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## From Cave to Screen: A Study of the Shamanic Origins of Filmmaking

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### ABSTRACT

This article is a study of the shamanic origins of cinema and the processes and elements involved in filmmaking and film viewing that recall shamanic and ritualistic practices. It interweaves several studies alongside theoretical and creative concepts concerning the shamanic origins of art and film, starting with Werner Herzog's statement from his film *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2010) that the Chauvet Cave art constitutes a proto-cinema. In this study, a comparative analysis of the archetypal structure of the cave's proto-cinema and the basic structure of Australian Aboriginal rituals demonstrates that they share common characteristics. These characteristics are associated with the contemporary cinematic apparatus. Moreover, Herzog's approach to the cave art as a cinematic shaman initiating the film's viewers is detailed in order to demonstrate the parallels between the shamanic and ritualistic technology and features of the cave art and the modern technology and awareness involved in moving images, filmmaking and film viewing. David Lewis-Williams' neuropsychological model of altered states of consciousness as a basis for our understanding of Upper Paleolithic cave art allows further articulations of the characteristics of the shamanic experience as generated by the aesthetics of the cinematic medium. In addition, the article implies that exploration of the interrelations of contemporary cinematic aesthetics and ancient shamanic depictions may trigger further insights on the evolution of human creativity and aesthetic forms through the integration of technological and spiritual means and expressions.

**Keywords:** Proto-cinema, Palaeolithic Art, Cave of Forgotten Dreams, Consciousness, Shaman. This is an open access article under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

### 1. Introduction

This article demonstrates a study that explores the shamanic origins of cinema and the processes and elements involved in filmmaking and film viewing that recall shamanic and ritualistic practices. In addition, it explicates the manners with which film technology and aesthetics, including

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the interaction of film viewers with the cinematic apparatus, may assume ritualistic and shamanic characteristics. The text interweaves several key studies (Lewis-Williams & Clottes, 1998, Lewis-Williams, 2004a, Günter, 2004, Tucker, 1992) alongside theoretical and creative concepts concerning the shamanic origins of art and film (Cook, 2013).

These studies are utilized to theoretically support the analysis of Werner Herzog's concept of proto-cinema as well as the article's comparative analysis of the elements that constitute proto-cinema and the elements which constitute traditional Australian Aboriginal ceremonies. The exploration commences in Section 2 with the analysis of Werner Herzog's concept of proto-cinema based on the Chauvet Cave's Palaeolithic paintings as featured in his film *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2011). It proceeds with an analysis of the fundamental components of Australian Aboriginal rituals in Section 3. The comparative analysis shows that the archetypal structure of the cave's proto-cinema and the basic structure of Australian Aboriginal rituals share common characteristics. In Section 4, Herzog's role as a "cinematic shaman" (Cook, 2013, p.28) initiating the viewers through the experience of the paintings in the cave is explicated through observations of his filmic treatment of the cave and aesthetic approach to the paintings and the themes that they evoke. Finally, in Section 4.1, David Lewis-Williams' neuropsychological model of altered states of consciousness as a basis for our understanding of Upper Paleolithic cave art is detailed (Lewis-Williams, 2004a). Lewis-Williams' theory allows further articulation of the cinematic medium as an inducer of shamanic experience. This notion of shamanic and ritualistic experience via film viewing is specifically exemplified in relation to the viewers' perception of mythological time in cinema (Day, 2017) and the notion of "time out of time" that typifies both film and "ritual consciousness" (Moore, 2015).

The parallels between the modern technology and aesthetics of cinema and the primordial technology of shamanic ritual that this article investigates reflect a quest for truth which is not merely factual. In *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, Herzog is asking "what constitutes humanness" (Kcali & Cakirlar, 2016, p.56) by taking the viewers back in time through his pursuit of truth, which characterizes his films and filmmaking in general (Kcali & Cakirlar, 2016, p.57). As Herzog states in the Minnesota Declaration (1999), deeper truth, which he terms as "ecstatic truth," is not rooted in factual details but emerges from the internal and external landscapes that our consciousness poetically and imaginatively perceives and weaves. Similarly to the scientists in *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, the viewers are confronted by Herzog's inquiry that demands internal subjective reflections. Thus, in *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, the film's characters, i.e., the Chauvet Cave's scientific team, and the viewers are called to become explorers of human consciousness whilst being guided by Herzog, the filmmaker as shaman.

