# 'Making-remote' as an alternative to realism in late Palaeolithic cave art: Representations of the human at the threshold of appearance

Fiona Hughes

*I initiate the concept of 'making-remote' to capture various strategies for representing the human in late Palaeolithic cave art. Drawing out the role of remoteness within phenomenological accounts of perception (Husserl and Merleau-Ponty), as well as offering an analysis of a wide range of archaeological evidence, I argue that realism does not capture the specificity of these human representations. In contrast to naturalistic animal representations, humans are consistently represented with a high degree of abstraction e.g., schematisation and abbreviation. I also argue for a site-specific distinction between deep caves and rock-shelters. Following Bourdier (2010) and Pinçon (2012), art at sites such as Roc-aux-Sorciers is best understood as stylised 'public art'. Meanwhile, the highly expressive and realist art of La Marche is domestic in contrast to the exclusively symbolic art of deep caves. In conclusion I argue that 'making-remote' in cave art's human representations exhibits complex relations to self and others.*

## 1. Introduction

Remoteness is not merely a descriptive category referring to temporal or spatial distance. The aim of this paper—drawing on both philosophical and archaeological resources—is to initiate the concept of 'making-remote' in order to make sense of strategies for representing the human deployed in cave art during the late Palaeolithic stretching from 40,000 to 10,000 years ago. In the course of establishing the philosophical basis for this argument, I also contribute to philosophical understanding of the importance of remoteness within perception. My approach is to treat philosophy and archaeology as interlocutors. Through philosophical analysis new possibilities for the understanding of cave art are opened up, while cave art offers examples that deepen understanding of the experience—not just the theory—of perception.

'Making-remote' arises when artistic representations deliberately eschew close similarity to everyday perception, opting, for instance, for schematization, stylization, symbolism or some alternative form of abstraction. I argue that human representations in cave art are liminal, relating to everyday perception only remotely. By 'everyday perception'

I mean the normal construal of perception as directed to already individuated objects.[1] My parallel philosophical focus—in contrast to the more familiar theme of visible and invisible—is on how Husserl and Merleau-Ponty uncover a dynamic within perception of 'surging-forth' and withdrawing to remoteness, which is prior to individuation. I argue that the artistic strategy of 'making-remote' helps illuminate a dynamic that is constitutive for, but usually unremarked within, perception. That cave art deploys such strategies in representing the human—a form of *self*-representation—is particularly intriguing.

'Making-remote' contrasts to archaeological analyses proposing that late Palaeolithic human representations are realist. Luquet (1923) set the bar for the understanding of realism within archaeology with his distinction between visual and intellectual realism. Visual realism depicts something as a viewer sees it, whereas intellectual realism reconstitutes the object through the extension of visual realism to include different perspectives.[2] A striking example of the latter is Lascaux's famous 'twisted perspective' where the animal's head is portrayed in profile while its horns face forward. I argue that human representations in cave art stand in a different relation to the real than does either of Luquet's versions of realism. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's criticism of objectivist theories of perception as resting on 'one-to-one' correspondences with reality, I argue that cave art representations of the human reveal the real by making it look remote.

Phenomenology captures theoretically what I will argue cave art presents in practice. Because we lack external testimony for the cultural worldview within which cave art was embedded, we can only glimpse clues as to the *logos* it displays. While cave art allows us to see what phenomenology wants to say, phenomenology allows us to understand aspects of cave art to which we are blind because of our distance from it.

## 2. Perception and Remoteness: The Philosophical Argument

In this section I examine Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analyses of perception and artistic representation in preparation for my account of 'making-remote'. It is well known that Merleau-Ponty highlights the invisible or hidden dimension of the visible. The invisible is the visible's other side—a perspective that could come into view, but is currently unseen. Thus, the invisible is not an absolute or radical unseeable cut off from perception as would be the Kantian thing-in-itself. Although related, in this section I discuss a distinctive issue, the ebb and flow *within* what in fact appears i.e. is seen, heard, touched.

In the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty the phenomenon appears. Appearance is not *mere* appearance which is opposed to reality in everyday usage. Perception—which is distinct from memory and phantasy—is directed to physical things (phenomena) that appear (Husserl 1983: Hu 79). The physical thing as 'it itself' appears in perception as present 'in person', that is, the thing appears *as* a phenomenon and is not

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1    Husserl (1983/1913) calls this 'the natural attitude'.

2    Luquet's account of visual realism broadly corresponds with the art historical sense of naturalistic or, even, photographic depictions of reality.

merely inferred (Husserl 1983: Hu 79–80). Appearing is thus the mark of the real. The nature of the thing is that it only appears through adumbrations (*Abschattungen*) or profiles, that is, 'only in a certain "orientation"' (Husserl 1983: Hu 77–78). Within the field of perception things surge-forth and withdraw as adumbrations.[3]

Husserl offers an acoustic example of a violin tone, which brings out the importance of the dynamic between foreground and remoteness within perception. The 'objective identity' of the tone is given only in adumbrations that wax and wane. I hear the tone as I approach the violin, move away or listen through closed doors. In the concert hall 'and at the "right" spot I hear the tone "itself"'. However, even the latter is a 'normal appearance'—we might say a 'normative' or normalized appearance—rather than it being the case that, even in the concert hall, any one adumbration presents the tone absolutely (Husserl 1983: Hu 81–82). The musical tone is always heard—that is, appears acoustically—through degrees of withdrawal and surging-forth within a dynamic exchange. The possibility of remoteness is thus a condition of the possibility of perceiving. And although silence—the non-appearance of anything heard—is the extreme limit of hearing, the exchange between remoteness and surging-forth within what is heard reveals the dynamic of perception *in its process*.

