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Introduction

Kubrick and Mitteleuropa, or, a Source of Fascination and Anxiety

Jeremi Szaniawski and Nathan Abrams

Mitteleuropa played a fundamental, if understated, role in Stanley Kubrick's life and oeuvre. There were many reasons for this, including his own Central European Jewish background: as the director told Michel Ciment, he was of Austrian, Romanian, and Polish descent (Ciment 1983: 153). And indeed, although his parents, Jacob and Gertrude, were both born in New York City, his grandparents had all immigrated from Central Europe at the turn of the century. His paternal grandparents, Elias Kubrick and Rosa Spiegelblatt, came from towns in the Galicia region that are now located in modern-day Ukraine. As for Gertrude's parents, Celia Siegel and Samuel Perveler, they were both born in Austria.¹

Kubrick was married three times, each time to women of Central European lineage: Toba Metz was Jewish American with a Latvian father; Ruth Sobotka was born in Vienna, Austria, before emigrating to the United States as a teenager; and the director's third and long-standing marriage was to Christiane Harlan, who was from Germany. Kubrick adopted Christiane's eldest daughter, Katharina, and had two further daughters with her—Anya and Vivian. All of them played an important role in his filmmaking. He also employed Christiane's brother Jan as his executive producer for over three decades, as well as Jan's sons for various jobs on his films over the years.

Before proceeding with the manifold implications and influences it had on Stanley Kubrick's oeuvre, it is important to sketch out a picture of the complex entity and concept that is Mitteleuropa. Indeed, the latter is several things all at once: a geographic region (roughly speaking, the Austro-Hungarian Empire—present day Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Romania, and Western Ukraine);² an authentic geopolitical and historical entity; a specific lo-

cal imaginary steeped in history; and a complex blend of cultures and identities. Characterizing its spirit involves embracing this rich tapestry that binds together various nations and ethnicities. At its heart, Mitteleuropa was always a crossroads. Geographically situated between Western and Eastern Europe, it saw the ebbs and flows of empires, ideologies, and migrations. The Holy Roman Empire, the Habsburg Monarchy, and the tumultuous twentieth century, with its wars and shifting boundaries, have all left their mark on Mitteleuropa. As a result, it has come to be associated with a spirit of resilience and adaptability, with its people having learned to redefine themselves amidst changing circumstances. Culturally, the region can be considered a mosaic. It is a place where German, Slavic, Judaic, Hungarian, and Romani influences (among others) intertwine. The cities of Prague, Budapest, Vienna, Krakow, and Lviv (also formerly known as Lwów/Lemberg) are testament to this to this day, with their Gothic cathedrals, Baroque palaces, synagogues, and Art Nouveau buildings standing as symbols of a shared yet diverse architectural heritage. The literature, music, and art of Mitteleuropa reflect a deep introspection, often resulting from the existential struggles of its history. Writers like Franz Kafka, musicians like Béla Bartók, and artists like Alfons Mucha, to mention but three among many other exemplars, have all contributed to a vibrant cultural narrative that speaks as much of unity and individuality as it does of diversity and collectivity.

Undeniably, Mitteleuropa is to be associated with multi-ethnic, multi-lingual empires. Religion, too, played a pivotal role in shaping its spirit. While largely Christian, the region witnessed the coexistence of Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy, and Judaism. This religious diversity, while sometimes a source of conflict, also led to periods of fruitful coexistence and mutual enrichment, with synagogues standing alongside churches, and religious festivals becoming integral to the region's calendar. Another characteristic of Mitteleuropa has been its mix of intellectual fervor and curiosity. Throughout history, the region has been a hub of scientific discovery, philosophical discourse, and political thought. From the universities of Heidelberg and Krakow to the coffeehouses of Vienna, ideas have been exchanged, debated, and refined in this geographical, multicultural area. The spirit of inquiry, combined with a certain introspection borne from its history, made Central Europe a cradle of thinkers and innovators. It also saw a refinement in a spirit of congeniality that elevated a form of *savoir-vivre* to an art form (think only of the Viennese café culture), but also sometimes devolved into forms of nostalgic parochialism. Besides all these semi-clichés, one should hurry to add that the most defining aspect of Mitteleuropa's spirit is its sense of paradox. As is attested to in its political

and cultural history, this region where East meets West, where tradition meets modernity, more than any other in Europe, cultivated complexity and contradiction. Its people are fiercely nationalistic to this day, yet also deeply aware of their shared history and common destiny. It is a place of both tragic histories and scenic beauty, where the scars of wars and revolutions coexist with breathtaking landscapes and architectural marvels. This juxtaposition, often poignant, gives the region its unique flavor. There is little wonder, then, that the spirit of Mitteleuropa and its complex blend of history, culture, and identity, appealed greatly to Stanley Kubrick. His whole career was likewise marked by a spirit of resilience, insatiable curiosity, drive, as well as adaptability, and a deep sense of introspection. But for Kubrick, who scarcely ever traveled to continental Europe, only spent a short time in Austria,³ and never set foot in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Ukraine, or Romania, Mitteleuropa, however mediated, must have served as a fantastic, quasi-mythological setting, an imagined and perhaps idealized or romanticized place of family origins, where diverse influences met, creating a rich tapestry that was both unique and universal.

At the same time (and very much as in Kubrick, for whom one image or idea always conceals another one, and for whom no emotion is ever simplistic), what was once a glorious “Mitteleuropa” later became the geographical area where Adolf Hitler was born, and the place where the Holocaust took place. Even prior to the Shoah, this place of thriving culture and tolerance had also known dark hours, “a hive of social and religious bigotry, chronic anti-Semitism and Austrian repression and prejudice,” to borrow the words of John Le Carré about 1920s Vienna (quoted in Mikics 2020: 189–90). As a twentieth century Jewish artist, born in New York in 1928, Kubrick grew up as Hitler rose to power in Germany and as the war raged in Europe, and he was all-too-keenly aware of these events: the radio in his home gave constant updates, and war remained a topic of conversation in his family. Aged fifteen in 1943, he was alert to the Allied advances, German defeats, and the fate of the Jews in Europe. This was emphasized, after the war, by his marriage to Christiane—the niece of Veit Harlan, the director of the notoriously antisemitic *Jud Süß* (1940)—whose family background had a major influence on Kubrick. “I share the fairly widespread fascination with the horror of the Nazi period,” he once said, as well as, “I’ve never seen a history of Nazi Germany I didn’t like” (Kubrick, quoted in Frewin 2005: 518). This would naturally lead him to consider the possibility of making a film about the Holocaust set in Poland, which, although never produced, reached the point of going into development, as discussed at length in Nathan Abrams’s chapter.

Kubrick's Holocaust project, his intended "postcard to his forefathers," never got made.⁴ Kubrick was obsessed with the catastrophe that befell Jewish people during World War II, yet he never straightforwardly addressed the question of Jewishness in his films.⁵ Instead, Kubrick spent his career addressing his cultural heritage by indirection and by telling stories, as Abrams put it, in a "subsurface" manner. Likewise, and perhaps for very similar reasons, Kubrick, despite being obsessed and fascinated by the broader culture of Central Europe, astonishingly never set any of his films in Mitteleuropa (save for a few select scenes in *Barry Lyndon*, and even these are not strictly speaking set in Mitteleuropa, but rather in the directly contiguous Prussian Empire). All the while, and in a manner that is slightly less obfuscated than the question of Jewishness, Kubrick kept engaging more or less indirectly with Mitteleuropean motifs throughout his career. His final film, *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), is nothing if not both Kubrick's swansong and a love song to Mitteleuropa, his transposition of the Vienna of his beloved Arthur Schnitzler's story to his native New York City, but filmed (like all his films as of 1962) in the city in which he spent the majority of his personal life and professional career—London.

From his first feature films, Kubrick was influenced and fascinated by the central Europe of his roots. *Fear and Desire* (1953), *Killer's Kiss* (1955), and *The Killing* (1956) are imbued with existential and psychoanalytical motifs drawing upon Sigmund Freud. Furthermore, *Killer's Kiss* and *The Killing* were films noir and thus belonged to a tradition created by German and Austrian filmmakers (most of them Jewish) who had fled Nazi Germany (see Brook 2009). *Paths of Glory* (1957), although set in France, was shot in Germany, near Munich, which is where the director met Christiane. The humor found in *Lolita* (1962) and *Dr. Strangelove, or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964) was tinted with Kubrick's (mediated) European and (unmediated) Jewish sensibility, and both films betrayed the European influences of such creatives as Vladimir Nabokov (who spent a few years in Germany, knew German, and like many Central European intellectuals, ended up moving to the US) and Ken Adam. Fascist imagery, meanwhile, can be found in *Spartacus* (1960) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) (Sontag 1975). The unrealized *Napoleon* would have, of course, been set in part in Central Europe,⁶ as was its "offshoot" project, *Barry Lyndon* (1975). Images of Nazism are featured in *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), while the director's 1980 horror masterpiece, *The Shining*, in tone, influence and even setting—the grand spa hotel—makes it one of the most Mitteleuropean American films of the late twentieth century.

As emerges from this cursory overview, Kubrick's relationship to Mitteleuropa was complex and must have been ambivalent. On the one hand, the region represented an Arcadian realm, a paradise lost associated with a sense of prelapsarian community and belonging, closely associated with notions such as home and family. Yet, at the same time, there is an angst that unfailingly accompanies these positive associations. This is clear, when looking at his films, in the way in which the lure or promise of something *heimlich*, related to the home, or to the family, is inseparable from a disturbing sense of the *unheimlich*, an uncanny dread that mixes with deep disillusionment and suffering. One can take the example of *Barry Lyndon* or *The Shining*, where sumptuous visual beauty is accompanied by a sense of doom and failure. Ultimately, though, this in no way imparts a dark or defeated tone to the films: Kubrick's resolve and ingenuity, the self-professed feeling of unrivaled satisfaction he described in overcoming a process akin to "writing *War and Peace* in a bumper car"⁷ account for the exhilaration and joy that these films can produce in the viewer. This, if anything, would constitute a vibrantly Mitteleuropean paradox, which we must acknowledge in the films Kubrick made, in the complex affect they carry, and in the effect they have on audiences to this day.