Broadly, this study elucidates that the modern technology of cinema which is constantly upgraded is rooted in the shamanic origins of art and religion. Exploration of the interrelations of modern and ancient technologies of artistic and spiritual expression may trigger further insights on the evolution of human creativity and aesthetic forms through the correlated development of technological and spiritual processes.

## 2. The Chauvet Cave as Proto-Cinema

The Chauvet Cave is located in the Ardèche region of southern France. It was discovered in 1994 by a team of three speleologists led by Jean-Marie Chauvet. The site is renowned for its well-preserved cave art paintings dated between 30,000 and 33,000 years ago. These Ice Age paintings include 420 paintings of animals and other graphic themes and symbols (Fritz & Tosello, 2015, p.1). The paintings are not only of animals for hunt typical of Paleolithic cave art, but many predatory animals such as lions, owls, hyenas and more. The 3D film *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* from 2010 by Werner Herzog "explores and evokes the sacred dimensions of the cave" (Biles, 2011). Herzog introduces the cave as "one of the greatest discoveries in the history of human culture" (Herzog, 2010). It contains, he says: "the oldest paintings ever discovered, more than twice as old as any other." He sees in the "great art" left in the cave not merely a primitive start but a sudden explosive momentum in human evolution, stating: "as if the modern human soul had awakened here." Observing how the artists had utilized the features of the cave in ways that animate the painting and transform them into vivid dramatic narratives, he states that "they are almost a form of proto-cinema" (Herzog, 2010).

The notion of the cave as proto-cinema begins at the start of the film when the viewers, following Herzog, are entering the dark interior. As no sunlight reaches the cave, Herzog remarks that the crew's lights falling on the cave's walls function in a similar way to the Paleolithic painters' torchlights. The crew's lighting equipment is restricted to four panels of cold lights and battery belts to avoid damage to the paintings. Those early humans made their paintings in total darkness utilizing torches to light their surroundings. The sharp contrast between the dark space of the cave and the projected lights that reveal the images on the wall has an uncanny resemblance to the basic mechanics of cinema. Entering the cave recalls the experience of going inside the dimly lit cinema theatre and noticing the total darkness that falls before the film begins. Similarly to the space of the cave, which is dedicated to the paintings, the cinema experience happens in a defined enclosure.

There is a small hole in the cave through which water comes after the rain. Around it the Paleolithic painters placed the animals' figures, creating a composition that refers to a location where animals would be coming to drink. It is evident that they were using the features of the cave not only as the settings for painted actions but also as the backdrops for narratives. In this composition we can identify an imaginative approach to the setting and the formation of narratives through associations as well as through linear progress of events. Paintings of animals interacting with one another in the cave express emotions such as aggression, competition, suspense, anger, courtship, and more. These instinctual feelings are denoted in paintings of two rhinos fighting perhaps competing over territory or females, whinnying horses, male lion courting a female which rejects its advances, bison escaping a predator, and more. One of the remarkable paintings is of an extinct species of cave lions in the cavern's furthest chamber dubbed as the *Chamber of Lions* (Figure 1). The group of lions is shown unified by the intensity of their combined gaze while stalking a herd of bison. According to Fritz & Tosello (2015, p.20):

Cave lions, the largest predator of the epoch, practiced coordinated hunts (as do African lions today) and attacked large prey such as steppe bison and even woolly rhinoceroses. This beast of prey must have been simultaneously feared and admired by the humans who shared their territories. It is conceivable that this combination of fear and admiration (awe) inspired in these artists, themselves hunters, a certain fascination and that they symbolically staged themselves in these scenes, in the form of these big cats.

Interestingly, the composition does not involve the actual hunt or the killing but focuses on the moments of high suspense leading to the chase and carnage. The image of the lions functions similarly to suspenseful shots in films, capturing the minutes before a deadly attack is unleashed. However, the center of attention is on the killing beasts and the artist as Fritz & Tosello (2015, p.20) imply venerated their beauty and power.