Husserl's account, in this the early Transcendental Idealist period of *Ideas 1*, thus sets up an account of perception as fluctuating between foreground and background. For Husserl the appearance of the thing through adumbrations does not mean that it is absent. Its presence 'in person' depends on our seeing it through adumbrations, not absolutely or from a god's eye view. He remarks that there is 'a certain inadequacy' in perception because the thing can only be given 'one-sidedly' (Husserl 1983: Hu 80). I interject that this co-called 'inadequacy' is a necessary aspect of perception, not a failing. Within perception there are always elements or aspects that are remote or withdrawn, otherwise nothing could be in the foreground. Indeed, it is a necessary condition of the thing as transcendent and external that it escapes us in various ways both within (liminally) and beyond (transcendently) the field of perception. This is the dynamic distinctive of all perception yet usually unremarked within an everyday or 'normal' construal of perception as focused on determinate, individuated objects.

Both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty hold that artworks can show this dynamic, that is, the appearing of appearance necessary for perception.[4] In *Ideas 1* perception as presentation is distinct from 'depiction', a form of representation which Husserl identifies with artworks such as Dürer's 'Knight, Death and the Devil' (Husserl 1983: Hu 226). Husserl, (2005/1898-1925) offers a much more developed account of what he now principally calls 'image-consciousness'.[5] The clearcut distinction between perception and depiction

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3    I take the expression 'surging-forth' (*surgissement*) from Merleau-Ponty (2003, e.g. 37). While the contrast between foreground and background also captures the dynamic within perception, it could suggest too static a relation.

4    Heidegger (for instance, 1950) in his later works shares this view. However, as he pays little attention to perception per se, he does not figure in my discussion.

5    Husserl (2005) is a compilation of posthumously published writings spanning from 1898–1925.

is maintained. Image-objects such as artworks are distinct from physical objects as they appear in perception. The physical object depicted in the image-object does not appear: only the image-object appears (Husserl 2005 20: Hu 18). Nonetheless there is some progression beyond understanding art as a reproduction of perception, for the image-object now qualifies as intermediary between perception and imagination or phantasy (Husserl 2005: xliv). He refers to 'perceptual re-presentation', suggesting a hybrid notion (Husserl 2005: Hu 476). Indeed, Husserl characterizes image-objects as the appearing of the appearance or 'the manner of appearing' (Husserl 2005: Hu 462). Image-objects not only reproduce the appearing characteristic of perception, but are capable of letting perception be seen as such.

In early texts 'image-consciousness' is equivalent to depiction understood as a representation or 'portrait' of an external physical object (Husserl 2005: L). This implies the close resemblance between representation and perception characteristic of artistic realism. In a later text from 1918, however, Husserl introduces the notion of 'a pure perceptual figment' (Husserl 2005: Hu 515–56). Now the real objects on the stage of a domestic drama or featuring in a fairy story are artistic illusions and operate as semblance (*Schein*) (Husserl 2005: Hu 516). The meaning of the artwork is internal to it and does not come from perception. As Brough points out, such a fiction is about something 'but what it is about is to be found only within itself' (Husserl 2005: L). The examples Husserl gives show that the contents of such fictions—'living human beings, the actors, actual furniture, actual curtains, etc.'—are about something in the sense that they deploy things or persons from the everyday world, however they are not *about* the everyday (Husserl 2005: Hu 515–16). The artwork constitutes the significance of things 'borrowed' from the outside world. Thus artistic 'perceptual figments' operate as transpositions on a border between reality and its artistic transfiguration, creating new forms of fictional reality.

Merleau-Ponty internalizes the relation between perception and artworks as a development of Husserl's already complex attempts to distinguish them. Cézanne's paintings show the process of perception in ways that are impossible for an objective or scientific reconstruction of perception (Merleau-Ponty 1993: 64). Although not all artworks do so, some qualify as heightened forms of perception. In this way, Merleau-Ponty finds in Cézanne a fellow phenomenologist insofar as he paints 'as if no-one had ever painted before' (Merleau-Ponty 1993: 69). Both phenomenologist and artist address the coming-into-being or surging-forth for perception of the world, rather than a theoretically predetermined account which would treat it as static.

Merleau-Ponty's examples demonstrate that for him art is not restricted to realist depiction—even at a fictional remove—of the external world. Cézanne uses blue to portray an apple *as it appears* in perception, even though an objective reconstruction of perception would not colour it thus (Merleau-Ponty 1993: 64). He also uses multiple lines to show how the apple's outline appears in perception in contrast to the hard or defined border which would be the result of an intellectual reconstruction (Merleau-Ponty 1993: 61–62). The painting shows us *how* we see with our eyes, not how we think about what we see. Cézanne remarked 'we are attempting a piece of nature', revealing his commitment to a convergence of art with perception (Merleau-Ponty 1993: 62). Meanwhile, Matisse and Klee intentionally incorporate abstraction into anything they depict, should it be a

female figure constructed from minimal but expressive lines (Matisse) or a network of gardens distinguished not by lines but by indeterminately bounded expanses of colour (Klee's 'Tunisian Gardens') (Merleau-Ponty 1993: 143–44). Perhaps surprisingly, such techniques of abstraction enable the exhibition of how we actually see. Such abstraction is not the same as intellectual reductionism and is, rather, a way of revealing the necessary indeterminacy within the process through which we come to see things as determinate. In so doing, artworks allow what appears to be shown *in* its appearing, that is, as a dynamic of surging-forth and becoming-remote.