All these aspects of Kubrick's work, and many more, are investigated at length in the pages of this book. Many of the key figures of Mitteleuropean life and culture appear, including, but not limited to, Schnitzler, Freud, Kafka, Bruno Bettelheim, Otto Rank, Bruno Schulz, Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig, Hermann Hesse, Erich Maria Remarque, and Alois Riegl, to name but a select few. We can easily understand, for all the reasons listed above, the fascination that Kubrick harbored for the land of his ancestors, a crucible of cultures that produced some of his favorite works of art. But we can also consider his lineage and influences from a rather different angle; namely, as the reason why Kubrick remained an anomaly in the contemporaneous Anglo-American film landscape: a late modernist among cinematic auteurs, long after the idiom had been superseded by postmodernism in literature and film.⁸ In her chapter, Brigitte Peucker teases out the crucial influence of Franz Kafka—both in style and content—on Kubrick's modernism. Kafka was the epitome of the modernist writer to be sure, but he also represented and was a product of a Jewish Mitteleuropean culture at the turning point between tradition and modernity, and accordingly, enriched and torn by this very situation. Furthermore, Mitteleuropa is nothing if not the epitome of the imperial ethos (a place where the Holy Roman Empire and the Habsburg family reigned), and as has been well known at

least since Fredric Jameson elucidated it (1992: 155–229), the late imperial style and the imperial phase of capitalism used modernism as its idiom, an idiom to which Kubrick remained faithful until the very end. Indeed, even as a film such as *The Shining* can be interpreted as a postmodern palimpsest of earlier filmic references (Cocks 2020), it remains staunchly married to the impetus and thrust of the modernist work of art—one which resists its own commodification. And while *Eyes Wide Shut* might be regarded as a postmodern and playful transposition of turn-of-the-century Vienna to the turn-of-the-next-century New York City (and indeed it was released at the height of the wave of American postmodern cinema), it too remains a cryptic and mysterious maze of a text which parades under a mask of commercialism (the “erotic thriller”), all the while being as complex and modernist a text as Hollywood could ever produce in 1999. Kubrick’s fascination, and even fealty to Mitteleuropa as not only a set of artists but also an entire spirit is in evidence here. In other words, Kubrick was not only invoking a story by Schnitzler, not only the literary canon and artistic tradition from which it emerged, but also that idiom which expressed more or less directly imperial ideology. The latter was informed by an ethos of sublime, and its vanished or passé nature was also what prompted an indispensable form of irony: the world Kubrick admired and channeled in his work, its past grandeur, had started to wane by World War I, and was all but gone by World War II. Mitteleuropa could only be evoked or invoked, recreated in the form of films, symbolic text, but not revisited. It thus makes perfect sense, even if it might at first seem paradoxical, that Kubrick rarely traveled to continental Europe after shooting *Paths of Glory* there. Perhaps this was due to his aversion to flying on commercial airplanes, or perhaps because the world and culture he knew from his grandparents’ and parents’ stories, from films and books, was largely gone. But he kept traveling to Mitteleuropa through the books he read and films he saw, and, of course—he perhaps more than any other filmmaker—through the most immediately recognizable and unfiltered Mitteleuropean aspect of his cinema: his use of music.

Kubrick’s Mitteleuropean Melodies

Kubrick has been noted for his employment of classical music (Gengaro 2013; McQuiston 2013), bringing the Viennese waltz of Johann Strauss Jr. to outer space and the whimsical music of Béla Bartók to a haunted hotel in Colorado. As

Peucker writes, “Kubrick’s films reveal a fixation with the writers and artists of the Habsburg monarchy; the ‘Blue Danube’ waltz and Strauss’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra* only momentarily seem out of place in the aural texture of *2001*.” Kubrick weaved patterns across time and space that all, somehow, seemed to point back to the moment and place he perhaps idealized, namely the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its immediate surroundings. We know from a childhood anecdote that Kubrick developed an absolute obsession with Prokofiev’s score for the Eisenstein film *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), playing it so much that his sister allegedly smashed the record on his head in aggravation (Kolker and Abrams 2024: 47). Music, an art so immediately affecting and so dear to Kubrick from an early age, then, can serve as our first and clearest point of entry into Kubrick’s obsession with Mitteleuropa.

This leads us to the following question: while there are clearly certain musical genres directly connected to the Austro-Hungarian court (Strauss’s waltzes a case in point), is there such a thing as *Mitteleuropean* music in the broader sense? Depending on where one stands, the question is either rhetorical or to be rejected outright. From a strictly musicological perspective, it is obvious that while early baroque music was begotten in Italy, it quickly developed in Germany and Austria, where it arguably outdid its earlier competitors in France and Italy, giving rise to classical music. Eastern European music itself would catch up later, but produced its share of tremendous exemplars in the second half of the nineteenth century. It certainly goes without saying that Mitteleuropa and the golden age of late classical/early romantic music (Mozart!) are practically one. The traditions that resisted or challenged these, like Italian opera, or Handel, were also picked up by Kubrick, but it is undeniable that the majority of composers whose work Kubrick used for his films came from Central and Eastern Europe, part of a ‘Mitteleuropean sphere of influence.’

While one can find the work of composers whose background, like Kubrick’s, was Central European Jewish (Gerald Fried a case in point), in some of his earlier works, it is really with *2001: A Space Odyssey* that Kubrick, after passing on Alex North’s original score, began to draw upon the repertoire of Central and Eastern European classical music in the fullest fashion. The works of Richard Strauss, Johann Strauss Jr., György Ligeti, and Aram Khachaturian are famously featured in the soundtrack of the film. Strauss Jr.’s piece, of course, is a waltz, and the waltz, although not exclusively a Central European form, developed at the Austro-Hungarian, German, and Prussian courts, as well as that of the Czars (we do

not, however, mean to imply that St Petersburg and Moscow belonged in Mitteleuropa, but rather were influenced by its glorious cultural exports). This fascination with the waltz links Kubrick with the cinema of Max Ophüls, perhaps his favorite filmmaker. As for the glorious pomp of Richard Strauss's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, it clearly connects with Friedrich Nietzsche and with the theme of the "reborn man," or perhaps the superman (Star Child) in the film. Khachaturian (whose adagio from the ballet *Gayaneh* is used in 2001), meanwhile, ties in with Kubrick's love of Prokofiev's music for Eisenstein's film, composed, like Khachaturian's piece, in the 1930s at the height of Stalinism in the Soviet Union. All the works mentioned above are used in an eminently choreographic way. Yet the case of Ligeti is quite different: the music is atonal and it is also difficult to identify as "Hungarian." However, we can discern in Ligeti's music a very specific sort of dread that contrasts with the ostentatious order and harmony of the music by pre-World War I composers. Ligeti himself often correlated these aspects of his work to Stalinist totalitarianism, which dialectically was an offshoot, or reaction, to the political wasteland left in Russia after World War I had finished precipitating the downfall of the empire. Likewise, Ligeti's identity as a Jewish composer echoes the Holocaust, in which many members of his family perished, and which as Shelley Baranowski identifies (2011) is a continuation, or dark descendent, of Prussian imperialism.

A Clockwork Orange, of course, places Beethoven front and center, as the protagonist, Alex De Large, idolizes "Ludwig Van" in the book, as well as in the film. Can Beethoven, with his Flemish lineage, be considered a composer somehow related to Mitteleuropa? Indeed he can, if only in the ways in which his work was in more direct dialogue with Haydn and Mozart than it was with Johann Sebastian Bach. No place in the world spawned more vibrant expressions of romantic music than Central Europe. The late Mozart was a progenitor of this current (his high classicism foreshadowing romanticism), and Beethoven became one of its early exemplars. But this is of course not the only way that Mitteleuropa appears in *A Clockwork Orange*: in the Burgess book as well as in the movie, Alex's English is called Nadsat, which includes "a passel of transmuted Russian words" (Mikics 2020: 115)—a form of oblique dialogue with nascent globalization, which we can also interpret as a nod to Mitteleuropa's plural cultures and multilingualism. Connotations of imperial and post-imperial internationalism cannot be ignored when discussing *A Clockwork Orange*, epitomized perhaps by the use of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" from his Ninth Symphony (which would later become the European

Union's unofficial anthem), and the ambitions of socialism attached to it, all of which Kubrick looked at with a mix of fascination and caution. We also note that apart from Beethoven, *A Clockwork Orange* mostly resorts to English (Elgar, Purcell) and Italian (Rossini) music, be it from original symphonic recordings, or sampled and recreated through Wendy Carlos's synthesizers. This is hardly surprising given the nature of the film, its rapport with lyrical music, and the fact that it takes place in England. This is yet another example, however, in which Kubrick utilized music in such a way that it was not necessarily period-accurate or geographically appropriate: what else can one say about the use of Mitteleuropean waltzes to circling spacecraft? Here, as everywhere else, it was the spirit, tone and atmosphere of these pieces that interested him first and foremost. But he was aware of the places they came from, and would comment upon this directly while discussing the use of music he made in his subsequent feature, *Barry Lyndon*.

Barry Lyndon begins in Ireland but takes place partly on the European continent. Here, Kubrick reached for nineteenth-century music for eighteenth-century scenes (Franz Schubert). In an interview with Michel Ciment, the director explained that eighteenth-century music lacked the sensitivity and emotion he needed in the famous scenes of the film for which he used the piano trio by Schubert (in short, he favored romantic music over more period-accurate classical music) (Kubrick quoted in Ciment 1983: 174). Schubert's music, and in particular, this piano trio, perfectly encapsulates the transition from the rigor of early classical music, still indebted to the baroque of Bach and Handel, to a more emotional, richly lyrical tone that we also find in the late Mozart. Kubrick also uses the music of Mozart, Bach, Vivaldi, and Paisiello in *Barry Lyndon* (more in keeping with the time period), but the most famous piece associated with the film is Handel's *Sarabande*. Handel was, of course, a naturalized English composer at the time of his glory, but he was born in Germany and made his name by importing the advanced tradition of German classical music to England. This can be clearly linked to the film's themes, as well as Kubrick's biography (an American Jew of Central European descent who later emigrated to England). In short, if not accurate chronologically, the soundtrack of *Barry Lyndon* espoused its protagonist's peregrinations, and while these were mostly on British soil, the soundtrack remained more firmly entrenched in Germany and Mitteleuropa in the broader sense.