The artist's composition and treatment of the painting named *Panel of the Horses* was planned in advance. He scraped the surface to prepare it before making the images (Fritz & Tosello, 2015, p.15) and "mixed the charcoal with the surface clay to obtain various hues and visual effects [shading and perspective]. The technique was stump-drawing, as well as scraping the outer edges of the images to highlight them with a pale aura"

("Fighting Rhino and Horses," n.d.) (Figure 2). These insights of the thoughtful processes involved in the making of the images indicate their importance to the people who made, and interacted with,



Figure 1. *Chamber of Lions*, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, 2010



Figure 2. *Fighting Rhino and Horses*, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, 2010

them. The relevance of details such as colors and shades can be seen in the cave art through diverse techniques such as engraved lines that produce white outlines against the brown-to-ochre background or scraped surfaces such as in the *Chamber of Lions* that show the white background which was initially covered by clay and onto which the lion heads were drawn in charcoal. The three main colors utilized by the artists – red, black and white were blended through diverse techniques and tools, which they developed, with the reddish-brown-to-ochre and greyish-white hues of the cave’s soil and stone composites (Fritz & Tosello, 2015).

To convey the illusion of movement, the Paleolithic painters added multiple legs to animals to induce a motion effect, for instance, a bison with eight legs, illustrating the animal’s movement (Figure 3). It is the same basic principle utilized by Eadweard Muybridge in order to animate an image of a galloping horse through a succession of photos (Muybridge’s *The Horse in Motion*, 1878), (Prodger & Gunning, 2003). Étienne-Jules Marey, for example, produced a chronophotographic study entitled *Horse Motion* in 1886, which recalls the cave painting of the eight-legged bison (Figure 4). Comparing the Paleolithic painters’ understanding of animals in movement with early photographic experimentation in capturing movement, it is possible to identify a similar approach to the depiction of subjects in motion.



Figure 3. Bison with eight legs, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, 2010

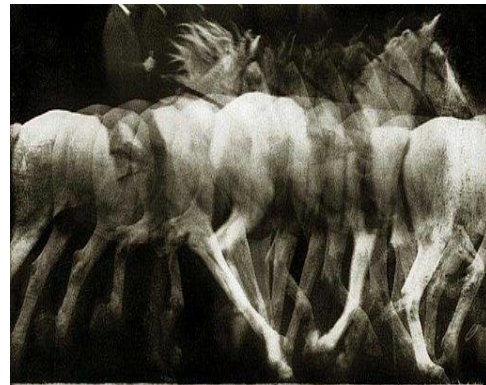


Figure 4. *Horse in Motion*, Étienne-Jules Marey, 1886

The fantastic visions of animals in motion were enhanced through interplay of flickering torchlights and shadows. In the film, the motion of handheld lights and camera over the painted images show them being subtly animated (Figure 5). Herzog speculates that perhaps for the Paleolithic people they appeared living and moving. Moreover, the painted surfaces are not flat but have three-dimensional qualities due to holes and layers, cracks and lumps, smooth and rough textures, different hues and soil composites. The painters who clearly utilized the natural characteristics of the cave created effects that, with the addition of dancing lights and shadows, produce the illusion of animals hiding, ambushing or surprisingly materializing before our eyes (Figure 5). Herzog suggests the presence of shadows on the cave’s walls as fire was necessary for both making and looking at the images, thus, the shadows of people fell on the painted scenes. He imagines people dancing next to the paintings and compares their dance with Fred Astaire’s *Bojangles of Harlem’s* shadow dance from the movie *Swing Time* (Stevens, 1936), showing Astaire dancing with three huge shadows of himself. Dancing with shadow, says Herzog, “is a very strong and old image of human representation, because the first representation was the walls, the white wall and the black shadow” (Herzog, 2010). Thus, the shadow is an additional performative element that becomes part of the painting and the experience of viewing and interacting with the imagery. The shadow has revered and magical dimensions in various cultures and religious traditions where it is interrelated with the idea of image-making, and in modern times it has been especially linked to photography (Moore, 2018, p.230-233 ). Furthermore, Herzog suggests that music and sound in general played a part in the ancient experience of the painting. Many of the paintings clearly suggest the sounds made by the depicted animals. Dominique Baffier, an expert in Palaeolithic art, remarks that in the painted scene of two fighting rhinos one can almost hear the sound of their clashing horns (Figure 2). Fragments of Ice Age ivory flute found in Southern Germany,

which was reconstructed, is yet another indication of music playing part in Palaeolithic forms of artistic expression (Herzog, 2010).

