

Language in an interior life: *The Loser* and Glenn Gould

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*the meaning of the light which permeates the universe
is only exact in silent thought
like in the emptiness, which is not a vacuum
there nothing is missing
everything arrives on time.
as one writes one reads, but when one reads oneself one doesn't write
one inscribes oneself
on the spirit.
the sound dimension of language loses original force
to the force of being used as a mere tool of relating
to the force of being fixed by the writing, necessarily clear to make sense,
to the force of the safety of discourse, of elegance of style
of rules which seek out effects
which infect the meaning with those affections
yet are impotent before the enigma of the phonemes
which can only stutter, when pronouncing upon Life, on Love on Death, on
Meaning...in short on everything.
As everything is equally important.*

Manuel Zimbro, *Clods of Earth*, notes of a tiller to find heaven and earth

Abstract This paper aims to reflect on Thomas Bernhard's novel *The Loser*, Glenn Gould and his performance of the *Goldberg Variations*, and blind drawing. The experience and understanding of the creative process in Thomas Bernhard's work and in Glenn Gould are similar while remaining unique and individual; as in blind drawing, there is a process of sharing, through experience and understanding, among those who propose to undertake blind drawing exercises. However, the route that is drawn/inscribed on the paper is always a journey that concerns each individual alone. In the reflection undertaken, literature, music and drawing (my area of knowledge) establish a union that stems from an aesthetic used to analyse the creative process. Walter Benjamin and Gaston Bachelard support and uphold the aim of engendering an image situated between the work and the creator: the medium – transparency and opacity. The conception of art, in this case music, as the main element in *The Loser* gives rise to a plot involving characters, writer and performer, which, in its reality/unreality, unites the work and the creator – the veil that reveals the dual participation of fear and desire: art as language.

Keywords: language; blind drawing; desire; fear; transparency; opacity

1. Introduction

Thomas Bernhard's work *The Loser* describes the relationship between three friends – Glenn Gould, Wertheimer and the narrator – and music. They meet in summer in Leopoldskron, in the piano classes of Professor Horowitz of the Mozarteum. Glenn Gould represents talent and genius. Wertheimer is the loser – a piano virtuoso who is unable to live due to the brilliance of his friend Glenn Gould. The narrator is also a virtuoso. However, in realizing his inferiority in comparison to the impact that Gould has on him and on Wertheimer – which destroys them – he abandons his musical career and devotes himself to a new life as a writer. There is an element of unreality arising from the fact that this is a literary work that belongs to the world of fiction. Nevertheless, it is a work that intersects with reality: it brings together Bernhard and the narrator, Bernhard and Glenn Gould, Glenn Gould and Glenn Gould and, ultimately, it enmeshes the characters, author and performer in a plot woven between life and art. Thomas Bernhard admired Glenn Gould, not only as an artist but also as a thinker. In the work it can be seen that Bernhard pays a sort of tribute to Gould, from the real/unreal link between Glenn Gould and Glenn Gould to the way in which it is written, with no transition between one sentence and another, as if it were a musical composition: it creates rhythm. Like the narrator, Bernhard also studied music at the Mozarteum and abandoned his career to follow a second calling as a writer. *The Loser* is a dazzling work since it is not only a literary work but also a kind of sorcery that operates in the gap between life and art, unreality and reality, transparency and opacity, as well as being a valuable treatise on the life of Glenn Gould. Interpreting and arriving at a work of art, in this case a musical one, triggers a plot that, in being created, is the inscription of a drawing in which fear and desire make up the constellation of characters. On the one hand, the connection created through the expectation, anguish and awareness of the self and the work, hope, abandonment, despair and, on the other, the immense sensibility, passion and trance-like state that exists in the communion between two bodies: that of Glenn Gould and that of the Steinway. My reflection stems from a relationship between literature (Thomas Bernhard/*The Loser*) and music (Glenn Gould/*The Goldberg Variations*) as rhythm, isolation, discipline and attention that are also characteristics of my creative process: drawing. This paper therefore proposes to generate an image which, being unique, belongs to everyone because of the way in which the threads of the story become entangled in Bernhard's work. As in drawing, the lines that cross and uncross and are linked and unlinked on the paper are the image of unreality/reality and of the invisible/visible. Ultimately, the figurative image on the paper is always a document and an individual record: art as language. Three aspects will be considered: language and interpretation, the death that lives every day in each of us and the translation/impression that, inside and outside of the body, reveals the dual participation of fear and desire – transparency and opacity.