This investigation of the dynamic flow of perception has implications for Merleau-Ponty's account of reality, which also contributes to my discussion of 'making-remote' in Section 4. He rejects objective accounts of perception as in one-to-one correspondence with reality, the artistic corollary of which would be a realism according to which artworks copy perceptual objects. His positive account of 'the real' is as 'the framework of relations with which all appearances tally' (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 349). While the objectivist position treats the real as always already determined, Merleau-Ponty insists that the real comes to be in a process through which indeterminate appearances *become* determinate (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 351). He uses as an example 'real' (supposedly, constant) colour. He rejects both Empiricism and Intellectualism according to which colour is 'fixed', arguing that it is, rather, 'a way into the thing' and operates as a background condition that 'persists' beneath appearances (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 355–56). The idea that reality is fixed once and for all, he argues, destroys our contact with the real which emerges through indeterminacy (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 387).

For Merleau-Ponty the real is a process of surging-forth and retreating to remoteness, of which perception is tacitly aware, but to which the intellect is often blind. Objectivist accounts of the relation between perception and reality as entailing one-to-one correspondences of represented and representation fail to capture the dynamic movement of the real. Artistic abstraction expresses the real as remote from the determinate reconstructions of everyday perception and in so doing brings to light the underlying process of perception. In Section 4, I will argue that such abstraction is already discoverable as 'making-remote' in late Palaeolithic cave art.

## 3. At the Limits of Realism: The Archaeological Evidence

While in the last section, I examined the role played by remoteness in both perception and artworks from a phenomenological perspective, in this section I examine the range of representations of the human in cave art and the extent to which they qualify as realist in accordance with the archaeological standard for realism set by Luquet in 1925, namely, that the artistic representation resembles what is seen from a viewer's perspective, possibly with the addition of features not seen from a single perspective.

The view that representations of humans are absent in late Palaeolithic cave art used to be generally—although not universally—assumed. The classic case was presented by Bataille (1980/1955), who argued not only that human figures were absent but that they were prohibited in cave art. That it is untrue that human representations are absent from cave art is now firmly established. (e.g. Delluc and Delluc 1971; Leroi-Gourhan 1992;

Groenen 2000; Fuentes 2015) Future research must be focused not on *whether* the human is represented but on *how* it is represented.

It is undeniable that the role played by representations of the human within the repertoire of late Palaeolithic art raises a number of difficult questions. While there are numerous such representations, they are considerably rarer than those of animals or marks referred to as 'signs'. Delporte (1979) estimated there were thousands of animal figures and only about 400 human figures throughout *all* late Palaeolithic art. More recently, Fuentes (2015) reports that if all supports (parietal and portable art) and techniques (painting, engraving and sculpture) during the Magdalenian period alone (*circa* 18,000–11,000 BP) are included, the total number of human 'silhouettes' reaches 413. We will see that human figurative representations are especially rare in deep caves. Nonetheless, Combarelles, particularly rich in anthropomorphic figures, has 50 (Archambeau et Archambeau, 1991).

Representations of humans feature prominently within late Palaeolithic portable art, particularly as small to medium-sized sculptures. Many are figurative even though they do not resemble individuals and are likely to have functioned symbolically. Most famous are the curvaceous 'Venus' figures from the Gravettian period (approximately 33,000 to 22,000 'Before Present' or BP[6]) and which have been found from western Europe to as far away as Siberia. These are usually characterized by an absence of facial features. Nonetheless, there is no simple homogeneity of style throughout the Gravettian as the 'Dame de Brassempouy' is svelte and has more recognizable features, although she has no mouth. In the later Magdalenian period (1580 BP onwards) more svelte Venus figurines predominated in both western and central Europe (e.g. Venus of Monruz) (Cohen 2003). Portable art from the Magdalenian period (19,000–10,000 BP) includes, but much more rarely, schematic male figures, sometimes with erections. (Groenen 2000) There are representations of vulva and penises across all these periods, as well as hybrid figures combining human and animal features e.g. the lion-man of Hohlenstein-Stadel from roughly 40,000 BP. Finally, portable art on stone and bone includes many realist, although stylized, depictions of animals as well as a wide range of geometric decoration and abstract marks or 'signs' (Paillet 2006).

Cave art throughout the late Palaeolithic is dominated by realist representations of animals. Animals are often portrayed in quite simple outlines. However, many animal figures are richly elaborated and finely detailed (Archambeau and Archambeau 1991; Vialou 1997). The highly individuated and expressive bison from Niaux's 'Salon Noir' are exemplary, but they are not unique (Leroi-Gourhan 1965). Even though stylization clearly played an important role, such attention to anatomical detail could suggest that these figures were inspired by animals encountered by these hunter-gatherers. Certainly, familiarity with anatomical features and portrayal of movement suggest that attention to how reality appeared in perception played an important role on many occasions (Azéma 2009). As we will see, few human representations even approach the realism of these representations of animals flourishing in the Magdalenian period.

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6    According to archaeological convention Before Present (BP) is calculated from a conventional 'present' of 1950.

In my analysis of representations of humans in cave art, 'human representations' are not only human figures but all representations that are marks for 'the human'. Thus, from the outset, I include all ways in which the human is represented whether figuratively, stylistically, schematically or, potentially, symbolically. This greatly extends the range of human representations, allowing the representational presence of the human in cave art to be recognized in its many guises prior to considering how the human is presented. Delluc and Delluc (*Hominides*) take a similar approach in their analysis of human representation in the Périgord region, saying there are more than a hundred human—both female and male—representations which include realist, schematic, and fragmentary representations (principally sexual organs as well as heads and hands).