Additional aspect of the cave art involves portrayals of scenes that suggest mythic, supernatural and shamanic themes. One of the prominent paintings that imply a mythic or ritualistic function is named: *Venus Pendant* (Figure 6). The painting hangs on a rock formation that extends from the ceiling and is flanked by compositions of animals. It portrays a hybrid entity, half-human and half-bison named: *The Sorcerer* (Figure 6). The creature is mounting a woman's lower body whose pubic triangle and vulva are highlighted. The image is perhaps symbolic, related to a fertility rite, or perhaps depicting a relationship between a goddess-like woman and an animal spirit in a man's body. According to Lewis-Williams & Clottes, the half-human and half-bison is probably a therianthrope made of a combined image of a shaman and his spirit-animal guide (Lewis-Williams & Clottes, 1998, p.19).



Figure 5. The interplay of lights and shadows, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, 2010



Figure 6. *Venus Pendant/the Sorcerer*, Chauvet Cave Paintings Gallery, Bradshaw Foundation

On the basis of the above observations, the following list includes the basic elements that constitute the proto-cinema in the cave: 1) Darkness and light 2) Defined enclosure 3) Settings 4) Paintings and the sense of moving images and animation 5) Performative actions 6) Storytelling 7) Interplay of lights and shadows 8) Colors 9) Sound/music 10) Myth-making, supernatural and shamanic visions and 11) The participation of a community.

### 3. Aboriginal Ceremony as Proto-Cinema

Traditional Aboriginal art has to be understood as part of a wider context of ceremonial storytelling involving songlines and dance. The songlines are oral poetic tradition of storytelling, and many of them tell mythic tales of the Rainbow Serpent. Although for thousands of years the songlines' words were not written and the images were not intended to be seen, or were painted on bodies during ceremonies, the tradition endured (Spivey, 2005). In the sixties, the British television presenter David Attenborough explored the Aboriginal tradition of painting stories. After spending time with Aboriginal artists he was invited to participate in a ceremony and gained access to the paintings' secret. Attenborough then revealed to television viewers that each painting was a symbolic representation of a mythic tale which became an integral part of invocation and expression through dancing, singing, and music made by click sticks and didgeridoo. Attenborough states:

[...] you have to recognize that they [the paintings] are only a part. They don't exist by themselves. [...] So the music is an integral element from all kinds of points of view and to abstract that from a piece of painting is to impoverish the painting. (Whately, 2005)

In the BBC documentary series *How Art Made the World, Once Upon a Time* (Whately, 2005), a scene of an Aboriginal ceremony shows the participants painting symbolic colorful shapes on their bodies; they are waiting for the night fall to light fire, and then assemble next to a rock wall covered with traditional painted stories. Next, they bring the stories to life with the music of click sticks and didgeridoo, singing and dancing. Nigel Spivey, the presenter, compares the archaic Aboriginal manner of storytelling to that of cinema made of "image pulsating with sound" (Whately, 2005).

Aboriginal ceremonies recall the painted stories of Chauvet Cave, and their combined elements, as seen in the above-mentioned scene, form the structure of a proto-cinema. Performed during the night, they take place in an enclosure lit by fire. The paintings are an integral part of the settings, which may include sacred traditional locations. Painted images on rock or wood surfaces and on the participants' bodies are animated with music, the singing of stories and dance. Lights by flickering flames and shadows cast by the dancing people add zest and spiritual air to the performance. As a tribal event, the ceremony invokes the ancestral spirits of the Dreamtime (Spivey, 2005).

The following list includes the basic elements that constitute Aboriginal ceremony as proto-cinema: 1) Darkness and light 2) Defined enclosure 3) Settings 4) Storytelling 5) Dance and performance 6) Paintings, including body paintings, and the sense of moving images 7) Interplay of lights and shadows 8) Colors 9) Song and music 10) Myth-making, supernatural and shamanic visions and 11) The participation of a community.