2. Language: translation and drawing.

According to Hannah Arendt:

(...) what comes clearly to our eyes as an end is easier to understand as a beginning whose deep meaning we aren't able to apprehend yet. Our present is emphatically and not just logically the suspended point between a not anymore and a not yet. (ARENDR 2001)

As I see it, the language used by Glenn Gould in interpreting the *Goldberg Variations* lies on this point, suspended between the ‘not anymore’ and a ‘not yet’. The ‘not anymore’ concerns the fact that he is not just a pianist reading a composition by another author but Glenn Gould himself. Gould develops and understands Bach's original language and interprets it in his own translation: he creates movement¹. Gould's interpretation and translation moves in time and in its continuous unfolding, which Benjamin calls ‘pure language’ (BENJAMIN 1970). Gould's interpretative performance of the *Goldberg Variations* initiates a language which, being only his, is also everybody else's because of its translatable condition. Thought is present in this situation (performance) not only as an act of isolation and withdrawal from the world but above all, as Gould says himself (GOULD 1984: 5), as a musical exercise in which its manifestation is a language of dynamic reflection, expressed through his body. Gould takes hold of the piano and, away from the ears of the world, makes a unique language. The inner ear that lives in Gould's body establishes a meaning that, in the union between his hands and the keys of the Steinway, alters and transforms the affected individual: the piano is the object of his own affection. Gaston Bachelard distinguishes between the attentive ear [*l'oreille tendue*] and the withdrawn ear [*l'oreille recueillie*] – the former is that which ‘on the darkest night, awaited the loved one with passion’ (BACHELARD 2010: 102) and the latter is the ear ‘which pleasantly enjoys its beloved’ (BACHELARD 2010: 102). The ‘attentive ear’ is that which interests us because it is this ear that feels the vibration and attempts to listen to itself inside itself. This is the ear which, in the silence of the night, in a state of tension because it is trying to go beyond what it hears, awaits the loved one with passion and, in waiting, the ear stretches concurrently with the imagination:

The visual images of the stretched ear take imagination beyond silence. The images are not formed in semi-darkness and real murmurs, interpreting sensations. It is necessary to feel the images in the act of the stretched imagination.² (ARENDDT 2001: 103, author's translation).

However, time and space must be created so that both ears can act. In listening to the self, through the ‘attentive ear’, attention and practice absorb the duration and, in harmony with the ‘withdrawn ear’, create links between life and art. In the exercise of blind drawing, when the outline of the model is sketched on the paper, the eyes, which observe what is in front of them, in its uniqueness, allied to the ears, feel the vibration of the pencil that is drawing: ‘the attentive ear aims to see’ (ARENDDT 2001: 102). In this learning process, a communion is established between the eyes and the hand – the gaze learns and grasps the delay of time. There are two ways of teaching blind drawing: the first consists of never lifting the pencil from the paper while you observe and sketch the outline of the proposed model; the second allows stops to be made, i.e., lifting the pencil from the paper whenever the eyes encounter some element on the path that does not allow the hand to continue, so that not only the

Translation does something that the original does not: it creates movement. Translation moves in time; if it is not translated, the original stops. An original which is translated into a language can be translated into every language. Walter Benjamin calls this continuously unwinding thread ‘pure language’. BENJAMIN 1970.¹

² “Les images *visuelles* de *l'oreille tendue* portent l'imagination au-delà du silence. Les images ne se forment pas autour des pénombres et des murmures réels, en interprétant des sensations. Il faut éprouver les images dans l'acte même de *l'imagination tendue*.”