Triangles, often annotated with a decisive vertical half-line are interpreted as vulva. We have already encountered these among portable art. In cave art they are usually engraved, but also, more rarely, painted. For Vialou (1997) these fluctuate between anatomical realism and geometric schematization. He argues they involve a double transformation firstly from realistic representation to graphic sign and secondly to geometric schema. I would suggest that the tendency of these representations towards schematization means any realism is always stylized. Moreover, they are unrealistically detached from depiction of the body as a whole. Although rarer, there are a number of penis-shapes which are more realistic, but also isolated from their bodily context.

Extremely rare in deep caves are complete—or near-complete—engravings or paintings of female human figures. Chauvet (currently dated to the Aurignacian around 36,000 BP) has a recognizable yet partial painting of the body of a headless woman interlaced with a bison and making use of the natural configuration of the rock. Chufin in Cantabria has a schematic near-complete painting of a female figure also deploying features of the rock. Gabillou's Magdalenian engraving, usually called 'woman in an anorak', is so minimal that its sex is disputed. None of these are resemblances of women as they appear in ordinary perception.

Two remarkably detailed Venus sculptures in bas-relief from the Magdalenian period were found at the shallow cave of La Magdeleine, while there are bas-reliefs at the rock-shelters of Laussel and Roc-aux-Sorciers. The Venuses of La Magdeleine lack facial features, while the head of the Venus of Laussel was never worked in contrast to the detail of its pregnant body. Meanwhile, the female figures at Roc-aux-Sorciers lack heads and upper limbs (Betirac 1954; Iakovleva and Pinçon 1997). Although all are incomplete, within the survey I offer here these come closest to realism. In Section 5, I will propose an explanation of their exceptionalism.

A contrastive and more frequent Magdalenian style from 15,800 BP onwards is the Gönnersdorf-type minimalized silhouette of svelte female forms without heads and usually without arms. These are found not only at the eponymously named habitation site in western Germany, but also in caves at Combarelles in the Dordogne and Creswell Crags in northern England (Pettitt 2007).

Magdalenian cave art has a range of complete or near-complete male representations. The authoritative (although brief) study by Delluc and Delluc identifies what they call, after one of the most striking examples, the Sous-Grand-Lac type. They discuss 16 instances almost all of which the Dellucs consider 'elementary' in style. The figures are

complete but schematic yet to some degree identifiable as male. Distinguishing varying characteristics among these figures, they point to bent knees at the caves of Sous-Grand-Lac, Saint-Cirq, Combarelles, Altamira, Los Hornos and Villars, remarking on the same feature in portable art from Mas d'Azil, Murat, Isturitz and Lourdes. The arms are lifted forward in figures in the cave art of Sous-Grand-Lac, Combarelles and Saint-Cirq, as well as in portable art at Isturitz and Mas d'Azil. The long muzzle of such figures at La Magdeleine, Combarelles and Commarque suggests a bestialization of the human form. Some clearly have a penis, for instance, at Sous-Grand-Lac, the 'stick figure' from The Pit at Lascaux, Saint-Cirq, Pech Merle, Gabillou, Combarelles, Trois Frères, Gourdan and a bone 'semi-rondelle' piece of portable art from Mas d'Azil. A few may have tails, for instance at Sous-Grand-Lac, Pech Merle and Los Hornos. Some may be pierced with arrows, such as at Sous-Grand-Lac, Cougnac and Pech Merle. The Sous-Grand-Lac figure is more detailed and, the Dellucs suggest, is comparable to engravings at La Marche which I discuss later. Clearly, this representational type has a varying range of features representing what can be seen in perception. Nonetheless, it belongs to the schematic 'chain analytical style' and the lower part of the body is treated 'summarily' (Delluc and Delluc 1971).[7]

Among the list of figures of the Sous-Grand-Lac type only a very few caves have more than one complete male figure. Groenen (2000) points out that there are a number of 'scenes' in addition to what is often considered the highly unusual case of The Pit at Lascaux with its one 'stick figure'. Nonetheless, even if the claim by Delluc and Delluc (*Hominides*) that there is only one male human figure in any one cave in the Dordogne region were not tenable, they are certainly right to emphasize the parsimony of human representations in contrast to animal figures. They also remark on their spatial remoteness, as they are typically found in the centre (already far from the exterior) or in the depths of caves.

There are also numerous fairly realistically depicted isolated body parts (Fuentes 2020). I distinguish these from incomplete figures on the grounds that the latter are clearly suggestive of a whole even though some parts—e.g. heads, facial features and feet—are missing. While isolated parts can be considered as realistic reproductions of parts of the body, they are not realist insofar as—like the specifically sexual parts discussed above—they are detached from their normal bodily context.

Isolated heads are sometimes referred to as 'ghosts' or 'phantoms' (Fuentes 2015). At best, they operate on the limits of realism and may be considered so ephemeral as not to represent human beings at all. 'Masks' are further candidates for inclusion in human representations. When combined with a schematic human body, in the past they have been considered realist, perhaps portraying some ritual practice. This interpretation is now considered doubtful (Fuentes 2015). Especially when masks occur in isolation—as at

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7    Marc Groenen (2000) discusses further instances of stylistically distinctive male figures including 'the man with the Mohican' at Ker de Massat and a bearded man at Rouffignac, as well as the fascinating 'pendaloque' portable art from the abri of Raymonden. We should additionally mention the human face, probably male, at Bernifal.

