

Et dans les plaines retentit le cri silencieux d'Eurydice

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P142363

MA Contemporary Dialogues

Confirmative Praxis

M7X02024

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This report will be presented to you as a soliloquy in correlation to my practice, you will probably find that I do not have many direct references, it is not by ignorance or lack of research, there will be some indirect references to theorists in my poems marked by end notes which you will be able to find at the end of this report. Moreover, there will be no illustrations directly inserted in the text as I think it would interrupt the flow of the narration which is very important in the context of my practice that the flow of the text was not interrupted, but they will be put at the end of the report as well. It for the same reasons that there will be no separation between the introduction and the conclusion from the main body of work as well as no chapters.

Through the poetry and prose that you will be encountering below dear reader, I will be discussing some of my thoughts and what I have been working on in reaction to these thoughts. But my thoughts on what? I am supposed to explain it to you without really explaining it, to intrigue you and trick you into reading the rest of this text without spoiling it. I believe I will be attempting to discuss my reflexions on human nature and its construction in relation to time, space, memory and death through the use of different mediums, easy, isn't it? I do apologies if what you read seems incoherent, out of rhythm or dislocated, and lack academic structure, as it is the literal representation of the thoughts of a divided mind. The intercourse of two voices, both similar but separated by language and culture, one which was once French, one which is still constructing itself. Always oscillating between two constructed countries, cultures and languages. It is a stream of consciousness and unconsciousness, Dionysus against Apollo. A monologue between two fools.

A red line

That is how we see

That is how we think

With a beginning

With an end

So we traced lines

Invisibles

Lines on earth

Lines on maps

Lines that defines the territories

Lines that separates us

Lines against Nature

Lines against Man

Lines that caused wars

Lines that will keep creating wars as long as they exist

But no one wants to erase them

It all started with lines. Lines to trace. Tracing words and tying them to language, language tying thoughts, reducing and restrictive. Lines traced make words physical and therefore to our eyes, binds them to physical reality. We need lines to visualise the intangible, to bind it to something that can be represented and restricted.

We draw a line, putting us over them, we draw a line putting us over animals, we draw a line on a map putting us over Earth, we draw a line putting us over God's creation, we draw a line putting us over God Itself.

The past was written so we couldn't forget

The conflicts were written so we couldn't forget

We are part of a collective past

Without being part of us

It is imposed to us

I hate these lines, they only have a "meaning" when they are placed on a map, and maps represent history, they are a path to the past, a reminder of conflicts for a piece of land or a disagreement, they cannot be a pathway towards the future, so I decided to take their meaning away by retracing them on a sheet of tracing paper, crossing and overlaying each other, without background, without

contextⁱ. I took their power away, I made them useless and meaningless. They were just lines on a piece of paper.

The words *Different* and *Other*, are lines traced on paper but also lines in the mind. A line drawn between **US** and **THEM**, between what we consider to be normal as a way of being like us and what we consider different which is unlike us. These lines have created a division between people just like the lines on a map create a division between pieces of land. They created a tragic and violent gradation between these words and therefore between Men. The antagonism of the words escalated through the ages, so did the conflicts they created between Men. Until we made a weapon so powerful, so violent that we thought we could not create anything worse. Everything stopped: time, space, Men and wars. We dared. We were astonished. No one realised. No one understood. But life has to keep flowing, water under the bridge. We forgot and started again.

It was Pandora's box

Which should never have been open

It only brought destruction and misery

It is an absurd creation

Made to end

Not one life

But all lives

It created a rain of ashes

Erasing the collective memory

Hoping that the silence would give them the answer

They wanted a power to overtake God, they wanted all the answers, but after the creation of the hundred suns, a rain of ashes burned us through the flesh and choked life into the ground. After the rain came the silence from which they were hoping to find the answers, if only they knew how to listen... they could only see a line, they were judged too proud to think that they could overthrow God, and for all the lives they took on the way, Minos sent them to the seventh circle, drowning in the blood of those they killed.ⁱⁱ Their names and faces are lost, we forgot them, they are kept by Nyx, whom they brought back on earth with their creation. The silence created for a nanosecond after the detonation could have been the answer.