outline is drawn but also the content. When the pencil is lifted from the paper, you look at the drawing, situate the pencil on the drawn figure and begin another line, and so on until the outline and contents are complete. In the second way of learning blind drawing, there is a moment related to pleasure which is always slowly and carefully transformed, through attention and precision, into a lure for desire: the present moment is lived and, in the necessary delay, the duration and propagation established are enjoyed. In observing the model, the eyes that are joined to the hand holding the pencil, in a dynamics of repose, create a distended time. Only thus does the desire to reach the end of the exercise remain calm and become a lure for the attention, discipline, rigour and silence of what, in that moment, is awareness of the self and of drawing. The time that the hand and the eyes take to draw lines on the paper sets up communication between the brain and the eyes that, awakened by the action of the hand, inscribe the line in the present. There is no active thought, no archived information, and the knowledge that one has of a model similar to the one being set down does not intervene. What matters is understanding that model, in the moment when the eyes and hand communicate, envelop and draw the figure without any reference to a discipline of drawing. Being able to draw is not a question of being able to copy exactly what is there, before our eyes, according to certain rules – measures, proportions, volumes etc – but of being prepared to establish connections between the model and the investigation of the self. Shapes are recorded and unique and individual routes are discovered: the inquiry in drawing is the realization of the self and of what is transformed into knowledge and recognition of a unique language. While “the visual image is connected to the manual image, the eye follows the lines because the hand is aware of that action and awakens the active being”³ (BACHELARD 1970: 68, author’s translation), we perceive that in the silence of the self the sound of the pencil inscribing the line on the paper is heard and it is also through the action of the working hand that the vibration is heard internally. This sound involves the internal listening of the ‘attentive ear’ because it is this which marks the rhythm in relation to the time of the line. One does not know at what point the line ends, but by listening to the pencil and listening internally, the ear’s attention determines this point because the hand creates a cadence, sending vibrations to the ear that lives inside the body. In Clarice Lispector we find the image that best illustrates the hand which listens:

Now I see that I’ve never told you how I listen to music – I gently put my hand above the *electrola* and the hand vibrates, sending waves through my whole body: that’s how I hear the electricity of the vibration (...), and the world trembles in my hands.” (LISPECTOR 1998, author’s translation).

Glenn Gould’s relationship to the Steinway in *The Loser* reveals something similar to what takes place in blind drawing – the hands that touch, envelop and connect with the piano, Gould’s total commitment. “He bent over himself and began playing. He played as if from the bottom to the top and not, like everybody else, from the top to the bottom (...) ““(…) to let exhaustion die in a final sound” (BERNHARD 2006: 24-39, author’s translation). Glenn Gould whispered the melody of the music as he played, his voice sounding like a whisper that he could barely hear: harmony of breathing – ears and hand. The internal ear and the hands, both being in harmony,

³ “(…) car à l’image visuelle est associée une image manuelle et c’est cette image manuelle qui vraiment réveille l’être actif en nous.”

float in a candid and gentle movement, develop exchanges of energy between the performer and the piano, and gain absolute totality. In blind drawing and in Glenn Gould's performance we listen and the hand vibrates and returns this vibration to the body – a communion exists between the eye, the hand and the ear. We observe by thinking of sight, grasping the form through the work of the hand and listening to the search for the self and for what becomes a unique and individual language. The 'not yet' is a result of the continuity of history. It involves unwinding the thread that connects us to each other, which, in unwinding, creates human webs. This is a process which exists in the tangle of our relationships, within history and in the history of each person. In Glenn Gould's case, the history is between the Steinway and himself:

“The ideal piano interpreter (he never said pianist) is the one who wants to be his piano, and every day, when I wake up, I say to myself: I want to be the Steinway, I want to be the Steinway itself. We have come close to this ideal many times, he said; we get really close when we think that we have already gone mad, when we are on the verge of madness, the thing that frightens us the most. As for Glenn, he wanted all his life to be the Steinway itself; he hated the idea of being between Bach and the Steinway, the mere mediator of the music, and of being ground between Bach and the Steinway; (...) to wake up one beautiful morning and be the Steinway and Glenn Gould at the same time, he said, I thought, Steinway Glenn, Glenn Steinway, just for Bach.”
(BERNHARD 2006: 72, author's translation).