Altamira—it seems more likely they operate as part of a symbolic lexicon where representations operate on the threshold of signs, as Vialou (1997) suggests for vulva.

The numerous hand-prints in cave art are undoubtedly human as they are imprints of actual hands. These stretch from the Gravettian period, for instance, at Gargas in the Pyrenées through to the more recent prehistoric as at Cueva de las Manas in Argentina. Vialou (1997) suggests that negative hands are 'shadows' rather than reproductions of body parts. This is because they are made by spaying paint *around* the hand so as to produce an outline. I would add that they are hardly realist as they are detached from their bodily context. Are hand-prints representations at all? Arguably, they are, rather, marks of the real presence of humans.

Much attention has been paid to what are called 'hybrid' figures combining animal and human features, for instance, the Magdalenian 'sorcerer' from Les Trois Frères in the Pyrenées. These may also be included within the range of human representations, although clearly their status in relation to the human is—and presumably was intended to be—problematic as they create a being that could not be perceived in unenhanced experience. They are also very rare (Groenen 2000; Fuentes 2015: 182). A further potential form of indirect human representation is anthropomorphism where animals are given human characteristics, for instance certain of the bison in the Salon Noir at Niaux are considered to have human facial expressions (Bonnet Balazut 2014). Meanwhile, some bison at Les Trois Frères and at nearby Fontanet are portrayed with human legs (Vialou 1997). None of these could be considered realist, even though they are made up of parts that can be considered realistic.

In sum, we have seen that although human figures in cave art are relatively few, representations of the human are rich in diversity. Moreover, although direct and indirect representations of humans taken together are still not as numerous as animals, they are not merely marginal. We should not simply assume that just because there are fewer human figures than animals and signs, they are less significant. A solitary human figure may have had a certain power. But whatever may be the significance of these various representations of the human, they are very rarely—and never entirely—realist. In the next section I propose an alternative thesis aimed to make sense of how the human is represented in cave art.

## 4. 'Making-Remote' as an Alternative to Realism: How Cave Art Presents the Human

Building on the phenomenological analysis and the archaeological evidence put forward in the previous two sections, I now initiate the concept of 'making-remote'. Human representations are usually spatially remote due to their position deep within caves (Dellucs and Dellucs *Hominides*). It goes without saying they are also temporally remote. In contrast to these familiar connotations of 'remoteness', the concept of 'making-remote' aims to capture how human representations present perceptual reality through forms of distancing that put in question their status as realist.

In Section 2, I established a phenomenological account of perception as entailing flow between surging-forth and remoteness within appearance. My concept of 'making-remote'

identifies a specifically artistic strategy that brings the flow within appearance into view by representing what is perceived as remote. I now argue that the range of human representations established in Section 3 deploy distancing techniques that render the human at the same time unfamiliar and recognizable. Such strategies—which can also be found in more recent art—show up an ongoing process that, from a phenomenological perspective, is characteristic of the underlying dynamic of perception. That cave art's 'making-remote' was intentional—even though we cannot know the contents of those intentions—is evidenced by the fact that within the same tradition animals are presented so naturalistically.[8]

'Making-remote' in cave art's representations of the human includes a variety of representational strategies ranging from partial and symbolic representations that only barely resemble perceptual appearance, through representations that schematically show what appears in perception, all the way to near-realist figures where what appears is marked by the non-appearance of features that would appear within perception.[9] In all these cases the human appears as present and visible, yet at the same time remote. Sexual parts are likely to have been abbreviations for something that does not appear, whether the whole body or the act they symbolize. Schematic outlines of male or female bodies resemble the perceived only minimally, also through abbreviation. Isolated bodily parts, ghost and masks are appearances that display they are *only* partial. Hybrids show what *could not* appear in perception in that *too much* appears. Even near-realist representations as at La Magdeleine, Le Roc-aux-Sorciers and Laussel show not only what appears but the withdrawal of something characteristic of the human within perception—the face.[10] In these various ways, all representations of the human in cave art discussed in the previous section operate liminally on thresholds within appearance through strategies of 'making-remote'.

In Section 2, I further introduced Merleau-Ponty's critique of the objectivist account of perception as standing in a static one-to-one correspondence with the real. Merleau-Ponty argues that the real is discoverable only through fluctuations within appearance, for instance, variations within colours or, as in Husserl's example, acoustically. These examples clarify the phenomenological model of the real by invoking artworks and inform my response to archaeological debates about the realism of human representations in cave art. My thesis of 'making-remote' suggests that the various strategies deployed in cave art's human representations shows an awareness of perception's ongoing process.

We now need to consider what would be an appropriate standard for artistic realism within discussions of cave art. It would be misleading to impose on late Palaeolithic art a standard external to the norms it exhibits. An internal norm for realism is, nonetheless, available in naturalist representations of animals that are often so detailed and expressive they appear alive. While these are not necessarily copies of what is perceived outside the

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8    Moreover, in the next section we will see that within the same tradition—but outside of caves—humans were portrayed realistically.

9    In the next section I will argue that the most near-realist of these do not strictly speaking belong to cave art.

10    I do not include hand-prints in this list as I consider them marks of presence not representations, realist or otherwise.

cave, they resemble how real animals are seen (Azéma 2009). In contrast, although Sous-Grand-Lac figures and Gönnersdorf profiles reference anatomical detail they do not show bodies as they appear to a viewer in perception, nor do they show expression.