This list of the basic elements that constitute traditional Australian Aboriginal ceremony as proto-cinema and the list of the basic elements which constitute the proto-cinema in the Chauvet Cave, as detailed in Section 2, in comparison reveal their almost identical structure. The two lists form a comparable evaluation that clearly indicates the elements that constitute the technology and the aesthetics of archaic shamanic rituals. Furthermore, their similar components highlight their proto-cinematic sensibility. The same sensibility can be seen embedded in today's advanced cinematic technologies including 3D films and Virtual Reality films.

#### **4. Considering the Shamanic Origins and Characteristics of Filmmaking**

In *Dreaming with Open Eyes: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth Century Art and Culture*, Michael Tucker refers to the film theorist Valda Petric who writes:

In "the dawn period" of mankind the cave-artist wanted to create a painted illusion of moving animals appearing as bizarre as the imagery in his dreams. Today, modern technology permits such a strong creation of oneric visions that viewers feel they are experiencing their own dreams. (Tucker, 1992, p.243)

Tucker also refers to Ingmar Bergman's statement that film has a strong hypnotic effect on the viewers. The hypnotic effect results of having to sit in total darkness and look steadily on a spot of light on the wall, sitting still throughout. Bergman compares the experience of viewing a film in the cinema to a method used by hypnotists who ask their subjects to concentrate intently with their gaze on a lit spot moving on the wall. Bergman also highlights the fleeting intermission of total darkness between each filmic frame that in effect means that the viewers are watching the film in total darkness (Tucker, 1992, p. 242). The essential element of darkness in the cinematic apparatus correlates with the pivotal importance of darkness in cave art. According to archeological evidence, hominids and Palaeolithic people tended to live at the openings of caves and very rarely lived inside the caves (Montelle, 2004, pp.131-132). In his widely accepted theory, the behavioral archaeologist Yann-Pierre Montelle proposes that "throughout the 25,000-year span of the Upper Paleolithic, the decorated deep caves functioned as cultural containers where liminal activities were performed and systematized and esoteric knowledge was archived" (Montelle, 2004, p.131). Clearly, darkness had a major role in establishing a sense of liminality, of being in-between realms, and entering a spiritual reality that lies beyond the veil of darkness. The proto-cinematic quality of the paintings being lit by torchlights and the shadows that intersect them function like a sequence of filmic shots edited by the continuous thread of pitch black. Roger F. Cook explicates that Herzog replicates the Paleolithic experience of art for the contemporary viewer. Herzog replaced torches with mobile lights, inducing motion of shadows with lights that animate the images along with camera movements. Additionally, he created moments of total darkness through editing and intercutting between shots (Cook, 2014, p.32). Moreover, Herzog emphasizes the technological and cultural similarities and links between cave art and cinema by contextualizing the film's narrative and 3D apparatus in a moment in history that "prefigures the invention of film" (Cook, 2014, p. 28).

On the basis of the similarities between cave art and cinema as well as the ceremonial aspects of cave painting, Cook states that Herzog "takes on the role of a cinematic shaman, performing for his viewers much the same function as the ceremonial masters of the Palaeolithic might have done in their

time” (Cook, 2014, p.28). However, Herzog questions our ability to comprehend the cave paintings in exactly the same way they were understood by our ancestors. “Will we ever be able to understand the vision of the artists across such an abyss of time?” (Herzog, 2010) As a cinematic shaman, Herzog utilizes the medium of film and his filmic aesthetic sensibility to initiate the viewers with the Chauvet Cave art. There are two contemplative sequences in the film which are dedicated to simulating the cave art’s ritualistic, spiritual dimension for the viewers (Cook, 2014). One is an entirely non-verbal sequence based on the motion of the camera and the interplay of lights and shadows over the paintings on the cave’s surfaces. It is accompanied by the film’s soundtrack, the instrumental and choir music of Ernst Reijseger, which exudes religious tones. The syncretic arrangement of the cave paintings and the modern music, representing Western culture, art and religion, is perhaps an attempt to bridge the “abyss of time” through a common, primal sense of awe and religiosity. It is a film sequence for the modern soul encountering and contemplating its ancestral origins as manifested in the Chauvet Cave art. In a previous scene, the crew and the scientific team, stop to listen to the silence in the cave. “Silence, please,” says the renowned archeologist Jean Clottes: “Please don't move. We're going to listen to the silence in the cave, and perhaps we can even hear our own heartbeats” (Herzog, 2010). Silence, panning and wandering camera movements, solemn music and the sound of a heart beating induce an almost visceral atmosphere of contemplative observation. The camera observes the cave — the magnificent stalagmites, which were not there when the paintings were made, the cave’s floor that is littered with fragments of extinct animals’ bones — and the crew and scientists observe the cave's surroundings and the camera filming. While all these observations are interwoven with a sense of reverence, Herzog is asking: “Is this their heartbeat or ours?” (Herzog, 2010) The visceral quality of the sequence is enhanced by a heartbeat’s sound vibrating over the paintings as they are being revealed by the moving vision of the camera. According to Cook:

