is no present, no past, no future, but only the eternal return, true essence of 'the becoming', in which time 'dimensions' mingle. How insane such a 'becoming'!**

**On a side bank of that mad flow, however, remain his children, their mother, his land. Nothing touches him. Someday his family decides to leave that riverside house. Only one son, the one who most evokes his traits, still stays living in there. Unable to stop thinking on his father, or even forgetting his face. Quite the contrary, his fate is to resemble him even more every passing day:**

**"On occasions, an acquaintance would say I was acting and gesticulating more and more like my father. ... And I replied: --- father once taught me so..."**

**A day came, after all other family members were gone, when there are still only three 'characters': son, who tells his story, father - then already rowing for decades - and the São Francisco river. Yes, here the river may be seen as a third character.**

**Owing to the latter, nothing stays the same, and only differences keep flowing. When abandoned everyone and everything, father left behind all representations of himself, that is, any self-image to which all other coming images could be compared, identified.**

**Readers may conjecture Father, because of no more tolerating his self-identity, his socially bound, and recognizable Self, has decided to plunge into the perpetually flowing differences down the chaotic waters of the big river.**

**Within that huge stream, nothing keeps any identity, any mask, only differences keep going down it. Abandoning everyone and everything, Father left behind all Self representations, that is, all his images which could be used by whatever memory records for recognizing in him a fixed identity. No supposedly fixed essences or masks could subsist down the becoming flow, where only inexorably and endlessly changing states of things persist.**

**Time's reality itself is put into question, since it loses all its labels (masks?): nor present, neither past, nor future, but only the eternal return of becoming, of coming-to-be. Thus, there is neither place nor occasion for the Freudian 'Ego' nor for the 'Superego). No 'Self', no world, and vice-versa. This way, the limits of the world are broken, so on the third margin, amid the mad becoming (le devenir-fou), also the limits of the 'Self' get dissolved. Perhaps it would still make sense to talk about the 'Id' (das Es, O Id, O Isso, Le Ça ), but not in the Freudian sense, since any mention to a personal existence would be deprived of any sense:**

**“Ça fonctionne partout, tantôt sans arrêt, tantôt discontinu. Ça respire, ça chauffe, ça mange. Ça chie, ça baise. Quelle erreur d'avoir dir le ça!”                  Deleuze-Guattari: L'Anti-Oedipe  
  
"The Id works up everywhere, sometimes without any stopping, sometimes discontinuously. It breathes, it heats, it eats. It shits out, it fucks. What a mistake to have said 'the Id". [Free translation]**

**On riverbank remained Father's Other-Self, a son who cares for bringing him some food, hence somehow keeping on to treat the loner oarsman as a living being, despite the latter's absence from the trite everyday world, where identities are registered more and more accurately at each passing day.**

**At this point it appears a tension running then throughout this beautiful tale: the narrator son seems a last remaining trait of his father's Self, a bridge into a reality so radically rejected on living forever flowing, in a seemingly irreversible way.**

**This contradictory tension grows to a point at which Son, now also an aged man, pities his father, deciding to take the place as oarsman, for such yelling to the riverfront:**

**"Dad, you've become old, you already have made your lot... Now, you come, no more need to stay there... You come, and I, right now, or when it be according to both our wills, I'll take your place, dad, on the canoe! ... "**

**His sudden proposal of changing their roles, according to which he would become the perpetual rower down those waters, into the 'mad becoming', should be a kind of compensation for Father's return to terra firma.**

**"He listened to me, stood up, putting oar in water, rowed forth, agreed."**

**Despite having so firmly uttered his decision, Son hesitates at last, and terrified runs away from their lifelong riverside, never returning.**

**To his own conscience arguing he fled for fear Father could "be coming from the 'beyond'".**

**Son, a being the loner oarsman had brought into this world, who appears here as this tale's narrator voice, acts as an Alter-Ego to his runaway dad, and after all chooses to remain empirical, temporal, everyday aging and dying bit by bit - "a postponed corpse that breeds"\*\*\*\* - any a man, little man, real, well-identifiable, bounded, mediocre, 'ein-Viel zu-vieler' [German expression meaning 'just one more among too many others'], someone who is redundant on Earth. In his own words:**

**"Am I a man after this failure?"**

**“But then, at least, that in the decree of death, someone might carry and deposit me too within, a small, a tiny like myself canoe, almost a nothing, into that water which never stops, with its so extended margins: and I river down, river out, river into - the river.”**

NOTES:

**1)\*\*Free title translation of "A Terceira Margem do Rio", a tale in first person, part of the 'Primeiras Estórias'[First Stories] anthology by Guimarães Rosa, first published in 1962.**

**2)\*\*\*\*Extract from the poem "D. Sebastião, King of Portugal", by Fernando Pessoa, in Cancioneiro.**

**3)This essay is a part of "Genealogy of the Real”, author's PhD thesis.**