No work by Kubrick has Mitteleuropa more cryptically yet pervasively written all over it than his following film, *The Shining*. Here, Kubrick used works by Hungarian composers Béla Bartók and György Ligeti, and by Polish composer Krzysztof

Penderecki for the soundtrack to the film. In Bartók's *Music for Percussion, Strings and Celesta*, we find Kubrick's highly choreographic approach (as in the scene where Jack looks at the maze model while Wendy and Danny are walking in the actual life-size hedge maze), and in *Lontano*, through Ligeti's atonality, the director's work with atmospheres (including horror) not unlike those of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Although *The Shining* is an American film based on an American book, it is known (particularly from the work of Geoffrey Cocks) that it can be interpreted as allegorically connecting with the Holocaust, with Native Americans as analogous to Jews and Americans of European descent as Nazis. Ligeti's music immediately echoes this (Cocks 2004). In Penderecki's music, we witness a combination of these tendencies and influences, but we must also note that Kubrick, in close collaboration with sound editor Gordon Stainforth, very often superimposed various snippets from Penderecki's works (*De Natura Sonoris* 1 and 2, *The Awakening of Jacob*, *Utrenya*, etc.), actually playing with and recutting Penderecki's music (which the composer was not very happy about, although he initially praised the film). In this volume, musicologist Krzysztof Kozłowski investigates the rapport between Penderecki and Kubrick, and how their works, careers, and conception of art echo one another: "Seeing and understanding, hearing and feeling—this is the shortest way to condense what is fundamental about Kubrick and Penderecki's programs." To this, we should add that both artists were also astute businessmen who harbored a love nearing devotion to their respective wives (third wife in Kubrick's case), and whose art made both their fame and (quite immense) fortune, owning lofty countryside estates. This is a fitting place for a telling anecdote: after Penderecki passed away in 2020, his wife sold their vast estate in Lusławice, outside of Krakow, which the couple had painstakingly restored to its nineteenth-century splendor over the decades. At the heart of the gorgeous grounds, we find a hedge labyrinth (built in the early 1990s) which, while different from that of *The Shining*, eerily resonates with the attentive viewer. At the heart of the maze(s), we find, literally or in an obscure, coded fashion, a Mitteleuropean secret, an enigma.

One would be hard pressed to find the work of Central European composers on the soundtrack of Kubrick's next film, *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), as there are none. And yet, in this film too, Kubrick remained faithful to Mitteleuropa influence. As David Mikics identified, the film is structured according to the sonata form, and Kubrick, comparing his Vietnam film to *Apocalypse Now* (1979), stated that Coppola's film "was like Wagner" and his own "like Mozart, precise and classical" (Mikics 2020: 166). And in his notes for his unrealized project *Aryan Papers*,



Figure 0.1. Promotional video, Europejskie Centrum Muzyki Krzysztofa Pendereckiego. Screen capture from YouTube by Jeremi Szaniawski.

as Abrams indicates, Kubrick had listed the Polish soldiers' song "My, Pierwsza Brygada."

Finally Kubrick opens his last film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, with another waltz, this time not by Strauss Jr., but by Dmitri Shostakovich. Abandoning the obvious choice of a waltz emanating from fin-de-siècle Vienna, like "The Blue Danube" in 2001, Kubrick went with a waltz melody (from *Jazz Suite Nr 2*) composed by a Russian under the Big Other's (Stalin) watchful eye. Its combination of the words "jazz" and "waltz" in its title united Kubrick's American and Austro-Hungarian heritages. Heard at the film's outset, during a montage of Bill's and Alice's workaday routine, and at the end of the film, this melancholy and mellifluous piece fits perfectly with the film's sense of longing, with the characters' vague and distant awareness of some grandeur past and lost, which is replayed in pastiche mode in present-day New York City. Shostakovich's waltz, with its mixture of sadness and gaiety, its circular shape and rhythm set in minor mode suggesting the worlds of circus and music hall echoes less Weimar Germany and the music of Kurt Weill than it does, indeed, the era in which Schnitzler wrote his novella. In stark contrast to the mellow Jazz Suite waltz, or Franz Liszt's dreamy and distantly ominous *Grey Clouds* for piano (heard in the morgue scene), Kubrick resorted also to a strident piece: for the third time in his career, he used Ligeti's music, having already done so for

the needs of *2001* and *The Shining*. In *Eyes Wide Shut*, he takes the single, pounding stroke on the piano (“a knife in Stalin’s heart,” the composer said) of *Musica Ricercata II: Mesto, Rigido e Cerimonale* (1950) to insert and reinforce a climate of oppression and fear into the film. (This was already indirectly hinted at, behind its melancholy tone, in the context of terror in which Shostakovich had composed his jazz waltz.) Performed by Kubrick’s nephew, Dominic Harlan, the Ligeti piece plays to memorable effect during Bill’s unmasking at the orgy, his return visit to its location, when he is being stalked on the street, when he reads about the dead prostitute, and when he returns home to find his mask lying on the pillow next to his sleeping wife. The combination of such diverse music is in dialogue with the layered and complex character of the film. The manner in which it translates the Vienna of the last years of the Austro-Hungarian empire into New York (both to equate and differentiate them), as well as pieces that parody, or, in a sense, vampirize the forms trendy of the time—the waltz—exhibit Kubrick’s depth of knowledge of a given subject, but also his relationship to both music and Mitteleuropa. This rapport could be considered both poignant and sincere (even sentimental), yet ironic. This pushing of boundaries between sentimental sincerity and bitterness and irony to the point of indistinguishability characterizes *Eyes Wide Shut* as much as it does Mitteleuropean (and its partly overlapping Slavic) sensibilities in music. For this reason alone, and even if it hadn’t been adapted from a Mitteleuropean ur-text, *Eyes Wide Shut*, like the vast majority of Kubrick’s output, carries Mitteleuropa in its very fabric, and the use of music is only the most explicit or obvious aspect of this lineage.

The Land of the Golem

While the use of music is the most apparent site of Mitteleuropean aesthetic inspirations and recuperations in Kubrick’s films, it is only the tip of an iceberg otherwise submerged. As Nathan Abrams has shown, the question of Jewishness in Kubrick’s work is everywhere present, yet everywhere subsurface. One striking instance of this obscured influence from Jewish⁹/Central European culture is Kubrick’s engagement with the motif of the golem. Through his voluminous reading, interest in Central European culture, and knowledge of Yiddish culture through his maternal grandmother, Kubrick was no doubt familiar with the legend of the golem, an artificial man created to defend the Jews of

Prague. He was certainly aware of the German expressionist film versions of the story, and knew Gustav Meyrink's 1915 novel. The Stanley Kubrick Archive holds material about Meyrink's *The Golem*, translated by Madge Pemberton, which Kubrick read and annotated. The novel has been photocopied and bound. At the front of the novel [also bound] is an outline and breakdown of the novel by the reader, Paul Green. The volume is accompanied by a three-page document "Background Information on the Origins of the Golem Legend," compiled by Vaughan-Thomas.¹⁰ While it is not clear what Kubrick's precise interest in *The Golem* was, whether he specifically wanted to film this story or whether it was background research for another project entirely, it shows the director's knowledge of, and engagement with, this Central European legend. As Abrams has expanded upon (2018), the legend can be found in a mediated form in the artificial intelligence/supercomputer HAL 9000, and, further, in the brainwashed or conditioned characters of so many of Kubrick's films: *Dr. Strangelove*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Shining*, and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). The robot and its lineage traceable to the golem reveals itself in various ways in Kubrick's work, as demonstrated by Joy McEntee's chapter. McEntee looks at how programming is a key element in several of Kubrick's films, inspired by Weimar cinema,¹¹ and not limited to Paul Wegener's *The Golem* (1920). As he did with other sources, Kubrick draws upon Weimar's figures and tropes (especially the use of language for programming and its relation to cinema, particularly of children or child-like beings) by either transforming them, recalling them obliquely or indirectly and superimposing upon them concerns of his own that transcend their original context and meanings.

The creation of a new human being comes by way of a machine that humans themselves have programmed, just as encounters with the fantastical creatures of Weimar cinema like the golem, Cesare in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), or the False Maria in *Metropolis* (1927) enable a dialectic rapport that compels the human characters to either transcend themselves or reassess their nature as human beings—yet another kind of conditioning or programming. But, as McEntee indicates, tying us back to the fates of the golem, while programming in Kubrick's films in many instances results in tragedy and suffering, it likewise holds creative potential: in some cases, this leads to what might seem to be an entirely programmed figure to create something new, and in its most positive instances, presents an opportunity for transcendence, one that begins a process in which machines and humans continually alter and redefine each other. This promise, however, always

lies just a hair's breadth away from danger, and even from the potential eradication of humanity as a whole.¹²

An Erotics of the Gaze

As is evident from watching most of his films, Kubrick was not only a director with a very keen sense for music who told stories that closely engaged with motifs and questions of Central European Jewishness, albeit at a subsurface level. He drew on his experience as a photographer but was also a lover of the fine arts (literally so if we consider that Christiane Kubrick was a fine painter in her own right). Much as he quoted swathes of art history in creating the visual universe of *Barry Lyndon*, Kubrick, as is noted here by Maxfield Fulton, looked to overtly Mitteleuropean pictorial references for *Eyes Wide Shut*, mainly the works of Gustav Klimt. Fulton observes the parallels to be found between one of Klimt's famous models, Adele Bauer Bloch, and Nicole Kidman in the film. But the author also shifts his focus in different directions, zeroing in on the sensual, well-nigh erotic quality of Kubrick's artistic gesture and its imprint, motivated as it is, Fulton argues, borrowing Alois Riegl's concept, by Kubrick's "Kunstwollen," his will to art, as sheer inheritor of this philosophy of art in the turn-of-the-century Mitteleuropean art scene.

Female models were no doubt the focal point of Klimt's career and art, and while the same can't be truly said regarding Kubrick's films, it is certain that women (and the desire for them) assume a central position in *Eyes Wide Shut*. As Fulton points out, in 1967, Andrew Sarris wrote that "The difference between Kubrick and Ophüls is that Kubrick makes the players follow the camera and Ophüls makes the camera follow the players," to which Fulton adds, "Kidman causes Kubrick to violate this tendency." Tom Cruise's hapless Dr. Bill Harford is stuck when confronted with the seductive power of women (or "Woman"), which in turn allegorizes many other dimensions of power, life, and death.¹³ Whether it is to be viewed as an obscure melodrama ("With *Eyes Wide Shut*, Kubrick delivered the twentieth century's final entry in [the] alternative tradition of modernist melodrama," writes Fulton), a strange replaying of film noir, or just a dream thereof, *Eyes Wide Shut*, Fulton points out, crystallizes the "Freudian-Schnitzlerian notion of social behavior as a performative denial of repressed sexual impulses," while at the same time engaging, as Klimt did, with the fascination of and for the naked (female) body, its archetypal quality, and the mystery and potentialities it contains.