In what follows it is crucial to bear in mind that my analysis of human representations encompasses *all* modes of representation of the human across the entire temporal span of the late Palaeolithic, although only in cave art. My concentration on cave art arises from my conviction that it offers a distinctive perspective on the human through, as I have just argued, a variety of ways of 'making-remote'. While I believe that within the late Palaeolithic 'making-remote' is not restricted to cave art, it is much more apparent there. In contrast, for instance, sculptures of humans from the Gravettian (approximately 29–22,000 BP) are corporeal embodied beings, even though they rarely have individualized features.

Oscar Fuentes, an important reference for human representations in the late Palaeolithic, focuses principally on what he calls 'human silhouettes' on all supports and only within the Magdalenian period (18,000–11,000 BP). Silhouettes are representations of the human recognizable as human figures. Fuentes' range of reference thus already shifts the focus towards realism, just as my broader range shifts it away from realism. He concludes that 'human silhouettes are more of the realist than the non-realist type during the Magdalenian' (Fuentes, 2015: 183). He bases his claim for the predominance of realism on a well-established archaeological convention which identifies 'basic' human characteristics—principally arms and legs placed along the sides of the body, circular head-shape and a straight spine whatever the body-position—as well as various complementary characteristics—including nasal shape and bodily hair. For Fuentes the minimum criteria for a representation qualifying as human is posture indicating 'a human attitude' and at least one basic feature (174). Insofar as the intention was 'to outline a human silhouette' these factors qualify a representation as realist (176). Sous-Grand-Lac figures typically have an array of basic and complementary features, presented, Fuentes says with 'anatomical exactitude' (177). However, we would not consider a portrayal of a woman by Picasso realist just because it has upright stature and range of 'basic' human characteristics, including for instance, an eye, an ear and a nose in roughly the right positions.

Drawing on Leroi-Gourhan (1992), Fuentes's typology of human representations distinguishes 'realist figurative', 'non-realist figurative' and 'stylised figurative'. Fuentes further distinguishes within 'realist figurative' two sub-types: 'simplified figurative' of the Sous-Grand-Lac type and 'expressive figurative' found principally at the site of La Marche (Poitou-Charentes, France). The representations from La Marche are considerably more detailed, expressive and realist than the Sous-Grand-Lac figures.

All 'types' are in some sense artificial, as Fuentes is aware (176). This means that any grouping among them requires explanation. For him, Sous-Grand-Lac figures belong to a very simplified version of realism, which he sees as a 'purification', not a deformation of the human figure, which is the mark of non-realist figures (176). I agree they should not be regarded as deformations. However, I contend that the extremity of their simplification takes them beyond the limits of realism to schematization, especially in contrast to many animal representations from the same period.

Fuentes' grouping together of 'simplified' and 'expressive' figurative is critical for his conclusion that realism is predominant. Putting them on the same side of the typological border tips the statistical balance towards realism. An alternative strategy of considering 'simplified realism' as *not*—or at least only marginally—realist would limit the degree to which realism is operative in late Palaeolithic art.

So long as it is not assumed that figurative realism and abstraction are incompatible—especially given that Fuentes and I focus on different ranges of human representations, as well as different temporal periods—it is not necessary to conclude his concentration on the expressive figurative is incompatible with my thesis of 'making-remote' within a broader view of the diverse strategies deployed in late Palaeolithic art. Nonetheless, these two approaches lead to quite different conclusions on the predominance of realism. Whereas his focus on expressive realism emphasizes resemblance to perception, my concept of 'making-remote' suggests more complexity within how the human was represented.

## 5. Rock-Shelters on the Threshold of Cave Art: Public and Domestic Rock-Art

Might not the quantity and sheer quality of the evidence for realism at La Marche undermine my account of human representations in cave art? In this section, I address the challenge posed to my thesis of making-remote by the expressive figurative, which is so important for Fuentes' claim that realism is predominant within human representations.

At La Marche in Poitou-Charente a sizeable quantity of detailed and highly individuated engravings of humans, as well as many more of animals were discovered on stone slabs. Some are more caricatural, other extremely realistic. Among approximately 2,000 engraved stones, 150 have representations of human bodies and faces. Bodies are portrayed as moving, clothed, wearing jewellery and with expressions such as smiling. One third of these are identifiable as to their sex. Some are bearded males. The majority are female, although these include vulva as well as 'portraits' (Musée de Préhistoire de Lussac-les-Chateaux 2020). The realist figures are almost unique.[11] However, in evoking maternity the female figures are comparable to those at Roc-aux-Sorciers (*op. cit.*, 34). Fuentes (2015) argues that art at La Marche should be seen as belonging to a regionally distinct 'expressive realism' concentrated at the sites of Poitou-Charentes.

The first consideration in answering this potential challenge to the thesis of making-remote is that La Marche's engravings are considered as belonging to portable art, not to cave art which is parietal. The slabs almost certainly remained *in situ*, thus the engravings were never part of the rock wall. Admittedly cave art makes use not only of walls but also of ceilings and floors. Much floor-art has been lost due to wear-and-tear, including as a result of archaeological excavations. Current practice ensures that floor surfaces are protected by scaffolding as well as through restriction of access. We probably will never know how much floor-art has been lost. Hence, the stone slabs at La Marche are not

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11    See Lacey et al. (2018) on the nearby site of Les Fadets.

disqualified as cave art simply by their position underfoot. Nonetheless, these engravings were not directly inscribed on the floor of a cave. It is at least possible that at La Marche the fact that these engravings were not inscribed in the primary rock structure was significant for the themes depicted. Different relations to rock and placement within sites are likely to have been significant for these people for whom stone was a primary material. However, there are many convergences between portable and cave art (See Section 3). Modern classificatory distinctions are not sufficient to rebut the challenge to 'making-remote' posed by La Marche.