Glenn Gould's interpretation of the *Goldberg's Variations* traverses history and makes its own image over the existing piece. In other words, the creative process lies beyond the artist, going beyond time itself and dissolving history. Not only the history of the work but also the history of past and future generations. The work must grow in time and create affinities – the translation of a text, seeing a painting, interpreting a musical work, doing a drawing. The relationships between generations and works are always valid connections when they are understood as physiognomy itself: an original form of conception – moving. There is a deep language which belongs to the present time, when the now is the moment when the work is interpreted without the need to remember, when the past is suspended and the transparency of the translation “does not hide the original” (BENJAMIN 1970): Glenn Gould's language in interpreting the *Goldberg Variations* belongs to the world of 'pure language'. This is why Benjamin tells us that translation owes its existence not to communication but to a task of emancipation (*The Task of the Translator*), which is why, in both acts – interpreting a musical work and/or doing a drawing – it is necessary to know how to forget history and the story of one's life (that of the performer and writer) in the creative process. The oscillation between past and present, in the moment of execution, must be transformed into a unique encounter in which the suspension of the past allows us to see what lives in front of us in the present: the (re)discovery of truth – freedom. What matters is the now, that which is in the moment, a dynamic between creator and work. The transformation of drawing, as it occurs, provides a freedom in which the passage from desire to the inscription on the paper, as intention, is the potential space of the work (CARNEIRO 2007: 150). In blind drawing the pencil draws the line on the white paper, we listen, and the hand vibrates and returns this vibration to the body. Blind drawing is no more than a means by which to dilute desire during the process of inscription: the constellation of an image which, once inscribed, cannot be erased without leaving marks.

3. The death inside each of us

It is said that Glenn Gould suffered from an illness of the spine and, perhaps, another illness not yet diagnosed by science – the pain of the creator. This illness is related to the overwhelming passion which takes over the artist's body and mind. In other words, the exercise, discipline, habit and attention required to create are linked to movements such as digging and diving, rising and falling, which establish energies between the creator and the work. In Benjamin, habit and attentiveness are complementary: on the one hand, there is the threshold that is crossed in dreams and, on the other, the space of pain – “in dreams there is no astonishment and in pain there is no forgetting” (BENJAMIN 2006: 592). In *The Loser*, pain is the nameless interlocutor, in *Glenn Gould* and in other characters. The attention that *Gould* devotes to performing, wishing to be the Steinway itself, assails him with an immense pain: the memory of a gap that lives between him, the piano and Bach. However, daily habit – sitting in front of the piano to play the *Goldberg Variations*, projects and transports him into a sort of waking dream, into a state of trance. The extraordinary transformation undergone by Gould when he is playing, in comparison to when he is being interviewed by Bruno Monsaingeon, is inexplicable and mysterious. In the film he seems relaxed; his arms are linked behind his head, his hair is uncombed, his figure is athletic and he speaks clearly, with humour, sympathy and irreverence. His transformation begins when he starts to play the *Goldberg Variations*: his body ceases to be athletic and adapts itself to the body of the piano. Initially, an adjustment takes place between his head and his shoulders: his neck disappears, his hands touch the keys, his chest swells when he inhales and sinks when he exhales. His concave back looks like a shell; Glenn Gould, bent over himself, wrapped up in his rhythm, is transformed. The piano becomes a place of protection, shelter and fixation. There is a two-way communication: two voices that reverberate, exhalt, listen and celebrate an intense mutualism which, in a daydream, causes Gould to remain in a place that is only his and the piano's: two intimately related musical instruments. At the height of his performance there is an orgasmic grandiosity which, when it finishes, is revealed in a sinking of his body, which then immediately becomes erect. An empty time remains and, in this time, death may appear, between the anguish of the end and the beginning of the dream. The desire that, alongside passion, walks towards a place without an exit: ‘But Glenn didn't die of lung disease, I thought. What killed him was the impossibility of finding a way out of a situation into which he had been dragged by the piano for almost forty ears, I thought’ (BERNHARD 2006, author's translations). He gave art his body and soul and a terrible tiredness took over him during and up to the end of his ability to perform, triggering a sudden retreat inside himself and over himself - something very unusual, which can produce spiritual transformation, something bigger than life, which belongs to transcendence (GOULD 1984: 297). At his peak, he was overcome by a pain that brought him to the absolute end. However, the idea of tiredness in Glenn Gould/ *Glenn Gould* is an idea that lies beyond outer visibility and, perhaps, visibility itself. His retreat from the world and his constant desire to fuse himself with the piano led him to his death. He reached a degree of high exaltation: in his unease, the state of abstraction from the self and the world took him away from where he was – in a trance he was possessed and allowed himself to be possessed. The passion, the sweat on his skin and the continuous whisper issuing from his ecstatic mouth project an image of metamorphosis, as if Gould had awoken in another place in another body. He renews himself and transforms himself in order to