Nyx and Helios forever chasing each other in circle

In the meantime, Styx always moves forward

And just like Styx, we always go forward

We destroy to create

We create anew from the ashes of the old

Pretending it's a circle

Circle of life

Made of time and space

But life doesn't destroy

It evolves

Destroying to create is Human Nature

God can create life

And he takes it back when it pleases him

We can create

We were created at his image

We can take a life away

According to the Bible, God is the biggest mass murderer in history

By creating weapons of mass destruction

Are we trying to get closer to God?

We always try to get closer to our god. But which god? Apollo? Dionysus? We seem to forget that we are imperfect, therefore, how could our creations be perfect?

Art, God, gods are all man-made creations, which is why they will never be perfect.

We try to reach perfection through our creation and we try to reach the perfection of our creation. It is absurd, so is the vanity of Sisyphus.

We broke the balance trying to play God

The first time we tried to reach the sky

We were punished

Spilled across the earth

Unable to understand each other

They pretend that it is why there are conflicts

But men were killing each other long before it happened

Humans through history created a circle of creation and destruction, destroying to create something new, something better. A circle of destruction and renewal, a never-ending circle. Civilisation rose to then be brought down by war and conflict to disappear into history. Conflicts and mass destruction became more destructive and violent through time. We dread the idea of being part of a circle

because we tie it to an idea of repetitiveness, we see the conflicts and history repeating itself as our worst nightmare, but is it not in our nature rather than being in in time's nature?

It's funny how we imagine time and life as a line. With a beginning and an end. They acted, imagining that their actions would begin with their research and the end when they detonated the bomb. Did they realise how lasting its effect would be? They saw their action on a definite timeline because they ignore that nothing is a straight line but everything and everyone is part of a circle. This ideology of the line, is it what drove us to such a reckless way of living?

Let us imagine that life is a line and death is another line that you trace on a sheet of paper, you draw them parallel to each other, but maybe they are overlaid, existing on the same plan, separated yet existing together as a whole, the moment you detonate the Bomb and the atom splits, you create on our plan what is between these two line or a place where they coexist for an infinitesimal moment in time, "*a zone*" (Orpheus, 1950). Where time is stuck between life and death whilst being neither of them. Time is the never-ending movement of what composes atoms, a flow, non-stoppable. But what if the cataclysm, the shock wave created by the bomb was powerful enough to disrupt this flow for a nanosecond? The bomb test sites are a testimony of these moments.

Life and time fluctuate like a river, the river flows and goes to the ocean and completes an eternal cycle, but the bomb is a shock wave. A wave breaking onto the beach, and the reminiscence of it, changing the shape and the nature of the sand is how the bomb modified the nature of the landscape. That split second just before where it breaks on the rocks exploding into thousands of drops, it changes shapes and for a moment collides onto the rocks, covers it, glides on it, as two opposite elements becoming one, like the living space and non-living space (after death) colliding and becoming one for a moment, creating a portal in between the two worlds.

*Tide and wind take away the words, take away the memories, take away the time, to leave us, bare
and naked*

In *Thomas the Obscure* the sea became a portal for Thomas that led him to the world in between the dead and the living, neither dead nor alive, he became a replica of Euridice. The sea and the wave whether physical or theoretical are what breaks the boundaries between the two spacetime and their in between: fiction and reality, life or death, living world and underworld, heaven or hell, just like Jean Cocteau is able to bring back Cegeste through fire and the sea in the *Testament of Orpheus*.

Et dans les plaines retentit le cri silencieux d'Eurydiceⁱⁱⁱ

Carlo Rovelli affirms that, "*Times are legion: a different one for every point in space*" (Rovelli, 2018, p.15), so each time and place where a bomb was tested created a new rupture in time and space, marked by the collision of life and after life, the only exception being Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We "*saw nothing at Hiroshima*" (Hiroshima mon amour, 1959). It was one of the most mediated scenes of massacre caused by the Bomb, but we were no witnesses. We rejoiced, we were shocked, but it meant the end of the war, a reason for happiness, for the western world, not the eastern world, again, another separation made by Men. But these spaces were repopulated by Men, the scars left by the aftermath are not present in space, only in time and memory, whereas the bomb tested everywhere else in the world left scars in time and space but very little in memory. The bombs dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are present in everyone's memory as the horror that ended World War Two, whereas the bombs that were "tested" before and afterwards were kept under secret or in places that were uninhabited. Their names were kept hidden, few of the images and proof of what we did there are carefully curated and available to the public, for those who haven't forgotten. Searching and hunting their names and locations like a criminal, even though it is now freely talked about, most of the researches and history of it remains secretive and unknown.