Kubrick in the Mitteleuropean Literary Labyrinth

While only one of the films Kubrick made was directly adapted from a Mitteleuropean author, Arthur Schnitzler, it is hard to deny the influence of other key authors from the region, whose names we already mentioned above in passing. Several of our contributors make a point of digging deeper into Kubrick's often palimpsestic and indirect approach to literary adaptation: the filmmaker might have nominally adapted famous American novelists (Stephen King for *The Shining* a case in point), but he was actually channeling very different writers with very different ideas. Jason Doerre refers to this phenomenon as “reverberations,” using Erich Maria Remarque's famous take on World War I, *All Quiet On the Western Front*, to demonstrate how it must have informed Kubrick's take on “the war to end all wars,” although he never made a direct adaptation of Remarque's work. Kubrick's favorite genre, as a practitioner of film, might arguably have been the war film, given that *Fear and Desire*, *Paths of Glory*, *Dr. Strangelove, or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, *Barry Lyndon*, and *Full Metal Jacket* are all, at least in part, war films. The humanism and worldview found in Remarque may have served as a blueprint for a certain sensibility the filmmaker displayed when addressing war in a non-caricaturing manner. Writes Doerre, “in vividly depicting the horrors of [World War I, Remarque] imparted upon the international stage a statement as to how his generation came to be ‘lost.’ In a very similar vein, the films of Kubrick have exposed the senselessness of war, the contradictions, the ugliness, as well as trauma.”¹⁴

Conversely, Kubrick showed little faithfulness (more so in spirit and tone than in plot) to most of the famous authors he adapted: his *Lolita*, despite having been validated by Nabokov, was a very far cry from the Russian writer's tone; and *A Clockwork Orange* became a very different story on film than in Anthony Burgess's novel, partly because of the lack of repentance of Alex De Large's cinematic avatar (“I was cured alright”). But no other Kubrick film strayed more prominently from its source material in spirit and tone than did *The Shining*. And no other of his films, as a result, looked for Mitteleuropean authors for inspiration and for injecting meaning and depth to Stephen King's skeletal psychologizing and feeble philosophy of time and history. Our contributors mention a series of important unofficial sources for *The Shining*'s script. There are, of course, Sigmund Freud and Bruno Bettelheim, psychoanalysts Kubrick read, and whose import he carefully treated in collaboration with fellow screenwriter Diane Johnson, hardly limiting

themselves to Doppelgänger and fraught Oedipal triangulations. But more surprising is the fact that Kubrick found inspiration for his film in the writings of Polish Jewish writer Bruno Schulz, something revealed by a subtle clue that was only unearthed in recent years through a prop from *The Shining* in the Stanley Kubrick Archive.¹⁵ Schulz's engagement with questions of time and the towering role of the (dead) father in his writing is echoed and encoded deeply into the film's story and texture.¹⁶

Furthermore, in his chapter, Jeremi Szaniawski argues that this dialogue between Kubrick and Schulz extends into a dialogue with Poland—the Poland of Rabbi Moshe Isserless and Schulz, but also the Poland of contemporaneous directors Andrzej Wajda and Wojciech Jerzy Has, who adapted Schulz's short stories into *The Hourglass Sanatorium* (1973), a film, Szaniawski argues, that Kubrick most likely saw, channeling parts of it in his Stephen King 'adaptation.' Bruno Schulz was murdered by a Nazi on the streets of his hometown, Drohobycz, which he seldom left. And so the Has film has the Holocaust inscribed deep into its fabric, as does *The Shining*, as Geoffrey Cocks has taught us. In his chapter for this collection, Cocks mentions Schulz's presence in *The Shining*, but he also persuasively elucidates other sources, including Hermann Hesse, Stefan Zweig (whose *Burning Secret* [1913] Kubrick thought of adapting), Franz Kafka, and, chief among them, Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. Much as Szaniawski points at parallels between Schulz's stories and Has's film and *The Shining*, Cocks shows the clear connection between Mann's Berghof and Kubrick's Overlook Hotel through their locations (both luxury hotels perched high in the mountains) and play with time and its perception, and how these texts all point, one way or another, toward the tragedy of war and the unspeakable horror of the Holocaust.

While he by no means limited his list of favorite writers to Mitteleuropean ones, in interviews, Kubrick often mentioned his admiration for Kafka but also Joseph Conrad. In closing his chapter, Kozłowski shows how the humanist tradition and legacy found in Conrad is echoed in the works of Kubrick and composer Penderecki (families of all three artists originating from a part of what is now Western Ukraine). Meanwhile, in her chapter, Peucker demonstrates the affinity between Kubrick and Kafka. On the surface, we might note how both authors have been sometimes characterized as cold or affectless in style. But probing the matter more deeply, Peucker takes her cue from a sentence Kafka allegedly uttered, reprised by Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida*: "We photograph things in order to drive them out of our minds. My stories are a way of shutting my eyes."

After all, Peucker reminds us aptly, Kubrick once pointed out the importance of filming “what the mind could see but eyes could not.” Nowhere is Kafka’s presence more felt than in Kubrick’s most Mitteleuropean films, *The Shining* and *Eyes Wide Shut*, which the author of “The Metamorphosis” and *The Trial* haunts in more ways than one.¹⁷ To demonstrate this connection, Peucker first looks at photography in relationship to the corporeal and ‘exorcising’ in *The Shining*: “Adopting Kafka’s tendency to speak in paradoxes, Kubrick shrouds the relations between photograph and narrative in further ambiguity.” Furthermore, she writes: “Narrative is complicit with photography in its attempt to keep the ‘things’ that haunt us at a distance. But is sight really the ‘necessary condition for the image’ . . . ? Surely it is also suggested that some images exist in the mind’s eye alone,” with eyes wide shut, as it were. Secondly, following an observation made by Slavoj Žižek, Peucker teases out the Kafkaesque in Kubrick’s adaptation of Schnitzler; namely, the costume shop scene in *Eyes Wide Shut*. In it, the idea of flaunting, in a manner that is humorous and absurd in equal parts, a joyless world of Law with bawdy or sexual quid-pro-quo is more Kafkaesque than Schnitzlerian in either spirit or form. Reacting against this separation between Law and corporeal enjoyment in Judaism, writes Žižek, “Kafka trespasses the divisions of his inherited religion, flooding the judicial domain, once again, with enjoyment.”

The Shining rather clearly owes much to the author of “The Metamorphosis,” as well as to Mann, Freud, Bettelheim, and Schulz, among others. But in a rather intriguing temporal loop or time paradox of sorts, *The Shining* might also have owed something to . . . *Eyes Wide Shut*. Indeed, as Michel Ciment intuited, Kubrick might have made *The Shining* partly because he could not quite find ways to handle the adaptation of Schnitzler’s *Traumnovelle* (1926), which might have kept him up, by Kolker and Abrams’s account (2024), perhaps as early as his days in the East Village in 1950s New York City, and undeniably from the early 1960s onwards. Beyond the Kafka connection elucidated by Peucker, it is easy to see *Eyes Wide Shut* as a companion piece to *The Shining*, with its Doppelgänger, uncanny atmospheres, ghostly Steadicam movements, scenes where eroticism is combined with dread, and a “modernist melodrama” tale, to use Fulton’s term, with its fraught familial nexus. But it is even more fascinating to see how his work on *The Shining*, almost as a compensatory gesture of spite for not finding the right angle or key to Schnitzler, allowed Kubrick to rehearse and enrich his approach. Some images of Wojciech Jerzy Has’s adaptation of Schulz, *The Hourglass Sanatorium*, which, Szaniawski argues, Kubrick saw and was influenced by in his preparation work for *The*

Shining, also echo or anticipate *Eyes Wide Shut*. It includes, for instance, a scene oddly similar to the Somerton orgy sequence (the scene in Has's film involves bare-breasted women in bright blue, purple, and greenish light entertaining the protagonist's father, both a jolly reveler and a somewhat more disturbing master of ceremonies inside a vast, sinister room). But most important, perhaps, is the way in which Kubrick channeled Freud (Schnitzler's "*Doppelgänger*" as per the famous letter the Jewish Viennese psychoanalyst wrote to the Jewish Viennese writer) by way of Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*, in working on *The Shining*, to foreshadow what would become, two decades later, his final film. Here, we quote Fulton again, himself in dialogue with Peucker (for whom the connecting point between the two Kubrick films was Kafka). Fulton writes: "If *The Shining*'s ending has, as Johnson hoped, 'the artistic satisfaction of a fairy tale,' then *Eyes Wide Shut*'s ending dialogue recasts the film's diegesis as a type of dream. While Bill's adventures over the previous three days were not technically a dream, he nonetheless experienced them as one. In a Bettelheimian sense, to encounter the world with one's 'eyes wide shut' is to cultivate the concentration necessary to access the unconscious via fairy tales or dreams."

Before Kubrick: Mitteleuropean Films and Mitteleuropa in Film

His use of music, the fine arts, and literature, often by Mitteleuropean artists, in a complex game of palimpsest, obvious (and sometimes fake) leads, and obscured but genuine interpretive keys, all teach us that Kubrick never hesitated to add yet another additional layer when conceiving his complex cinematic realms. However, his gargantuan appetite for the arts and literature should not lead us to forget that he was also an avid filmgoer and cineaste. Alas, for all the treasures that it contains, the Stanley Kubrick Archive does not hold a record of the film prints Kubrick owned, nor has a record of the films he watched been found. To be sure, Kubrick singled out in various interviews some of his favorite films, ranging from Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria* (1957) to Claudia Weill's *Girlfriends* (1978). We know well that his favorite filmmaker, Max Ophüls, whose legendary camera movement Kubrick loved to emulate, while not strictly speaking a pure product of Jewish Mitteleuropa (he was born in Germany near the French border), is forever associated with Vienna, setting his most famous films there: *Liebelei* (1933) and *La Ronde* (1950), both based on Schnitzler, and *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948), based on

Zweig—perhaps the greatest representation of Vienna ever committed to the screen.