sink down into his own meaning, *a intentio*⁴. However, there is a moment of grace: at the end of the performance, his body slowly moves upright and his arms perpendicularly follow the movement of his body; his hands remain suspended in the air in a kind of levitation from which fear has emerged. He despised the public, its opinions and applause (GOULD 1984: 245-250), arguing for it to be abolished in a paper that he published entitled GPAADAK (*Gould Plan for the Abolition of Applause and Demonstrations of All Kinds*). For this reason the recording studio was the perfect place for him, where he could play alone without the presence of hundreds of people. The intensity of the harmony between him and the piano wrapped him up in a unique immensity. A connection exists between the sender and the receiver that creates a passage to a time lived between the two; for both Glenn Gould and the character, the audience was an unbearable presence:

“He despised those who, when speaking, expressed incomplete thought, so he despised almost all of mankind. And he had been apart from the mankind that he despised for more than twenty years. He was the only piano virtuoso who despised his public and who had really separated himself from this public. He didn't need it. He bought a house for himself in the middle of the woods. He moved into the house and perfected himself. Bach and he lived at that house in America until his death.” (BERNHARD 2006: 24, author's translation).

There is a connection between emitter and receptor that is not a part of the human essence of Glenn Gould and *Glenn Gould*, the character: “In the appreciation of a work of art or an art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful”, Benjamin concluded (BENJAMIN 1970). The work of art is always a metamorphosis of the body of the creator, i.e., the identity of the body is constantly renewed in the passage from the self to the work; pleasure allied to fear feeds the creative process. In the solitude of being with the self and with the work, in a dynamic present, there is a forgetting of the self and, in the act of creating, an indefinite time and space opens up: the understanding of a language that exclusively belongs to and only lives between the two. In opposition to *Glenn Gould* stands the impossibility of *Wertheimer*, who would love to have been like him and/or anyone else, who does not accept himself. *Wertheimer* was always tormented in his human condition. He lives in a chronic state of anguish with his weakness and dissatisfaction with the world, developing the greatest of human unhappinesses:

(...) He had never been able to adapt to a world which, after all, had always been against him in absolutely everything, since the first hour. As he grew up he thought that the desire would die, that it would just suddenly disappear, but, as the years went by, this desire became even more intense, although it had not yet reached its maximum intensity and concentration, he said (...) Because we are misery itself, infamy itself. We haven't the least musical talent! - he shouted, the least talent for existence! (BERNHARD 2006: 43-44, author's translation)

Wertheimer was merely a piano virtuoso who, while possessing technique and skill, did not show any sense of direction, commitment or discernment. He never tried to hear himself playing the *Variations*. The narrator, who is friends with *Wertheimer*

⁴“(…) the language of a translation – in fact, must – let itself go, so that it gives voice to the *intentio* of the original not as reproduction but of harmony, as a supplement to the language in which it expresses itself, as its own kind of *intentio*”. (BENJAMIN 1970).

and *Glenn Gould*, and who, like *Wertheimer*, abandons his piano studies, takes the risk – he plays the *Variations* once. He thereby understands that skill and/or technique are not enough to create. He withdraws from musical life and begins a career as a writer: he renews the form, lives/survives. In his lack of courage, *Wertheimer* traces his misery, not only because he commits suicide but because he does so after *Gould's* death. *Wertheimer's* end is genuinely tragic. He sends for a poor-quality, deliberately out of tune piano and plays it. In view of the atrocity that he has committed against himself, there is no possibility of salvation apart from to hang himself from a tree and allow his body to fall: an unparalleled void. Awareness of death intensifies the meaning of life and the novel's characters carry its inscription inside them: a(n) (in)visible line, unfocussed, on the horizon, in the distance.