They are the testimony of Destruction

No war happened

Just a rehearsal^{lv}

A rehearsal which became more and more violent

Despising Nature and Man

Sinking deeper and deeper through the circles

The desert was a place of meditation, of renewal

A sacred place to seek the truth

Now contaminated by Man

We made these landscapes transform themselves into what seems to be an extra-terrestrial landscape. I became obsessed with them, I hunted them. They became non-spaces because human life is not possible nor allowed in them. They are restricted and now have their own eco-system. I wanted to photograph them, to at least see a crystallized image of them the same way we crystallized time and space by detonating a bomb. Unable to access these spaces myself, I began a methodical search through satellite, ironic isn't it? To be able to see and try to experience a terrestrial space, I had to use what we commonly associate with extra-terrestrial exploration, through Google map. Similar to what I did with the borders, I wanted to put these spaces out of context, make them unrecognisable, inhuman, by putting the pictures in black and white and printing them on tracing paper, relating it to the idea of mapping just as with photography and finding "new" spaces. With only red lines drawn on the prints representing how many bombs were tested per country per year to "identify" them, creating the feeling that what happened there could have happened anywhere in the world. I searched on the internet like a lunatic, I searched on the CIA library, secretly worrying that I will be stopped. No one came to stop me, it was just me. I hit a

wall. The images I created were exhibited in a small shop front window and the assembly of work was named "*Shadow of the Valley of Death*". It felt like a finished piece, I couldn't go any further with it, but the subject had so much more to offer. I thought I was at the end of the line.

John Berger in *Confabulations* stated that "*time is not linear, it is circular*" (Berger, 2016, p.141). It sparked in me the contradiction between the human ideology of the line and the circular fluidity of the universe. If time is effectively circular, then the bomb might not allow the superposition of two lines on different plan of existence, its shockwave might actually break the circle which is why the land stays damaged for so long, because it stopped the flow of time and space long enough to stop the flow of life.

Time is circular not linear

Life is a circle but always we imagine a straight line

We draw the evolution of Man as a straight line

Going from left to right

With death being the end of the line

With the nuclear bomb, we destroyed this circle

The land is forever damaged by its impact

The circle is broken

We can't stop, we can't stand still, we have to walk along the line until we find the end of it, or at least we hope to find it. We want to find the end of the line, because we see it as an answer, a resolution, a finality. If there is no end, there is not right or wrong, no answer, just the unknown. In a world where we are all looking for an answer, a justification of why we are here, if there is no end, then what is our purpose? Being part of a circle and not a line, means that we are incomplete, unfinished, a work in progress, which does not satisfy our human nature.

We are like Sisyphus,

Trying to trick the gods

To break the eternal circle

Without realizing

That by trying to break it,

We reinforce it

The absurdity of Sisyphus and his task is carried by Mankind, we are born without a choice and die without a choice, our lives are series of different circles coming up one after the other. We are always running in circle, but is it really an atrocity?

We partly acknowledge the circle whilst trying to ignore it as well as trying to break it.

We are stuck in a linear vision

A linear way of thinking

Again, tied to a line of representation

I thought the bomb broke the circle

But I understand now

We cannot break it

We only enlarged it

We cannot go against the second law^{vi}

I thought that the explosion of the bomb broke the circle of time and life in the non-space that they created by testing them. But after being introduced to the laws of thermodynamics and more specifically the second law, I came to understand that the explosion of the bomb and the split of the atoms didn't break the circle. It enlarged it. Yes, it destroyed life on a scale that we still struggle to measure, but life grew back in these non-spaces, it adapted itself, evolved. It's just taking more time than it would have before. The second law of thermodynamics and entropy explain why time only flows in one direction and that we cannot go back in time: the flow of time is a movement of particles, invisible, impossible to quantify, movement and friction creates heat, and heat always flows from hot to cold not the opposite, just like a river cannot flow backward from the ocean toward the mountains.