Precious few Eastern European films made the cut of the various ‘top tens’ compiled by Kubrick’s critics and fans, based on fragments of interviews. And yet, upon closer scrutiny, we find several Central and Eastern European imports of note: Kubrick listed two major films of the Czech New Wave among his all-time favorite films: Jiri Menzel’s *Closely Watched Trains* (1963) and Milos Forman’s *The Firemen’s Ball* (1967). These two films, it is important to note, featured echoes of Nazism and/or the Holocaust, topics that were exceptionally important, and monstrously difficult, for Kubrick. The filmmaker also referenced Roman Polanski’s *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968), Andrey Tarkovsky’s *Solaris* (1972), and Andrzej Wajda’s *Danton* (1983) as films he admired or whose take on their respective genres he felt inspired by. Late in his life, as reported by Frederic Raphael, Kubrick was enthusiastic about Krzysztof Kieslowski’s *Decalogue* (1989) as a model of efficient filmmaking and intelligent storytelling (he also wrote a preface to the published screenplay in English).¹⁸ Anthony Frewin also affirms that another Czech film, *Ikarié XB-1* by Jindrich Polak (1963), served as an influence on Kubrick in the making of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. This is by no means unusual: peer American auteurs such as Coppola, Martin Scorsese, or Steven Spielberg, also admired Eastern European cinema—including films by Wajda, Menzel, and Has—while Hollywood and Western European festivals (Venice, Cannes, Berlin, Locarno, etc.) often lionized items from the other side of the iron curtain, especially during the Thaw era and right after the fall of the Socialist bloc. Likewise Kubrick’s keenness for Eastern European cinema is notable and can be correlated with his catholicity of taste, and his vast intellectual curiosity, but also points again to an affinity of sensibility. And, ever the pragmatic film producer, much as he read and listened to a tremendous amount of material for his personal growth and enjoyment, Kubrick no doubt mined the resources of these national cinemas in search of inspiration and ideas for his own films as well.

And so, as in the case of Has’s adaptation of Schulz, upon watching certain films that either hail directly from Central/Eastern Europe or have their plot located there (which is not to suggest that any film set in Central/Eastern Europe should automatically be considered ‘Mitteleuropean,’ irrespective of where the film was made and where its makers, or their ancestors, hailed from originally), it becomes difficult to imagine that Kubrick did not watch them. One such film is *The Mysterious Lady* by Fred Niblo (1928). A film made at the height of silent cin-

ema, and visually most impressive, it stars an unforgettable Greta Garbo, echoes of whom can be found in Nicole Kidman's appearance in *Eyes Wide Shut* (and both women wear almost see-through dresses at given moments of the films). The melodramatic plot of *The Mysterious Lady* bears little to no resemblance to Kubrick's films, at least upon first look. However, it carries, in its Hollywood adaptation fashion, the cruelty, refinement, or even perversion that Garbo was forever associated with, and which clearly fascinated Kubrick, not least in several of his own renditions of *femmes fatales*.¹⁹ The film also has a near oneiric quality, and paired with, say, the masked ball from Ophüls's *Le Plaisir* (1952), it could have served as a key source for the visualization of the dark dream recounted to Bill by Alice upon her awakening in Kubrick's final film. Furthermore, *The Mysterious Lady* offers a truly alluring and finely reconstructed picture of turn-of-the-century Mitteleuropa: interiors with lavish staircases and hidden passages/secret doors vastly evocative of the Ziegler mansion, where elegant revelries hide darker interactions. Bill Harford, not unlike the protagonist of *The Mysterious Lady*, gets sucked into a universe that may be partly a figment of his shaken imagination, with only impotence and humiliation as his rewards. This resonates strongly in *The Mysterious Lady*, and later in more than one Kubrick film: as Maxfield Fulton underlines, "the military degradation scene [in *The Mysterious Lady*] could have fit snugly in *Paths of Glory* or *Barry Lyndon*, and [we note] resonances with the confrontation be-



Figure 0.2. *Eyes Wide Shut*. Directed Stanley Kubrick. Warner Bros. 1999. Screen capture by Maxfield Fulton.

tween Bill and Red Cloak in *Eyes Wide Shut*—Kubrick was the master of male humiliation” (correspondence with editors, 2023). As if this was not enough, we find in *The Mysterious Lady* scenes that seem almost to have been literally borrowed by Kubrick’s final film: the moustachioed protagonist at the piano (a gentleman and an officer concealing a Nick Nightingale?), or the moment when Garbo walks away with a man under each arm, the mirror reflection of Cruise walking with the two alluring young women at the Ziegler party. Kubrick, we know this, spent his youth attending film screenings at theaters such as Loew’s Paradise or the RKO Fordham near his family home in the Bronx, and then, as a young adult living in Manhattan, he dedicated a lot of his time watching films shown at MoMA, and *The Mysterious Lady*, no doubt, was among them. At the latest, Kubrick would have seen the film in his private projection room at his home in Childwickbury, among hundreds of others as was his habit, while preparing for *Eyes Wide Shut*.

It is less certain where Kubrick could have seen Oldrich Lipsky’s *Happy End* (1967), a Czechoslovak film told backwards, starting with the protagonist’s execution following a crime of passion, and going through—in reverse motion, which makes it a very unique experiment in the genre—to the events that led to it. The



Figure 0.3. *The Mysterious Lady*. Directed by Fred Niblo. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. 1928. Screen capture by Maxfield Fulton.

striking use of time aside—which yields its more than fair share of macabre humor, as death is equated with birth, and a coffin, with an incubator—the film’s Mitteleuropean setting summons echoes of Ophüls as well as Ernst Lubitsch. Notably, Kubrick used the same Rossini pieces as Lipsky did for *A Clockwork Orange*—the most memorable instance being the comical threesome in fast-forward motion, set to the tune of the *William Tell* Overture; Rossini’s escalating musical structure, overlapping and relaying a variety of motifs, is a perfect fit for the ménage à trois imbroglio. The humor and irony of *Happy End* (of which *The Mysterious Lady*, a Hollywood film, is bereft) is not only representative of the Czechoslovak new wave, it is quintessentially of Bohemia, one of the most authentically Mitteleuropean regions, with its multilingualism, multiculturalism, poly-ethnicity, and tolerance of a variety of religions, which in turn gave birth to Czechoslovak humor and sensibility—fed by centuries of overlapping influences, including Slavic/Moravian, Jewish, and Austro-Hungarian.

Kubrick and Poland: The Impossible Confrontation with the Holocaust, and Productive Confrontations with the Polish Audience

Kubrick was obsessed with all things Mitteleuropean, and yet, as we discussed in the opening, Kubrick’s most directly Central European project—*Aryan Papers* (based on Louis Begley’s *Wartime Lies*), his take on the Holocaust—never came to fruition. Nathan Abrams delivers an in-depth study of the film’s production history to speculate not only why it failed but also how it might have looked had the director shot it. Kubrick never went to Poland (and as Abrams indicates, after Steven Spielberg started shooting *Schindler’s List* (1993) there, Kubrick decided to move production to Slovakia), yet he has continued to fascinate Polish audiences. In his chapter, a study of the exhibition and distribution history of Kubrick’s films in Socialist Poland, Konrad Klejsa shows how an auteur’s corpus can be processed by a national audience limited by state policies and censorship. Only two of Kubrick’s films, Klejsa found, received a nationwide release in the Polish People’s Republic: *Spartacus* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*.²⁰ Naturally, the lack of access to the other films made Kubrick the veritable stuff of fascination and ear-to-mouth legend for those who got to see *A Clockwork Orange* during a brief stint at a film festival in Warsaw.²¹ Irony has it that Kubrick’s film, which is arguably most in dialogue with Polish culture—*The Shining*—was never released officially in Socialist

Poland.²² And yet, as Szaniawski argues, the film may star an all-American cast and purportedly take place in the Colorado Rockies, its look and feel, its violence, bathed in cold cinematography, and its emphasis on preternatural intuition, all are redolent, not only of an evocation of the Holocaust, as the seminal works of Cocks and Abrams established, but also of the place where the Holocaust was carried out in vast part, namely Poland.

These Polish elements and echoes of Poland in *The Shining* are less obvious than the Mitteleuropean resonances in many of the other films, and arguably have never been fully tackled in a critical text before this study. Not without reason: abstracting from the defining use of Polish composer Penderecki in the film, one would be at a loss to identify what is Polish, on the surface, about *The Shining*. However, upon closer scrutiny, we discern more than one element which, in the film, has at the very least affinities with Polish culture and art. We already mentioned, and this is indisputable given the strong endorsement of the English translation of their screenplays, that Kubrick admired Kieślowski and Piesiewicz's *Decalogue*. But this *magnum opus* comes after *The Shining*, correlating closely with Kubrick's uneasy dalliance with adapting Polish-born writer Begley's *Wartime Lies*. Watching *The Shining* from an informed perspective, however, one is struck by its aesthetic proximity to Polish cinema of the 1970s. First and foremost, as noted above, is the work with music, combining borrowings from the classical repertoire and original compositions, and a sense of dance and choreography. The carefully choreographed work that Kubrick had made his trademark at least since 2001: *A Space Odyssey*, so clearly highlighted by the waltzes of spacecraft in that film, finds a strong Eastern European analog in the films of Wojciech Jerzy Has, but also those of Andrzej Wajda.

Novel to *The Shining*, relative to Kubrick's previous films, was the use of the Steadicam. While Polish filmmakers of the 1970s did not have access to this technology, we find something similar when a kinetic (often handheld) camera reveals ghost-like or motionless protagonists (think of the final scenes of Wajda's *The Celebration* [Wesele, 1972] or *The Promised Land* [Ziemia obiecana, 1975]). These films, which predate *The Shining* and earned multiple awards (and Oscar nomination in the case of the latter film), make it very likely that Kubrick saw them, and as mentioned earlier, he admired Wajda's *Danton*. The Polish school of cinematography was considered (and is still considered to this day) one of the greatest in world cinema, and Kubrick's own legendary work with light was reminiscent of the Polish style of lighting in *The Shining*, where John Alcott's work rendered a cold

style, which unmistakably evokes the work of the great master of Polish cinematography Witold Sobociński on *The Hourglass Sanatorium* or Wajda's *The Celebration*. These two films, with their motifs of ghosts played by actors interacting freely with the live characters, and suffused with a sense of strange dread, are almost uncannily echoed in *The Shining*. But *The Shining* is also a playful, and at moments funny, film, and this absurdist, angst-filled humor (inherited from Kafka no doubt) found its own inheritors in Poland in authors such as Polish Jewish playwright Sławomir Mrożek (whose *Tango* bears more than one resemblance with the comedy of menace of *The Shining*), or in the Oscar-winning animated short film *Tango* by Zbigniew Rybczyński (1980, and unrelated to Mrożek's play).²³