Hearing the sound of a beating heart is a penetrating and forceful stimulator of embodied simulation. When we hear and feel the vibration of another person’s heart beating it tends to change the rhythm and timing of our own heartbeat so that the two become synchronized. The sound of a disembodied heartbeat on the soundtrack together with Herzog’s suggestive question spurs a strong sense of co-presence with the early cave-goers. (Cook, 2014, p.33)

Herzog’s filmic style in *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* recalls Andrei Tarkovsky’s cinematic observations. Tucker writes that Tarkovsky’s images of the physical world are powerfully physical and at the same time “they are some of the most metaphysical ever to have been captured on film” (Tucker, 1992, p.244). According to Tucker, the medium of film can photographically portray the physical reality while transcending its mundane materiality. Film can project simultaneously presence and absence, materiality and immateriality, a form of ‘doubleness,’ (Tucker, 1992, p 243), which we can observe in *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*. Herzog tells the viewers at the end of the sequence in which the paintings are observed in silence entwined with heartbeats: “These images are memories of long-forgotten dreams” (Herzog, 2010). Despite the physical immersion in the cave that the sequence denotes, there is a sense of an extra immaterial, spiritual presence. Herzog’s remark highlights the invisible presence in the cave:

Dwarfed by these large chambers illuminated by our wandering lights, sometimes we were overcome by a strange, irrational sensation as if we were disturbing the Paleolithic people in their work. It felt like eyes upon us. This sensation occurred to some of the scientists and also the discoverers of the cave. (Herzog, 2010)

The 3D aesthetics of *Cave of forgotten Dreams* accentuates the liminal ritualistic status and function of the paintings (Montelle, 2004) by offering a greater immersion within the painted planes that seem to be floating not on static but pulsating matter. The feeling of dream imagery or the presence of an altered reality derives from the paintings’ style. It often shows the absence of the animals’ lower body, such as the lions of the *Chamber of Lions*, whose heads seem to be emerging from the background of the cave’s wall and with the rest of their bodies hidden by it (Figure 1). Figures of animals without lower legs and feet or floating rather than standing on the ground, which typify Upper Palaeolithic cave art are, according to David Lewish-Williams, pictorial expressions of visions perceived in altered-states (Lewish-Williams, 2004a, p.121, p.211).