A further development in responding to this challenge is required. La Marche is a rock-shelter—a site of habitation—not a deep cave. It has been reliably established that deep caves were not inhabited. The entrances to some caves—e.g. Altamira—were inhabited, but usually habitation sites lay at some distance e.g. La Vache across the valley from Niaux.

Habitation sites were often symbolically marked. Rock-shelters such as Roc-aux-Sorciers as well as Laussel—where Venus figures were also sculpted in the rock-face—are dramatic examples. The shallow cave of La Vache, meanwhile, was inhabited but lacks figurative parietal art. Nonetheless, at this habitation site was found a remarkable horde of portable art, some of it deposited--or perhaps thrown away—along with bones from small game consumed by inhabitants. There are also tracings on the walls of the cave—'finger-fluting'—further into the cave yet within easy distance of the hearths. Gönnersdorf was an open-air habitation site where many Venus sculptures and engravings on stone slabs have been found. The distinctiveness of deep caves is not that they alone were symbolically charged and rather that they were used *solely* for symbolic purposes. The title of 'sanctuary' is often used to express the distinctive character of deep caves. Cave art's separation from everyday life allows us to better understand why they may have displayed a heightened degree of 'making-remote'.

In their study of the major rock-shelter site at Roc-aux-Sorciers, Ludmila Iakovleva and Geneviève Pinçon analyze the comparative attention to anatomical detail in five Venus figures at the site.[12] All lack heads and upper limbs. The authors argue convincingly that these figures are realist and individuated insofar as they show different stages of female maturity: prior to child-bearing, during pregnancy and, potentially, after multiple births. But they also remark that while the figures appear realist from one perspective, they appear stylized from another. Consequently, they suggest these figures can be considered as belonging to 'feminine signs'. Commenting on the convention of partial representations of humans to which these belong, the authors suggest this could have had a significance in contrast to animal representations which are usually complete (Iakovleva and Pinçon 1997: 140–43). Stylization—operating as signs and through incompleteness—complicates the realist status of these figures. Echoing their account, Kozlowski remarks in his 'Preface' that we should not assume an evolution in human representations from realism towards schematism and rather see 'parallel figurations' revealing different facets of the Magdalenian (1997: 7).

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12    Other abris with striking human representations include Abri de Raymonden, Laugerie Basse, Roc de Sers and Teyjat.

Vialou (1997) remarks that the absence of heads and detailed faces in sculptures and parietal art from both Magdalenian and Gravettian periods was not due to lack of skill and must, rather, have been due to a 'refusal' all the more evident because of the naturalism of animal figures and the detailed depiction of the bodies of Venus sculptures. Nonetheless, in his view, even later female forms which show an 'abstract schematisation' never cease to be feminine and human. The idea that there may have been a 'refusal' to portray head and face at the same time as emphasizing the feminine seems very pertinent to the complex artistic strategies displayed at Roc-aux-Sorciers. Vialou's 'refusal' is a version of what I am calling 'making-remote'.

If it is reliably established that near-complete and near-realist human figures are principally found in rock-shelters and not in deep caves, the deployment of realism may be site-specific.[13] Pinçon suggests a tentative reason for a distinction between two modes of art at Roc-aux-Sorciers. Whereas the Venuses were accessible to all, engravings on rock slabs found at the same site were not seen (Pinçon 2012).[14] As Bourdier (2010, 346) puts it, the friezes at Roc-aux-Sorciers were 'public art'. The same could be argued for parietal sculptures at other rock-shelters such as Laussel. Rock-shelter art at Roc-aux-Sorciers represents female bodies as similar to how we perceive them. This is why Fuentes includes them within 'expressive figurative' realism. However, at the same time the absence of heads or facial features are ways of 'making-remote'. Thus, human representations at this rock-shelter operate liminally on a border between cave art's remoteness from perception and the more directly realist and domestic art of La Marche. This, I would suggest, puts in question Fuentes' typological grouping of La Marche along with the Venuses—although not the engravings on slabs—at Roc-aux-Sorciers. Domestic art at La Marche deploys 'making-remote' little if at all in contrast to the complex stylistic strategies of public art at rock-shelters. The latter lie on a threshold between the realism of domestic art and the remoteness of human representations in deep caves.

Breuil (1952) remarks on stylistic similarities between La Magdeleine and Roc-aux-Sorciers. It is significant, he suggests, that natural light reaches as far as its Venus bas-reliefs. As Merleau-Ponty (2002/1945) establishes, lighting is essential for perception. The relative degree and quality of lighting is highly significant for the play of appearance in all parietal art whether in deep caves or in rock-shelters. The visibility of representations at rock-shelters varied under a range of natural lighting conditions (Iakovleva and Pinçon 1997: 88–89; Bourdier 2010: 328). More dramatically, the play between extreme dark and flickering torchlight is constitutive of what appears and what does not appear in deep caves (Groenen 2016; Pettitt 2016). Because La Magdeleine is closer in its lighting conditions to rock-shelters than to deep caves, I think it is justifiable to associate it with Roc-aux-Sorciers and Laussel and their near-realist human representations. What matters is not whether a site technically qualifies as a cave, but how it was used and how it was experienced.

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13     Fuentes (2015) mentions the relevance of sites as well as regionality for the incidence of realism.

