

Hands in Comic and Cinema

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We take advantage of the space of introduction to speak about the duality “from within and from outside” that seems crucial in the process of a research related to the role of hands in our world. The term world it is not used only for the environment of the physical bodies, but for any poetic place that we inhabit; auditory, literary, cinematographic.

*World is what one can imagine of what it is outside of him.*¹

Philosophy indicates that in the exploration and production of the various worlds that we can be, there are two “modes” of placing ourselves in relation with them; *from within and from outside.*²

Being inside a world means to get involved in the story that unfolds in it. Doing without thinking about why and how things are done. Conversely, when we stop, step away and observe it from outside, the world becomes an object and the distance we take from it permits us to name it world.

This positional polarity can be understood better through Wittgenstein’s metaphor of the native and the researcher. As he says the native speaks his language without any written rule and without thinking how and why he speaks; use it from inside. On the

other side, from outside, is standing the researcher who attempts to investigate their language and create its structure³. In a parallel line of that of the native and the researcher lies the investigation around our hands. We use our hands without thinking about their anatomy or their movements, believing that work and movement according to the demands of our brain. However, the study of the hand requires the abandonment of the site of the native and the conquest of the researchers space. Requires the exit of our everyday life and the achievement of the necessary distance in order to observe them from outside and investigate its role as if they were not ours, like the language isn’t for the researcher.

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In this article it has been chosen to speak about hands through the hands that live in the world of the comics and movies. The interesting thing about hands is that their creators, influenced by the hand of everyday life, recreates hands of another everyday life, of another context.

The hand in Earth 616

The Earth 616 is a world in the Marvel Universe⁴ in which the reality is the same with ours: same countries, same story, same politicians and same historical events. However, in Earth 616 there are more than 616 countries and in between the humans live

Superheroes and Supervillains who have powers that normal people can’t have. In 1981, in Earth 616 appears a fictional group of supervillains under the name The Hand. A group of mystical evil ninjas that were invented and designed by the writer and designer Frank Miller for the first volume of the collection of Daredevil⁵. The origins of the hand it revealed to us later, in 2004, by the artists Akira Yoshida and Christian Gossett in the limited edition comic Electra, The Hand. According to the story, in Japan in 1588 a child, Kagenobu Yoshioka, kills a foreign man who wanted to murder his mother. When Kagenobu grows up he wants to protect Japan from the foreigners and found the group of ninjas The Hand.

He chooses the name Hand for his villains group because as he says the hand concentrates and lies all the human strength. Also as he can compare the forces of every finger with the forces of the five islands of Japan:

*The hand has five fingers, each of which can exist independently of others. Not unlike the five islands that form Japan. However, when the five fingers of the hand come together for a single, unified purpose ... the hand becomes an object of unwavering power!*⁶

The hand of the mind

The Hand has survived into the early 21st century and frequently fought with famous superheroes like Spider-man, X-Men, Wolverine among others. Wolverine⁷, a character who appeared in

Daredevil, Electra and X-Men, transforms his hands into a weapon changing their shape and their anatomy. Wolverine's creator is inspired by the shape of the hand, of its empty and full parts, add three hidden *fingers-knives* that come out when its necessary.

Without a doubt almost every superhero with hands of strange powers uses his hands as a weapon. In our reality, as of them, the hand is a weapon more than any other part of the body because its anatomy and place in the body gives it the capacity to touch, hug and kill.

Obviously, in Marvel Universe as well as in DC Universe⁸, the villains and the heroes use the strength of their hands like the way we use them. Their hands are accompanied by the same verbs of ours. Pull, move, write, crash, catch, shape, touch and more but the difference is in the results that they can achieve.

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It must be noted though that in the world of the superheroes, actions that we can only do through our hands, they can do without using their hands. For example, they can move objects by their minds and without touching them. However, when they need more power their hands indicate the object

and outline its direction. They move it without touching it but the hand is responsible for the movement of the object because all the forces are going through it.

Outside of the comics, in cinema, Tim Burton influenced by the advance of technology created **Edward Scissor-hands**, a child born with hands of scissors. The change of our daily life by technology provoked Tim Burton to think about the difference of our lives if possible to have a part of our body as scissors. In his fiction history, Tim Burton chooses the hands for that part of the body, probably thinking that quotidianity passes through our hands.

The movie presents the difficulties and the difference of actions that we never give an importance like eat, write, drink, wash, etc. in a probably change of the anatomy of our hands.

Perhaps, the movie, more than everything, accentuates the act of touching, loving and killing. As has been mentioned the place of the hand in the body and his shape gives it the privilege to kill and hug; love. Obviously, with scissor-hands, the act of love or hug can be the murder of the one we love by our touch.

The mind of the hand

Apart from the importance of the anatomy of our hands, the feeling of non-coherence between the hand and brain, that perhaps many of us have experienced, it's the subject that many designers and directors have used to create fantastic and fictional narratives.