Un, deux, trois... soixante^{vii}

Soixante means sixty

You need sixty seconds to make a minute

Sixty minutes to make an hour

Twenty-four hours to make a day

Twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty or thirty-one days to make a month

Twelve months to make a year

A day is the time it takes for the Earth to rotate on itself

A year is the time it takes for the Earth to rotate around the sun

Numbers, days, months, years, what are they?

An attempt for humans to quantify time

How vain of us to think that we can quantify something like time

Trying to tie it down to us through numbers created by Men

Numbers are the language of quantification

But quantification of time is an illusion to let us think that we have somehow defined it therefore

control it

Does a circle not have a beginning? It does, but in a circle the end meets the beginning in order for it to be complete. When we trace a circle on a sheet of paper, we have a starting point but when we complete it, the end is overlying with the beginning, because it's not a clear end and the fact that the end is over the beginning, it leaves room to keep drawing the circle again and again. The way we trace a circle on a sheet of paper is similar to the old symbol Ouroboros, a snake biting his own tail which represent the beginning and the end of time.

Is a circle not made of a line? And is a line not made of lots minuscule points so close together that we can't tell them apart?

Sisyphé ne tourne pas en rond

Il va d'un point à l'autre

Traçant une ligne droite

Regrettant d'être sorti du cercle^{viii}

After a tutorial, someone suggested that the effect of the detonation of the bomb creates a similar effect than photography. As we can see on footages from Japan after the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the movie *"The Atomic Café"*, the heat to which the urban environment was subjected to destroyed most of the landscape, but for what remained, it created a "negative" on the floor, a non-erasable shadow, last testimony of what was there. It made me think about how I could apply this theory to my practice. During my research, I found some archival videos of nuclear bomb testing without sound. I decided to freeze the video of the detonation of a Bomb onto

photographic paper in order to recreate Gilles Deleuze's idea of a crystal image, to see if I could capture the moment where everything collide, hoping that I could capture the silence, hoping to find an answer. After projecting the video from a laptop screen onto photographic paper, the images appeared as "*painting in black hues*" (Last year at Marienbad, 1961), similar to Yves Klein's Fire paintings. But you can still distinct a form, some form of enlightenment, a ghost? A silent cry.

Et dans les plaines retentit le cri silencieux d'Eurydice

Religion, philosophy and science try to give us one true answer but can never agree with each other. Religion against science, science against philosophy, philosophy against religion, religion against another religion, philosopher against philosopher, scientist against scientist, everyone has an answer, their answer but no true answer. Contradiction, opposition, controversy, polemic. God, Gods, Hazard, Luck, in the end we are always looking for someone to blame.

Religion put us at the centre of everything, we were the chosen one. But if each follower of a religion is a chosen one, what about the others? Why are they here if they weren't chosen? Another reason, another conflict. Religion was our first means to explain what is/was around us, how to think and see, it gave us rules and boundaries from a higher power. Is it not ironic that some people think that free will was given to us by a higher power? Is it really free will if someone has given it to us instead of us deciding for ourselves to think differently, and trying to see and think through different angles and have different opinions? According to determinism every decision that we take and every event that we create are already determined by pre-existing causes and according to the people who claim that free will was given to us by a higher power, everything happens according to this higher power plans. And these events and actions happens to us whether or not we follow the rules dictated by this higher power, then when do we ever have a choice? Is it not an easy excuse to make responsible someone else than ourselves? Did they choose freely to destroy so many lives, to change the course of time?

Three. The number three is interesting. The Holy trinity, a play contains three acts, movie series are often in trilogy... maybe my work should be divided into three piece or acts. Maybe I should do three videos. Religion, philosophy and science are the three corner-stones of how humanity sees itself and builds its perception of the world and its place within it, they are therefore the three way I use to look at time and human nature.

Each video would be a representation of one of the three theme and would be accompanied by a narration, a script written by myself, part of what you have read would maybe be part of it. The three videos with their point of view would discuss not argue. Too many conflicts were created, I want it to be peaceful.