4. The body's tissue

With regard to literary characters, Benjamin says that “they are so intimately integrated in the overall arrangement of the composition [tapestry] that in no way can they be set apart from it as particular motifs” (BENJAMIN 1998, author's translation). We know that Thomas Bernhard was inspired by Glenn Gould when he wrote *The Loser*, although the two men had never met in person. Gould and Bernhard are cut from similar cloth, both in terms of their involvement with their work and in their relations with the world: both withdrew and went into seclusion. They nurtured a sense of abandonment and scorn for those around them – in Bernhard's case, repugnance for Austrians and in Gould's case, his misanthropy. The uniqueness of each man lives, independently of the relations established with the artistic object, and only acquires its intensity, through being joined with something else – characters, writer, performer – where a form of equality is recognisable in a real image: seeing and allowing the clarity that penetrates the entire work to be seen. As Benjamin says, if we attempt to pull out one of the characters that makes up the tapestry, we come up against not only the impossibility of individual existence but also the destruction of the support. We can understand and imagine that small places inhabit the gap between the support – paper, rug – and the medium – graphite, wool: spaces of shadow and transparency which are visible and invisible through the ability of each person, whether spectator, reader and/or listener, to understand the nature of the work. There is a veil that changes reality into unreality and vice versa, i.e. in relation to what sight can achieve there is a shift in what appears, is transformed and passes from one place to another and from some people to others. The veil creates a mystery that lies between seeing well and hearing well; it pertains to the real/unreal function that becomes apparent when we look at the face of a woman who wears one: it awakens desire and projects fear – the shadowy, slightly unfocused outline through the transparency. At first sight, superficially, the image of the body is lost; we see only the multiple aspects that it presents. According to Françoise Dolto, the image of the body is the living synthesis of our emotional experiences and it is within it that time intersects with space, and where the past reverberates in relation to the present (DOLTO 1992, author's translation). The history that we each carry is all that we have with us from the beginning and presents all of the feelings that we have experienced, which, when dynamized, generate a rhythm in producing other images. We may or may not remember a particular sensation, but we always remember something about our past experience, whether it is agreeable or disagreeable. Memory appears in us and the rhythm of the body begins to produce images which, when oriented towards the creative act, make each

work a unique and individual project. For example, the unrest suffered by the world, by people and by things gives rise, in each of us, to a brief period in which we can enjoy each another in harmony and, above all, it negates the possibility of a space of openness to new encounters. It is through attentiveness, dedication and observation of the self and others that it is possible to create. However, it is essential to know how to isolate oneself and withdraw from the agitation of the world, or that which, in our eyes, is potential inspiration for the work. Seeing and hearing acquire tendencies of grandeur and expansion since, in truth, the majority of people see and hear not only because it involves less effort but also because passing through the veil that exists between two people requires us to come out of ourselves in order to enter the other and, often, to return: to come out of the self in order to enter it again and to learn and apprehend, observing in a different way. The three characters in *The Loser* contain within them a plot that constructs a single dwelling, like the spider that pulls a substance from inside itself and weaves its web. Each of them has his own form and content, whether in relation to the exterior and interior, or in the connection between desire and fear, or the creator and the work. However, a unique form of wrapping takes shape, as if the three were only one – a sort of package that hides or engenders a common will and restores a personal will. The permanency of life is linked to the desire to make and create from which the past and future withdraw – in *Glenn Gould*, *Wertheimer* and the narrator – and the moment when the work is created engenders the medium: an empty time, the now, like the web suspended from trees between the earth and the sky, blows a breeze. In the act of performing, writing, or drawing there is a living manifestation of the image of the body – “in current time something of a relationship, of a past time, is always repeated in a filigree” (DOLTO 1992: 14, author’s translation). In drawing, the rhythm sketches, marks, models and leaves a record; we listen while we draw – union of body and paper. In the presence of the marking implement, whatever it might be (graphite, charcoal, pastel, water, gouache), with each inscription on the paper the body communicates between the hand, the eyes and the ears – there is a rhythm that is transformed with each line drawn on the paper and the body moves to and fro: the hands draw, the eyes see, and the ears hear. In teaching, when the teacher presents an exercise to the students, it can be seen that each student responds differently to the proposal when drawing. The body changes as the exercise is understood by each student in his or her own way. A language is initiated that is unique because, from the understanding of the exercise, each student learns something different. In free drawing, the body finds harmony according to its own reason – “this is what is called an exercise. Success consists in allowing the will, in the body's internal space, to step down once and for all in favour of the organs – the hand, for instance” (BENJAMIN 2004: 226, author’s translation). If desire depends on a will which, for the benefit of the hand, for instance, connects the freedom of the imagination to language, then in the act of drawing the desire transforms, expands, projects itself and exteriorizes itself in an image. In blind drawing, the eyes connected to the movement of the arm and hand draw the line. In silence, the line is inscribed in conjunction with the eyes that observe and that return the secret to the hands: the memory that we have of a model similar to the one in front of us (a body, vegetation, etc.) is forgotten and, at the same time, what is living in front of us is recognized as being unique, hitherto unseen. In this process an often painful feeling persists caused by the dissatisfaction of not finding in the line what the eyes find. However, when the feeling of unease ceases and is accepted - a moment that is unique - the patience of the eyes and the hands usher in the calm of the body: the fear of drawing the line badly fades away and desire, in its curiosity,