The representation of that feeling comes

out through two categories. The first one, the more fantastic, are movies that offer space to hands that are independent entities, separated of the rest of the body. The second, more realistic, are stories or movies that the hand is still connected to the body but has its own strange attitude and always

Between all the movies that have been noticed so far stands a common fear. The thought that the hand sometimes can not hear our brain and is almost capable, literally and metaphorically, even to kill us.

surprises the rest of the body or the mind. For the first type of fiction, the reason of the creation of the independent hands is that the shape of the hand can easily be compared with the shape of a spider, and seen so, the hand can walk. Putting that together with its domination in the variety of actions that the rest of the body can do, gives it the possibility to be an autonomous entity, at least, in fiction.

In 1946, appeared the first independent hand under the title *The Beast with five fingers*. A pianist dies but his hand is still alive and only wants the ring stolen from its fingers. The story of an astronaut that died and his hand returned to earth to find those

responsible for the death of his body is the scenery of the movie *The Crawling Hand* presented in 1963.

The most famous movie in this category are Oliver Stone's *The Hand* in 1981. Oliver Stone successfully and with the great performance by Michael Caine incite terror and present the story of a cartoonist who loses his hand in a car accident. The hand becomes a murderer who kills without stopping.

We could not leave out of this category of films *The Thing* from the Adams family. *The Thing* is primarily a person in the form of a hand who does all the actions that hands do, the more usual quotidian as, open the door, hold the cigar, clean, wash, change channels in Adams TV set and so on. But what is important mainly in the *Thing of Adams Family* is that we can understand its feeling, its mood, without seeing a face or a person. The movements of the *Thing* perfectly reveals its thoughts and sentiments because the gestures of the hands is capable to externalize the feelings without the need of the face.

*The manual gestuality is essentially expressive and capable to achieve nuances of great subtlety, sometimes "regardless of" who moves them.*⁹

By the end we leave the stories of hands that keep their place in the body but the mind experiences the inability to control them. In *Idle Hands*, in 1999, a young boy lose the control of his hands while them act by themselves. Terrified asks for help while

his hands move and act as it were not his and are capable to kill him.

In the short film *The Hand*, of 2008, appear another case of hands that can't be controlled by the mind of their owner. This movie, like in *Edward Scissor-hands*, involves the technology and science, with the transplantation of the hands. Apart of the fact of the transplantation, that opens another discuss about our everyday life, it must been mentioned the dialogue between the two protagonists that describes very well the polarity hand-mind.

The girl who tries to convince the others that everything that she does is done by her hands and not by her and his lover who tries to explain to her that everything is on her mind, invented by her mind.

*-Everything is in your mind
-No. Everything is in my hands.*¹⁰

Both in our creative processes as in our daily activity many authors refers to the domain of the hand or the mind. Perhaps for Jacques Derrida, "*everything is in our hands*".

*The hand thinks before being thought; it is thought, a thought, thinking.*¹¹

Epilogue

The existence of comics and movies where the hands appear with supernaturals powers, or like independent entities or like uncontrollable parts of our body, indicates the concern about the ability of the hand to control body and mind. Between all the movies that have been noticed so far stands

a common fear. The thought that the hand sometimes can not hear our brain and is almost capable, literally and metaphorically, even to kill us.

This vision around the hands, that offered us this research, became possible, as it was said in the prologue of the article, by observing the hand from outside, like the researcher observers the languages of the natives in the metaphor of Wittgenstein. However, this output, this vision from outside, make sense only if we are capable to exploit it by using naturally our hands or better, if we can let us be used by our hands in order to discover and create new poetics worlds.

NOTES

1. Seguí de la Riva, Javier. *Dibujar, Proyectar XVIII, Desde dentro y desde fuera, del todo a la parte* (2), Cuadernos del Instituto Juan de Herrera de la Escuela de Arquitectura de Madrid, Madrid, 2009, p. 10

2. Ibid. p.20

3. Wittgenstein, L. *Filosofía, Secciones 86-93 del Big Typescript*, KRK, Oviedo, 2007, p.96

4. Marvel Universe was founded by the company Marvel Comics Publishing Inc. in 1939

5. Daredevil #174, Sept. 1981 Marvel Comics Group. Web. 12 June 2012 http://marvel.com/comic_books/issue/8156/daredevil_1963_174

6. Elektra The Hand # 2, (Nov. 2004 - Feb. 2005) Marvel Comics Group. Edición Española, L9D, La Novena Dimension, 2010. p.17

7. Wolverine (James Howlett). Marvel Universe Wiki. Web. 12 June 2012 http://marvel.com/universe/Wolverine_%28James_Howlett%29

8. DC Comics Editions. Web. 12 June 2012. <http://www.dccomics.com/>

9. Schinca, Marta. *Expresión corporal. Técnica y expresión del movimiento*. Wolters Kluwer, Madrid 2010, p.30

10. Dialogue from the movie *The Hand*. Directed by Drew Baldwin, Atom TV, 2008.

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