But beyond these analogies, these echoes, there may be something Polish—in the sense of a Polish “ghost”—in Kubrick's very method of working on his films. As is well known, the director drew out the shoot of *The Shining* and *Eyes Wide Shut* from a couple of months to over a year, using a method based on trial and error, repetition, which extracted a prodigious, tireless degree of expenditure of energy. And to this, Kubrick added intuition, against the odds perhaps, if we stick to the image of the filmmaker as a calculating, weathered chess player.²⁴ Intuition, of course, knows no particular place or nationality and can arise anywhere. Yet, as Polish composer Witold Lutosławski argued, invoking Piotr Tchaikovsky, intuition does not happen out of the blue. The artist has to work, and work hard, tirelessly, in order for intuition to be able to “take them by surprise,” and for the Eureka moment to happen. Furthermore, Lutosławski ventured, cautiously, to define something he referred to as the “Polish style.”²⁵ While the composer stopped short of using a specific term, calling it “risky” to do so, he admitted that nevertheless, and undeniably, one such Polish national style existed, and was characterized in his view by a few elements, chief among them a keenness on experimenting combined with a spontaneous, vibrant (*żywiłowy*) temperament, something deeply entrenched in Polish culture, which has similar analogs in other central European nations.²⁶ Such a combination of strict intellectual discipline and “inner fire,” and spontaneity, which Polish art never could get rid of, is what helped it steer clear of an overly intellectualized character. And it can be argued that *The Shining*, despite its surface coldness or “affectlessness,” is precisely such a work of “inner fire,” which never dissociates, despite its utmost intellectual rigor, the intuition or the instinctual from sheer intellect. And its horror, as Mikics argues, derives also from the failure of mastery, or, perhaps, to the realization by Jack Torrance that the literary mastery he sought through an empty practice of typing was never

there in the first place: a body running amok after being doomed by an overlay of empty over-intellectualization, detached from any actual connection to history or community. And just as no individual can function without community, no brain can function without a body, no true art can germinate without a combination of practice and intuition. Gilles Deleuze intuited something similar when he argued that Kubrick's work evoked the world as a brain, but a brain that was flesh and which felt and sensed as much as it thought and computed (Deleuze 2005, here we refer the reader again to the chapters by Peucker and Fulton). And Kubrick himself was known to put more stock, as far as a successful audience response to a film was concerned, in the "feel of it," the emotion, rather than the "know of it," strict intellection. It is this interpenetration of something deeply material and something more abstract that makes so many of his films, and certainly *The Shining*, stand out, a fusion or synthesis of an almost entirely sensory-based genre, horror, and the highly ratiocinative style of dark comedy.

In *The Shining*, more than any other work until its twin film *Eyes Wide Shut*, Kubrick applied a method that was partly planned, rigorously prepared (case in point, the gigantic set of the Overlook hotel with its impossible, disorienting geometry), and partly improvised or, rather, rewritten constantly on the set, and with the repetition of takes inducing a quasi trance-like state in the actors. This sends us back to the experience put to paper by writer Tadeusz Borowski (1992) to (unsuccessfully) exorcize his experience in the concentration camps. In his collection of short stories and novellas (which it is difficult to imagine Kubrick did not come across), Borowski described shell-shocked, traumatized, and desensitized characters (sometimes dehumanized to the point of anthropophagy), who had grown indifferent to the world around them, or on the verge of madness. The power of his text derives from the way in which he captures the matter-of-fact affect of the camp survivors, unable to enjoy a relative freedom, or struck by the possibility of romance snuffed out by a stray bullet while in displaced people's camps. The protagonists of *The Shining* feature echoes of this, not least in the conversations with the hotel staff (be it real or ghosts) or when the resilient representatives of minorities—Wendy, Hallorann, Danny—try to interact but face the hurdle of platitudes and a muted, affectless manner. Andrzej Wajda adapted several of Borowski's Holocaust stories in his *Landscape After the Battle*, a film Kubrick must have seen and which also features ample examples of Polish school cinematography, striking work with color, impressive camera movements, use of classical music, and acting style alternating between the muted, post-traumatic

affect, and the histrionic, expressionist excess of Jack Torrance's madness. Jack's abject failure, furthermore, can be said to echo the equally abject collapse of Socialism in Poland, which was very much already in an advanced stage of decomposition at the time when Kubrick made his film. The scene where Jack embraces the impassive naked young woman who turns out to be a cackling dead crone in *The Shining* serves as an allegory of ideology (be it capitalist or communist) falling apart and revealing its true nature from underneath its alluring guise—a brief encounter with the Real, and nothing less. The alcoholism and lack of prospect of social mobility seen in *The Shining* have at least as much to do with the social tableaux expertly captured by Robert Altman in the 1970s and the existential quests of Jack Nicholson's many avatars through his New Hollywood incarnations, from *Five Easy Pieces* to... *The Shining* as it does with the predicament of many people in the Socialist republics in the late 1970s.

The Shining is a most dizzyingly profound, and at once the most universal of Kubrick's works because it is the most generically constrained and specific. And, like Polish culture, it is a mix of a variety of complex influences. There is an analogy that can be drawn between the productively layered nature of the film and the mix/crucible of cultures that is at once a characteristic of Mitteleuropa and Poland (German, Slavic, Jewish, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, Tatar, etc.). Kubrick's ability to absorb the zeitgeist and trends in international cinema, of which Polish cinema was still a vibrant part in the 1970s, also explains why *The Shining* can so easily be re-appropriated by a variety of schools or perspectives. But as the preceding passage attempts to demonstrate, the Mitteleuropean, and especially Polish part of the film's DNA, is, beyond a reasonable doubt, one of the strongest elements, far more, at any rate, than the American horror film or the Stephen King novel it is based upon. This all-encompassing gesture might have been American, and capitalist, on Kubrick's part, instantiating a daring attempt at brewing a stew of all things useful or relevant in the 1970s zeitgeist. But it was also Mitteleuropean in its pointed refinement and ambition, its paradoxical nature, and its lasting, haunting, and haunted appeal.

Coda: *Eyes Wide Shut* and the Mitteleuropa Legacy

For all the Mitteleuropa to be found, cryptically, in *The Shining*, it would be fair to say that *Eyes Wide Shut* remains the most directly Mitteleuropean film Kubrick made,

the culmination and coda of all that had gone before, the one film he had been trying to make since he began making feature films. Written by a Viennese author and set in Vienna, no matter how much Kubrick attempted to translate it into an American idiom, its palimpsestic traces remained. These were emphasized by the director's decisions and frequent allusions to the fin-de-siècle Vienna of Schnitzler's novel. It is part of the counterpoint that Kubrick plays with throughout the film between past and present, the past within the present, turn-of-the-century Vienna and turn-of-the-twenty-first-century New York. All of the music played at Ziegler's party dates from 1924 to 1961, invoking the period in which *Traumnovelle* was written, but also, unwittingly or otherwise, the period in which Schnitzler's Vienna would be progressively erased. The disrobing of Alice that opens the film invokes a passage in Max Ophüls's *The Earrings of Madame de . . .* (1953),²⁷ where the protagonist tries on a variety of ornamentation before going out for the evening or a later montage where she dances in a variety of different dresses. A Hungarian lounge lizard named Sandor Szavost, something of a smooth satanic figure, attempts to seduce Alice as they sinuously dance as if they were characters in a Max Ophüls movie (the gentle movements in and around the dancers echo a similar sequence of dance-time seduction in *The Earrings of Madame de . . .*). Szavost also recalls the bored suave baron in Stefan Zweig's *Burning Secret*, transformed into the American Richard Hunt in Kubrick's never-filmed screenplay of the same name (Szavost's conversation with Alice actually contains literal echoes of that script). The interior of the mansion, festooned with sheets of lights, takes on the appearance of a Gustav Klimt painting. Later, we see a New World recreation of the type of Viennese café that Schnitzler frequented, complete with Mozart's *Requiem* playing on the soundtrack. We could be sitting with Fridolin back in turn-of-the-century Vienna but, in reality, the café was based on the Caffè Reggio on Macdougall Street in New York's Greenwich Village, opened one year after *Traumnovelle* was published. Kubrick was aware of all this, in devising his magnum opus, his love and swansong to cinema, to *Mitteuropa*, *Eyes Wide Shut*, which was at once life affirming and filled with a form of existential dread and angst.

Even at the end of his career and life, we find a Kubrick who is never simply fatalistic, or anti-humanist. Even at its darkest moments, his work reaches for a sort of transcendence, albeit not of a spiritual or religious variety, the kind that would seek refuge in a false and easy sense of hope. Rather, he sought to transform the fraught or mundane real into something that synthesized and generated a new artistic object and emotion from contradictory elements. This gesture derives

from and captures an essential element of the long artistic tradition and modernity of which Mitteleuropa was the cradle and the battlefield, insofar as it is predicated on probing and processing at once ugliness and beauty; trauma and joy; death and life—never assuming that these are in fact fixed and easily distinguishable terms. However pessimistic he might have been about the future of humankind, Kubrick never abandoned the conviction that the creation of a work of art held a redemptive, or at least palliative, function, for both artist and viewer. Just like the Austro-Hungarian empire of the Habsburg monarchy or interbellum Poland, Kubrick's oeuvre is now enshrined in the past, and yet it still continues to reveal new layers, which in turn generate new meanings: a possibly inextinguishable well of interpretive possibilities. The present collection partakes in this ongoing process, revealing an enormous number of influences and allusions. Despite their wide variety, they cohere around the concept of Mitteleuropa, this Central European Imaginarium, which constituted one of the most powerful forces driving Stanley Kubrick's art.

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gill, 2023), and *The Bloomsbury Companion to Stanley Kubrick* (with I.Q. Hunter, 2021).