reaches an end, without tension: it shelters it and makes it pointless. Faced with the real world, Glenn Gould and Thomas Bernhard recognise a will in what is truly desired: the imagination that works “throws a veil over distance” (BENJAMIN 2004: 239, author’s translation). In its transparency and shade, the constitution of the drawing forms its meaning, according to Benjamin’s conception of history⁵: a constellation of desire – the visible trace of the line inscribed on the plenitude of the white of the paper carries in it the time of now: the medium – small places of transparency and shade that, between the work and the creator, are powers: fear and desire.

5. Epilogue

I believe that all forms of artistic creation shape a similar manner of proceeding. Although the path chosen by the artist is always individual and unique, the attention, discipline, understanding, observation, habit, training, rigour etc. are ways of bringing about a union between the creator and the work. In the moment of creation the public’s recognition does not matter but when the work leaves the hands of its creator, to be free in the world, it is always a form of continuity of the self and the creator. However, it is through the transformation of those who speak and communicate with it (the work) that past and present are able to cross between generations. The communication of the work to others, in the age when it is created or in some future age, conveys a language that, being unique and different, ends up belonging to everyone. Rather than presenting a specific thesis on a language of art, this paper proposes a reflection on a way of acting in relation to creation that probably possesses a language characteristic of art. Let us therefore choose two artists – Thomas Bernhard and Glenn Gould – in order to demonstrate a relationship between their work and the creative act in blind drawing: observing, withdrawing, shifting and isolating. The similarity between the stories of Bernhard and the narrator of *The Loser*, and between Glenn Gould and *Glenn Gould*, is characteristic of a reality that is transformed into unreality and vice versa. A secret inhabits this literary work: the invisibility and visibility between life and art. In relation to other arts, drawing has the particularity of creating the outline that opens up or closes the figure – it reveals the lie inherent in the use of rubber, in the cohesion/adhesion of the medium to the support. These characteristics of drawing lead to a submersion of the body, which, through the patience of the eyes and the hand, arrives at tranquility. It exists as a mysterious complicity: the secret in the drawn figure. In blind drawing, there is confirmation that the model, being unique, is indispensable. In forgetting about other models, there is a form of total commitment; we work through dynamic repose: desire accepts and is renewed at every instant. Time is forgotten and the solitude of creating the drawing is forgotten; the dwelling place of the desire is recorded within the paper: vibration of patience. Since it is not possible to rub something out without leaving a trace, the pleasant or unpleasant pleasure is also

⁵ “Every present day is determined by the images that are synchronic with it: each ‘now’ is the now of a particular recognisability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time. (This point of explosion, and nothing else, is the death of intentio, which thus coincides with the birth of authentic historical time, the time of truth). It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectic at a standstill: not temporal in nature but figural (bildlich).” (BENJAMIN 2001: 463).

inscribed and the motivation that the drawer felt is visible in the uninterrupted action of the hand, which feels that there is a promise in each line drawn because the lie is always evident – the stroke that inscribes the line fixes desire and causes fear to subside. The process of inscription that takes place in drawing comes close to a language that is characteristic of the intimate relationship between creator and work: the veil which, whether transparent or opaque, triggers desire and fear in what is alive.

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