14     A small number of realist male representations, similar to those at La Marche, have been found on slabs at Roc-aux-Sorciers (Iakovleva and Pinçon 1997: 137–40).

My suggestion is not that the use of sites or access to natural light wholly determined the choice of supports or the contents of representations. Bedheilac, a deep cave in the Pyrénées, has engraved stone floor slabs although no human representations. Gönnersdorf female profiles have been found not only on slabs at the eponymous open-air habitation site but also on the walls of deep caves such as Combarelles. However, I have shown that there are patterns of significance in the predominance of making-remote in deep caves, as well as in degrees of realism within public and domestic art. It seems plausible that these peripatetic people, finely attuned to their environments, would have found the distinction between habitable and inhospitable sites, as well as between natural light and deep dark caves, significant and that they would have expressed this in their artistic choices.

Regional and geological considerations are also likely to have played a role for peoples who identified closely with their area of influence and its natural features. The geology of the Gönnersdorf area—as with other northern and central European regions, but also Poitou-Charentes—does not afford the deep caves prevalent in southwest France and northern Spain. While it is clear these regions were not cut off from one another—that the Gönnersdorf tradition also belongs to Lalinde in the Bordeaux region demonstrates this—it is likely that regions not adjacent to deep caves transformed cultural practices, for instance by transferring them to different supports (Gönnersdorf) or by developing different styles (La Marche). Further development of these complex considerations goes beyond the remit of this paper.

While La Marche's realism may be explicable by its regional situation and domestic context, it nonetheless has a more general significance. Firstly, it demonstrates the diversity of late Palaeolithic art, as well as the importance of taking regional variation into account (Fuentes 2020). Moreover, it demonstrates that these people were capable of realistic artistic representations of the human. Not only was human representation not prohibited: it flourished as realist under specific regional and site-specific conditions. The artists of La Marche were not operating in splendid isolation. They were certainly in close contact with other sites in the same region, particularly with Roc-aux-Sorciers where the same Lussac-Angles style of spearhead has been found (Musée de Préhistoire de Lussac-les-Chateaux 2020). They no doubt also entered into relations of exchange with peoples further to the south where the culture of deep caves flourished. These were the same people with, broadly speaking, the same cognitive, technical and social capacities.

The evidence from La Marche, thus, indirectly supports my thesis that 'making-remote' was an intentional strategy.[15] If the people of La Marche could depict humans in a realist way, then so too—if they had so chosen and if they had developed the necessary skills—could have those whose habitation sites were closer to deep caves. Both realism and 'making-remote' were within the compass of the late Palaeolithic mind.

## 6. Making-Remote: Perceiving Through a Glass Darkly

I have argued that representations of the human in cave art exhibit intentional strategies of 'making-remote', by which I mean that what appears is represented as

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15    For a discussion of intentionality in cave art, see [Hughes (2021)].

remote from everyday perception as we normally construe it, although not from the underlying process of perception. I have proposed that more realist styles at some rock-shelters—principally La Marche and Roc-aux-Sorciers—could be dependent on site-specific considerations allied to the combination of habitation with domestic or public art (Bourdier 2010; Pinçon 2012). The practice of 'making-remote' was not restricted to deep caves, however the latter were especially conducive to intense perceptual experiences. Cut off from normal life and from natural light, all artistic representations are likely to have had a heightened affect. In such an uncanny environment, human representations must have stood out both on account of their parsimony and their stylistic minimalism.

Cave art exhibits the late Palaeolithic mind exploring various possibilities in respect of artistic representation. Whereas representations of animals principally make their subject-matter appear in as recognizable and as lively a fashion as possible, representations of the human make their subject-matter appear remote. This arises through various experiments in representation at thresholds between figuration and abstraction. We have seen that realistic figuration was within their compass. Therefore, presenting a figure as abstract, abbreviated or incomplete demonstrates an understanding of the *function* of representation as showing the world in different ways. But why principally with respect to human representations? I suggest that 'making-remote' reveals the capacity to treat the human and the self as 'other'. I thus agree with Fuentes (2015: 190) that human representations are expressions of a form of self-consciousness, but disagree with his suggestion that the overall tendency in the Magdalenian was towards individualism (Fuentes 2015: 189). Fuentes himself references Raphael (1986/1940: 31) suggesting the predominance of anonymous figures expressed a wish to preserve the identity of the group. Nor do I agree that only expressive realist 'portraits' confront humans with an image of ourselves and 'our own fragility' (Fuentes 2015: 188). Humans encounter ourselves not only through finding a simulacrum for the self, but also through experiencing both the self and others as 'other'. Making-remote is a way of capturing differentiation and non-identity within human experience. I also do not agree with Vialou (1997) for whom the 'singularity' of human representations signifies a late Palaeolithic view of humans as outside nature. Animalized human representations (e.g. 'bestialized' figures in portable art from Isturitz) and animal representations with human expressions (e.g. bison at Niaux) may be statistically rare, but they nonetheless show that in the Palaeolithic imaginary animal and human overlapped in complex ways (Descola 2005). For now I will simply suggest that 'making-remote' expressed a self-awareness that was part of an ontology encompassing overlapping differences and continuities between human and animal.

While it is crucial to recognize the distance of our perspective from that of the Palaeolithic, I hope my development of the idea of 'making-remote' will contribute to a better understanding of why human representations in cave art offer something recognizable—something capable of touching us—even though 'through a glass darkly'. Cave art offers insights into strategies deployed in subsequent art, as well as into the experience of perception and how we perceive ourselves.

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Fiona Hughes
University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, UK
fhughes@essex.ac.uk

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