The egg is a symbol of the constant cycle of life, creation and death, a renewal. It is also one of the main creation myths, the cosmic egg, combining the primordial chaos and the potential of creation. I will make a ceramic egg similar to the one I made for my thought experiment. It will represent religion as it was our first viewing perspective on the world, it is also very fragile and can be easily challenged or rejected nowadays. The video made to represent the view on religion will be a ceramic egg on a black plinth with a black background with a hand approaching very slowly to touch it and make it roll off the plinth, will it fall and break? The egg is also here to represent our free will, the egg represents a formed idea which requires and awaits an action (breaking the shell) to happen. The people who made the bombs and decided to detonate them had a choice, a crucial choice, they believed in science and in progress just like some people prefer to trust religion, both type of people have committed atrocities justified by their view, always arguing who is right, who knows the truth. Philosophy and science started challenging this, challenging the established order, bringing more ideas and new views, sometimes unappreciated and repressed.

“Ever-newer water flows on those who step into the same river” (Heraclitus, 535BC-475BC)

Heraclitus was the first one to compare the notion of change through time and space to the flow of a river.

Time flows without interruption, the same way a river will flow towards the sea and complete the circle.

So do life and death.

There is no present, just a continuous transient flow between past and future, everything is in perpetual change.

Science shows that there is actually no present as we define it, just a continual flow between past and future.

But without present, we are going back to the original dichotomy.

I want to create the second video on the philosophical point of view from this quote. I want to film myself standing in a river, from my knees down, immobile whilst the river flows through me. It will be filmed in black and white as I don't want anything to take away the contrast between the constant movement of the river and my impassability. The present momentum doesn't exist, times fly by so quickly that us simple human trying to control everything can't actually measure, but still we use this notion of present in order to protect our established perspective and try to hold on to this illusion of control that we have of time. Time never stops to flow we have this illusion that present is the time "stopping" or slowing down for us to be able to grasp the present moment, we try to stop time by defining what we are doing "now" like a dyke trying to stop the course of the river. The word now doesn't mean anything, it's just a few constructed lines to which we are clinging onto in hope to keep what sanity we think we have left. Standing in the middle of a river is pointless, I am not physically stopping the water to flow, just deviating slightly its course. It is as pointless as

the words now and present are, they give a false representation of time and enable us to change our views and understanding of time, they are disrupting our relationship to time.

Even if we think that nothing changes on our plan, everything on a microscopic plan changes and moves.

For the third video on the scientific point of view, I will be using an archival video from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory showcasing nuclear bomb testing. A particular one attracted my attention, it was shot on colour film depicting the sky during a test. The sky looked apocalyptic, fading between shades of yellow, orange and red, going darker as the video unfolds. The sun seems obliterated by what resembles a black hole, they are side by side and you can distinguish what I suppose is the sun from the black hole at the beginning but the further the video goes the bigger grows the black hole and eclipses the sun. I prefer the abstractness of the video, there is no explosion, only the subtle change of the colours and the growth of the black hole, without context it would be hard to guess the subject. This would be the only video in colour as scientific progress was what shifted our world's view on our position in relation to the universe and in relation to each the latest, philosophy and religion have "erased" themselves in science's shadow, therefore the colour of the video would showcase this by attracting easily the eye of the viewer.

Explosions and "tests" disseminated through the world, through the map, through different years and different presidents. They are the products of the escalation of fear and hate, need for "protection". Even though they were separated by hundreds of miles and time they explosion of one resulted in the explosion of another, all these phenomena were linked together like a constellation, a constellation of destructive phenomena. A destructive phenomenon created by the disturbance of atoms due to a perturbation in their fluctuation through spacetime. We commonly associate the word constellation and its meaning to a group of stars that we decided to group together and name, the constellation I am mentioning here relates to Walter Benjamin's Gilles Deleuze's and Theodore Adorno's notions of constellation. They explain that phenomena which exist independently but can

be regrouped by human subjectivity into constellations. These phenomena (nuclear bomb tests) happened in different spaces and time but were all linked by their nature and the aim of the tests. I therefore decided to create my own constellation on tracing paper, the “stars” being the bomb testing sites around the world, unidentifiable, strange and unknown, once again out of context. Red dots on paper, consequences of the red lines on paper like red ink disseminated by conflicts and blood disseminated by red lines on a piece of paper.