#### 4. 1 Altered States and the Shamanic Origins of Art and Film

According to Lewis-Williams, human consciousness is constantly shifting and is comprised of different states induced by various factors. There is a tendency to highly value alert states relating to daily functions however, Lewis-Williams argues that researchers of human evolution have ignored introverted states of consciousness like daydreaming that distance us from our immediate situations (Lewis-Williams, 2004b, p.12). He terms these states “autistic” (Lewis-Williams, 2004a, p. 125) and indicates that they are generally categorized as altered states of consciousness. To explain the emergence of two-dimensional images as we see in cave art, Lewis-Williams formulated a neuropsychological model divided into three stages: Stage 1 involves entoptic phenomena in which individuals see vivid moving geometric forms such as dots and zigzags. These are wired into the brain thus experienced across all cultures though may be attributed different meanings according to cultural narratives. In Stage 2 there is an attempt by the individuals involved to reconstruct the forms they see into emotionally meaningful objects. Cultural context influences the meanings attributed to the forms. Stage 3 involves individuals hallucinating objects and scenes in their entirety hence the relevance of the geometric forms is reduced (Lewis-Williams, 2004b, p.19). More important is the manner with which these images are perceived whether in opened or closed eyes. The experience of perceiving such visions has been described as a slide or cinema show with the images seen projected on walls or ceilings. Lewis-Williams identifies similarities between the Upper Paleolithic paintings and engravings to projected mental imagery. The floating character of the animal figures, their unrealistic proportions, the lack of land or natural environment that ground them in a mundane reality and the choice to integrate them instead within the features of the cave, all indicate that they are akin to mental images and not pictures that reconstitute reality in a conventional way. Lewis-Williams contends that these mental images imprinted as two dimensional figures in the caves coincided with the development of the social structure of groups holding religious belief and experience based on powerful animal spirits (Lewis-Williams, 2004b, p.26). Overall, the paintings represent social hierarchy based on the shamans as seers who see and control the visions, those who can manifest and also control them through painting, and the rest of the community who may see them in the cave as part of a social ceremony though unable to conceive, manifest or control them (Lewis-Williams, 2004b, pp.26-27).

In *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, Herzog refers to the paintings as dream images of long forgotten dreams and not as realistic pictorial representations. The art in the cave is described as visions of inner landscapes, a comprehension which corresponds with Lewis-Williams’ theory of the cave as an Upper Palaeolithic visionary shamanic underworld (Lewis-Williams, 2004a, p.209). Moreover, mental imagery projected over concrete surface as visions outside the real-time, space and reality of the viewer, as seen in the Chauvet Cave and other Upper Palaeolithic cave art (Lewis-Williams, 2004b, p.26) seems to also characterize the cinema apparatus and the “time out of time” of “ritual consciousness” (Moore, 2015, p.332). Time out of a time is a duration that arises in religious practices and ceremonies in cultures across the world (Rappaport, 1999, p.181). It is a universal experience of time that is radically different from the ordinary time of daily situations. Time out of a time indicates a state of liminality of being in between the past, present and future akin to standing on a threshold amid all potentialities of becoming. It may also involve the experience of time as everlasting or as eternity where time becomes infinite. Rituals involving transfiguration occur in another dimension of time outside the linear arrow of time (Moore, 2015, p.333). According to Day, in principle, cinema has the power to displace time and intervene with our ordinary and automatic relation to time. It can permit us to interact with time in a mythological way though not all films exploit this option (Day, 2017, p. 217). Day states that *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* invites us to develop a mythological relation to time (Day, 2017, p. 222). Herzog, in his role as the cinematic shaman, does not document the past for us as a record to be watched neither offer us a fleeting escape from the burdens of reality but projects mental, dreamlike images before and around us for our own initiation (Day, 2017, p. 222).

#### 5. Conclusions

The article has demonstrated that the modern medium of cinema was prefigured by an archaic form of Palaeolithic cave art that was interlinked with shamanic ritual (Lewis-Williams & Clottes, 1998). The cave art assumed a structure termed by Herzog as proto-cinema. *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*’ use of



sophisticated 3D film which represents twenty-first century's technological innovation highlights the remote moment in which humanity's technological and aesthetic capacities first emerged as a combined enterprise. The proto-cinema in the cave is revisited through the aesthetics of cinema at the pinnacle of its current development (Klinger, 2012, p.38). *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* is a major example of the exploration of the common origins of art and shamanic ritual through the sensibility of filmmaking.

The article's comparative analysis that details the basic elements that create the proto-cinema in the cave in conjunction with the elements which constitute an Australian Aboriginal ceremony exemplifies their fundamental similarities (Section 3). Moreover, this analysis serves to further exemplify the suggestion concerning the interrelation of the technology of cinema and archaic technologies and forms of shamanic ritual. Overall, the notion of the filmmaker as shaman as presented by Herzog in *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (Cook, 2013, p.28), and as practiced by the pioneers of avant-garde and experimental film (Sitney, 2002), a topic which is beyond the scope of this article, could be further explored by returning to the shamanic roots of human creativity and spirituality. This research orientation may also lead to further insights on the evolution of innovation and the emergence of aesthetic forms through the integration of technological and spiritual means and expressions.

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