Notes

1. Rosa was already pregnant with Jacob when they arrived at Ellis Island. Once in the US, both Elias and Rosa took up the rag trade as tailors and clothes-makers. They lived on East Houston Street, near the knishery and bakery of Yonah Schimmel, which was lovingly recreated by Kubrick in *Eyes Wide Shut*. In 1902, Samuel and Celia wed in New York City where ‘Gert’ and her two younger brothers, David and Martin, were raised. See Kolker and Abrams (2024).
2. In this book, we address Mitteleuropa in a broad sense, reaching sometime beyond its traditional borders. As such, motifs coming from Northern Germany (as in the case of the novels of Thomas Mann), Switzerland (Hermann Hesse), or Western Russia (music by Dmitri Shostakovich or the works of Vladimir Nabokov) will also enter our purview, if briefly.
3. Following the shoot of *Paths of Glory*, Christiane Harlan recounted how they spent a few weeks in Vienna, where she was due to act in a film, and so Kubrick decided to edit his film there in order for them to stay together. “[I]n the evening the couple went out to explore. They went to the opera, drank wine in outdoor cafés, and danced.” (Kolker and Abrams 2024: 143).
4. This unfinished project would have been titled *Aryan Papers*. Other projects never came to fruition, including *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (which ended up being made by Steven Spielberg); *Napoleon*; and a Nordic Saga, *Eric Brighteyes*, among many others.
5. In 1956, Kubrick worked on a screenplay for the unrealized adaptation of Stefan Zweig’s *Burning Secret*. He removed all reference to Jewishness, relocating characters, by now American gentiles, to a resort in the Appalachian mountains. See Kolker and Abrams (2024: 123–25). Kubrick also expressed interest in adapting another Zweig novel, *Chess Story*.
6. Kubrick was planning to direct the film in Romania in the late 1960s, on account of the country’s landscapes, and the reduced production costs there. However, the project was dropped even before production could start.
7. This quote is from Stanley Kubrick’s celebrated speech of acceptance of the D.W. Griffith Award, 1997.
8. This is not to say that serious and important questions raised by postmodernism, including the nature of the text itself, are not engaged with in Kubrick’s cinema. But his aesthetics, and the way his films resist readymade consumption, are emblems of late modernism.
9. Those Eastern Jews (*Ostjuden*) who migrated to Western Europe were stereotyped as primitive and poor compared to the wealthier, more educated, and assimilated Western Jews.
10. SK/1/2/12/1/2/5, Stanley Kubrick Archive, University of the Arts London.
11. Although Weimar, Germany, was not exactly part of Mitteleuropa, it shared the same language and was vastly influenced by key Mitteleuropa thinkers, including of course Freud, or had the setting of some of its films in Mitteleuropa.
12. This trope was at the heart of a major work of early science-fiction, Czechoslovak writer Karel Čapek’s play *R.U.R.* (for “Rossum’s Universal Robots.”), which was the first text to coin the term ‘robot’ from the Slavic root meaning ‘to work hard/to perform heavy labor.’ First staged in 1920, the play presented a world where a corporation manufactured organic humanoids. These artificial beings were designed to be superior workers, relieving humanity from mundane tasks.

However, mirroring historical uprisings, the robots, upon gaining consciousness, eventually revolt against their human creators, leading to humanity's downfall.

13. What is interesting between the Schnitzler and the Kubrick versions of *Traumnovelle/Eyes Wide Shut*, is that in Schnitzler, wife and husband are more even: Fridolin also shares in a sexual fantasy (a 'duel' of sorts between them). In the film, only Alice recounts her fantasy to a dumb-founded Dr. Bill.
14. At the same time, there is no denying a darker side to Kubrick's fascination with war in its relation to modern technology, including weapons. The filmmaker loved guns and attending the shooting range—which is probably the most banal aspect of his ongoing engagement with the subject.
15. SKA/15/3/4, Stanley Kubrick Archive, University of the Arts London.
16. Kubrick had another affinity with an important motif of Schulz's stories, namely, mannequins: think of the literal mannequins encountered in *Killer's Kiss* and *Eyes Wide Shut*, but also the mannequin-like figures that the actors, with their affectless facial expressions, or in fixed or apparently lifeless poses, somehow become: a slack-jawed Jack Nicholson staring motionlessly into the void, or the sculptural young woman emerging from the bath in *The Shining* are cases in point.
17. For another take on Kafka and Kubrick, see Madigan (1991).
18. Kubrick knew Polanski personally (see Abrams and Kolker, 2024: 264–66), and he corresponded with Kieślowski (see Abrams' chapter in this volume).
19. See Metlič (2023).
20. By means of comparison with another satellite country of the Soviet Union, and another former part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, apparently three Kubrick films were released onto Hungarian screens commercially during the Socialist period, albeit later than they did in Socialist Poland: 2001: *A Space Odyssey*, released there in 1979; *Doctor Strangelove*, released in 1987; and *Spartacus*, on the cusp of the regime's collapse, in 1989. We thank Maja Nemere for this information.
21. Jeremi Szaniawski's father, Marek, was among those who stormed the movie theater in Warsaw to get a chance to see Kubrick's film on that lone occasion.
22. With the late emergence of home video technologies only allowing it to become a bootleg VHS hit in the late 1980s and early 1990s.
23. Furthermore, the way Wojciech Jerzy Has channels fabled Polish Jewish playwright and stage director Tadeusz Kantor in his *Hourglass Sanatorium*, echoing Kantor's play *Dead Class (Umarła klasa)* in the pallid makeup of his protagonists, are reverberated in Wendy's equally pallid appearance at the end of *The Shining*.
24. As David Mikics indicates, Kubrick allowed for improvisation on set, although he "would make actors' improvisations part of the script, rather than using improvised scenes in his final cut" (2020: 65).
25. Witold Lutosławski, radio interview, Polskie radio, in conversation with Janusz Cegiella (1971).
26. Lutosławski added that this 'Polish style' he spoke of, was not connected with the borrowings, in Polish music, of local folklore—a tradition exemplified by Béla Bartók, whom Kubrick uses in *The Shining*.
27. Kidman's disrobing in the opening of *Eyes Wide Shut* almost literally quotes the more bawdy, but no less naked, undressing of Adela (Halina Kowalska) in Has's *Hourglass Sanatorium*.

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Introduction

Fernando Ramos Arenas, Jono Van Belle and María Paz Peirano

Most of us have never seen an Ingmar Bergman film, and yet his work seems strangely familiar. I blame Kermit.

—David Bennun, 'How the Muppets Made Us All Bergman Experts'

Following the death of Ingmar Bergman in the summer of 2007, cultural critic David Bennun wrote a short article for the British newspaper *The Guardian* that encapsulated some of the paradoxical characteristics that the Swedish director embodied in his later years – even for those who, like the author of the article, had only a superficial knowledge of his films. Among the laments that could be heard from the cinephile community praising Bergman's artistic achievements, Bennun penned a piece that read as a tribute to a 'great director' but was instead primarily a recognition of Bergman's cultural status. Bergman was and is a phenomenon that goes beyond his films. Bennun also listed a series of Bergman parodies to prove his arguments, among them the 'Silent Strawberries' sketch from the 1981 movie *The Muppets Go to the Movies*: 'It remains one of the funniest things I've seen in all my given years'.¹ It is difficult to disagree on this point.

This book is written from a very different perspective, convinced as we are of the centrality of Ingmar Bergman's work for the history of cinema. However, it also shares some of Bennun's insights, as it seeks to understand Bergman's 'familiarity' – that is, the way this global phenomenon fosters imaginaries with an intensity one rarely finds among other filmmakers. Therefore, this volume analyses the way Bergman's films have influenced international cinema since the late 1940s, when his works began to be seen and debated by film festival organisers, film festival goers, critics, academics and audiences from all over the world. These people were surely reacting to the stories they saw on the big screens and to the challenging images that usually transported them to other mental and geographical spaces, aspects of Bergman's films that initiated a cinematic revolution. How-

ever, audiences also projected onto the films their own wishes and anxieties; they often used Bergman's films to address debates and concerns that felt very close to them.

The little world that Jan Holmberg addresses in his prologue to this book not only reflects the big world out there but also how such a world can be changed. Analysing the way Bergman was cherished and censored and admired and criticised helps us better understand his work and the way it has been received for more than half a century in very different contexts. In addition, such an analysis helps us understand these contexts. Therefore, here, we are attentive to how the public figure of Ingmar Bergman, a presence that frequently overshadowed his films, was created and transformed in a process where the filmmaker's own agenda was one among many other forces. The analysis of this process – or processes, as they were many and very different – illuminates not only the creation of an *auteur* but also the film cultures he so deeply impacted.

This book combines an array of cultural-historical approaches that connect it to some of the reception-oriented research that over the last twenty years has been popularised by New Cinema History (NCH). At the same time, its chapters question some assumptions usually identified with this field of research and expand its perspectives, placing at its centre a director who has been championed over decades as an *auteur par excellence*. These two notions – that is, *auteur* studies celebrating the creative genius of a filmmaker and reception-centred research interested in film circulation, exhibition, audiences and the culture generated around them – may seem antithetical at first sight. However, as we elaborate in this introduction, it is precisely this combination that constitutes an important part of our contribution to this field. Additionally, our approach illustrates how a broader understanding of film-cultural phenomena is essential to understanding differences in institutional and sociological micro-histories of film consumption.

Our book culminates the activities of a team of international researchers who have been working together on questions of film circulation and reception around Bergman for almost three years.² With its disciplinary, methodologically and geographically diverse contributions, this book as a whole decentres the narrow focus on American and European audiences, a focus that has largely dominated Bergman studies and the conception of Bergman as *auteur*. In the next section of this introduction, we engage with theory from NCH studies, *auteur* theory, Bergman studies and film culture(s). Then, we provide a detailed overview of the chapters in this volume.

This collection starts with early reception studies on Bergman and moves to South American reception, and then to specific studies of the role of Catholicism (in Spain) and communism (in Poland) in shaping the narratives on the director. Then, it analyses the role of film critics (in Italy) and film festivals (in India), and, finally, comes back to reception in the form of fan mail written to him. As this short description illustrates, the volume does not offer a complete history of Bergman's reception in different cultural contexts across more than half a century. Rather, its objective is to illuminate a series of phenomena that, due to their singular or symptomatic nature, can help us better understand or rethink the way audiences watch Bergman's films, how they share emotional responses regardless of where they are located across the globe, and how contexts matter for the rich variety of experiences that have been gathered in these pages. By this, we hope to provide the reader with an overarching framework that deepens the understanding of the different chapters in relation to one another and the book in its totality.

Re-examining New Cinema History, Resurrecting the Auteur and Re-approaching Bergman

For the last two decades, NCH has taken shape following previous calls to expand cinema history beyond a mere history of films.³ NCH's primary goal has been to analyse the complex relationship between cinema and society, including work on film circulation and exhibition as well as the investigation of audiences in all their diversity, usually through a focus on cinemagoing as a social, familial and cultural phenomenon.⁴ Successively incorporating innovative methods such as oral history, projects of geo-visualisation, or the use of big data, the best examples of NCH research have offered a combination of both top-down and bottom-up approaches that help illuminate 'actual audiences in their social, historical and cultural context of everyday life'.⁵ Systematic comparative research, often combined with complex data models that triangulate audience reception (e.g., oral history interviews) with programming and exhibition structures, has been at the core of many recent studies.⁶ Over the last decade, NCH's development has also been influenced by transdisciplinary approaches, which include, for example, social and economic historiography, geography, social anthropology, ethnography, cultural and memory studies and area/urban studies.⁷ This volume, which gathers contributions penned by film historians with backgrounds in communication studies,

art history and anthropology, reflects how this diversity reconsiders Bergman with fresh perspectives.