The constellation could also be projected on some fabric onto the ceiling of the exhibition space, or it could be printed, the video could be showed on screen or they could be projected. I could place three ceramic eggs onto black plinth to represent differently a trinity, I could print the portraits of the scientists as an A4 risographic print overlaid on the constellation, I could also print a picture I made which make it look like a mountain, like the mountain of purgatory which Virgil and Dante climbed and so maybe did some of the scientists if they were lucky enough, maybe this mountain represents how strong and immutable religion seems to be against the changes imposed by the modern age. But even a mountain gets eroded and transformed by the immortal flow of water. Maybe I could perform, maybe I will record my voice and narrate these three stories about religion, philosophy and science. Maybe I shouldn't say anything. Maybe people could use their imagination or guess, try to think by themselves, because if I give them my opinion about my work, will they not take it for granted? My words would be truth, the only acceptable answer. But what does it make of me then? I would not be any better than religion by defining my own work and imposing it on others. So many possible, so many timelines and ideas written on these pages which might never happen.

I can't pretend to have an answer, I don't think I understand, I don't think we can understand, lines and circles, time and space, spacetime, non-space, life and death, all are constructed representation tying the unknown to a man-made definition in hope that we can keep what is left of our sanity. Is there something between, something that we can't see or represent? Maybe instead of paying attention to the lines, creating and binding, but misunderstood, we need to pay attention to the empty space between the words, between the thoughts, they are silence, a bridge for comprehension and understanding, without the silence of the emptiness, the nothingness, nothing would make sense, maybe silence is the answer and the silent *Danse Macabre* of time and space is the best form of connection and communication between beings, maybe the reason why living and dead cannot communicate verbally to each other is because silence is the real communication between us, we the living are able to speak but we seem incapable to listen and understand, whereas the dead, unable to speak are finally able to listen and understand the silence, I now end this last line with a circle vestige of the paradox which I tried to discuss.

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End Notes

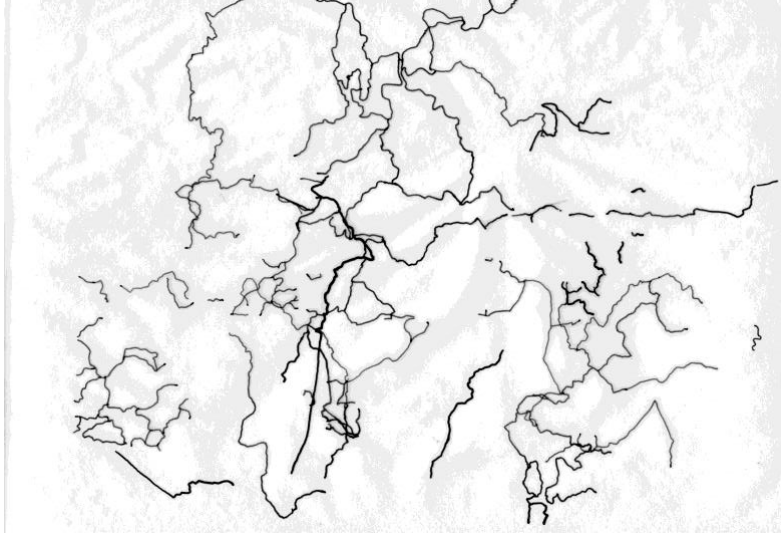


Figure 1: Relet, C., (2018), *Untitled*

ⁱⁱ Undirect reference to *"The Divine Comedy"* (Alighieri, 2010)

ⁱⁱⁱ *"And in the plains echo the silent cry of Eurydice"*

^{iv} Undirect reference to *"Savage Dream"* (Solnit, 2014)



Figure 2: Relet,C., (2018), *Shadow of the Valley of Death*

^{vi} *"The second law is concerned with the direction of natural processes. It asserts that a natural process runs only in one sense and is not reversible. For example, heat always flows spontaneously from hotter to colder bodies, and never the reverse, unless external work is performed on the system. The explanation of the phenomena was given in terms of entropy"* (En.wikipedia.org, 2018)

^{vii} *"One, two, three... sixty"*

^{viii} *"Sisyphus does not turn around in circles/ He goes from one point to another/ Tracing a straight line/ Regretting getting out of the circle"*



Figure 3: Relet, C., (2018), *Untitled*



Figure 4: Relet, C., (2018), *Untitled*