This methodological richness also applies to the geographical breadth of the case studies, as new methodologies have helped enlarge the research areas. Innovative perspectives that shed new light on circulation, exhibition and reception also helped decentre conventional film-historical narratives beyond the traditional centre-periphery idea. Thus, NCH has developed models that problematise the specificities of case studies in different historical and cultural contexts.⁸ Many recent studies engaging (historical) audiences bottom-up⁹ have addressed this problem, focusing not only on the methodological complications that arise from conducting similar studies in different places¹⁰ but also on the different roles that religious, political and economic factors play in diverse contexts.¹¹ Integrating this diversity is challenging.¹² That is, even when the methods are consistent, socio-economic and geographical contexts complicate the comparison.¹³

Our collection is a good example of this trend, as it problematises not only the circulation of Bergman's films in very different parts of the world but also explains how the construction of Bergman as *auteur* was the product of its cacophonous reception and discussion. Some of the contributors proudly inherit an openly interdisciplinary and bottom-up approach typical of NCH – that is, reception takes centre stage as these authors engage with topics such as distribution, exhibition, programming, and places and spaces of film consumption, censorship, audiences and cinemagoing.¹⁴ This book offers an innovative addition to this area of research. However, its setup has not been oriented – in the first instance – towards analysing cinema space(s) in a systematic way but towards investigating Bergman as *auteur* within a specific film-cultural context, reinvigorating a concept that NCH typically avoids in its focus on data, audiences, reception and situated micro-histories.¹⁵

The concentration on the specifics has allowed us to uncover certain continuities and patterns that connect the case studies in spite of their seeming disparities. That is why, despite some of the similarities regarding the role of film critics as cultural gatekeepers, parallel temporalities in different national film cultures and the importance of religious readings of Bergman's work, the continuity among these diverse approaches is addressed in the next paragraphs. However, this situated perspective has also had the contrary effect, as it shows how traditional categories in the discussion of the filmmaker and his work require a critical reconsideration in light of historical specificities. As we elaborate below, central

concepts in film-historical research such as film culture, cinephilia, art house and popular cinema, modernity, and even the idea of Catholic film criticism differ substantially in content when formulated in different contexts.

Among these different variations of core concepts, one stands out: the *auteur*. Bergman was indeed an artist filmmaker, a director with a voice, whose films presented a certain stylistic and thematic unity, if we adhere to the characteristics usually identified with the *auteur*. Nevertheless, this collection shows a diversity of interpretations of this idea. In this regard, the book reclaims a second tradition in film studies that, like NCH, was also reinvigorated around thirty years ago. At the time when Robert Allen stated that film history ‘has been written as if films had no audiences’¹⁶ and opened the path towards reception studies, research on film authorship was also experiencing an important renewal following Timothy Corrigan’s approach in his seminal article on the ‘commerce of *auteurism*’.¹⁷ Recuperating the *auteur* for film history meant defending a ‘constructivist’ understanding of authorship that went beyond the romantic, humanist model of classic *auteurism* and also sidestepped the poststructuralist criticism of grand theory.

With its particular variations, this is the path that this book follows as it defends the idea that Bergman, the Swedish filmmaker born in 1918, had limited influence on the creation of another concept: Bergman, the modernist *auteur*, not only an ideal construction and an object of discourse but also a set of references many filmgoers could relate to (even without having watched his films) and a ‘theoretical object’ for film critics and academics over the last six decades. Thus, this book places the *auteur* at its core as it recognises how it has been central in shaping the way Bergman has been consumed and discussed. At the same time, it questions the qualities usually associated with this concept. The celebration of the romantic genius makes way for a situated analysis of the process behind the creation of the *auteur* and its different manifestations. It further illustrates how this creation – Ingmar Bergman – was in many of these contexts the focal point around which film-cultural fields took shape and/or evolved.

The term film culture, so central in this understanding of the variations of the *auteur*, refers to central research areas formulated within NCH research – that is, those related to ‘questions of the circulation and consumption of cinema – on the commercial activities of film distribution and exhibition and the political and legal matrix that underpinned them, and on the sociocultural history of cinema’s audiences’,¹⁸ which usually translates into a focus on quantitative research around box office numbers, programming, types of venues and socio-demographic data

on audiences.¹⁹ What we argue for in addition to this – through our focus on Bergman – is that a broader understanding of film-cultural phenomena is essential to illustrate the differences in institutional and sociological micro-histories of cine-magoing, film consumption and film discussion. These phenomena range from film criticism debates to film policies and censorship, questions of canonisation and the role of academia, film festivals and essayists, and practices of film-cultural dissemination and pedagogy. And so, the relation between Bergman and the film cultures in which his work circulated goes beyond the traditional differentiation between text and context. That is, the case studies will show how film spectators, institutions, critics and academics were discussing Bergman and recreating him; but they will also illustrate how they were simultaneously transformed by him, reshaping the film-cultural context in which his reception had initially taken place.

However, the fresh approach we champion in these pages can never be done with completely fresh eyes, considering the theoretical discourse this director generated since almost the beginning of his own career. Bergman is one of the most discussed creators in the history of the medium. Since the celebration of what would have been Bergman's 100th birthday in 2018, there has also been a renewed interest in his work (including republishing Bergman's own writings)²⁰ that contributed to overcome the traditional purgatory that a filmmaker's reputation endures after his/her passing. This re-evaluation also reflects a new wave of scholarship accompanying the publication of older volumes for the occasion.²¹

This rich work on Bergman helps us trace the director's different interests while reflecting on the evolution of film studies over the last five decades. Roughly, four overarching approaches can be distinguished among these publications. The first group includes biographical works, dated as early as the 1960s, that reflect a journalistic background as well as the state of the art of film-critical debates under the spell of auteurism. For these publications, Bergman's biography usually provides a general frame of interpretation and an explanation of certain episodes of his films.²² The second approach covers those titles that, leaving behind the traditional biographical perspective, tend to focus on aesthetic and stylistic questions.²³ A third branch of research focuses on authorship in relation to one or different media,²⁴ and a fourth category is composed of works that put films and oeuvre in relation to more general and anthropological questions; related to his image as an *auteur* prone to deal with 'serious' subjects in his films, many publications discuss Bergman's oeuvre in relation to religion, philosophy and society.²⁵

Previous research often ignores how historical contexts inform the way Bergman's works are exhibited, received and discussed. The limited analysis of Bergman's oeuvre in its national context often dismisses the cultural complexity of his international reception, and, ultimately, clouds Bergman's cultural imprint.²⁶ Most of these studies also reveal little to nothing about the actual circulation of Bergman's films or about the various images of Bergman as *auteur*. However, recent exceptions to this trend relocate auteurism in a more challenging and creative way.²⁷ For example, Maaret Koskinen and Louise Wallenberg's recent edited volume re-addresses the value of the production contexts and therefore recasts the centrality of the *auteur*.²⁸ Other works we are indebted to include the already mentioned studies by Birgitta Steene from the 1990s, Tino Balio's work on marketing of Bergman in the US from 2010,²⁹ Ingrid Stigsdotter and Mark Bergfelder's work on the cross-cultural marketing and reception of *Persona*³⁰ and, more recently, Jono Van Belle's reception study³¹ and Hamish Ford and Daniel Humphrey's special issue that reconsiders Bergman in light of world cinema.³²

The Chapters in This Volume

In this book, nine authors provide analyses of highly situated examples of the phenomenon Ingmar Bergman in the broad sense discussed so far. At the same time, their contributions seek to be significant beyond their specificity. The texts illustrate, for example, the debates that emerged around Bergman's 'discovery' in Poland, Uruguay, Chile and Argentina since the mid-1950s, his centrality in Italian film criticism in the 1960s and 1970s, how he, while in Spain, was transformed into an *objet d'amour* by Catholic intellectuals around 1960, and how his presence still resonated among film festival audiences and film societies in India between the 1950s and 2020s. These contributions also show how Bergman's films influenced specific individuals as revealed in the letters they sent to the director himself. The chapters gathered here cover more than seventy years and spread over different world regions and film cultures; they offer new perspectives and at the same time reflect on and situate themselves within a larger tradition of research on Ingmar Bergman, where Birgitta Steene's reception studies clearly stand out.³³

The first chapter in this collection, penned by Jono van Belle, elaborates precisely on Steene's pioneering reception work. Steene recognised audiences as the driving force behind the legacy of Bergman's films. This approach is related to the

book's common research object, as it helps highlight the cultural, historical and geographical specificities of film reception. The chapter is a tribute to her contribution and a critical review of her relevance for many of the questions addressed and further developed by the rest of the authors in the volume.

Alejandro Kelly-Hopfenblatt and María Paz Peirano offer a perfect example of how these principles can be specifically applied in a comparative analysis of Bergman's reception in Chile and Argentina during the 1950s and 1960s. Bergman's emergence as a relevant international filmmaker owes a lot to South American cinephiles, as the director has occupied a central place in the cinematic imagination of the Latin American Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile and Uruguay), an influence that is still felt today. As in the many other cases analysed in this book, Bergman stands out among other filmmakers, acting as an exceptional exponent of the kind of cinematic cosmopolitanism embraced by local cinephiles. Films such as *The Virgin Spring*³⁴ were consumed, discussed, criticised and assimilated as representative of an aspirational modernity that for many seemed to have come from a far-off land (from 'Scandinavian mists' in the words of some romanticising contemporary texts). This reception cannot be reduced to mere aesthetic parameters and it usually involved a constant renegotiation of modernity as a cultural and social category.

Bergman's relevance among South American film cultures during the 1950s is also emphasised by Mariana Amieva in her chapter on Uruguay. Her point of departure is a question that became a matter of national cinephile pride among local cinemagoers in that decade: they claimed to be the *real* discoverers of Bergman's genius beyond Sweden's borders. Amieva further illustrates how this seemingly superficial controversy helped channel deeper debates about local film communities' relations to national identity, modernity and self-perception.

Fernando Ramos Arenas analyses how a paradoxical, limited and somehow effective image of Bergman as a religious filmmaker was constructed in Spain between 1960 and 1963. This 'national' reinterpretation was forced on a relatively small group of spectators by a system of film critics, censorship boards and film festivals who implemented the main guidelines of a conservative, national Catholic dictatorship that strongly limited access to the films. The text also explores the fringes of this system, as censorship rarely was homogeneously applied and successfully implemented. It shows how this 'religious' image was increasingly challenged by younger members of the national film communities, making Bergman a point of friction for a film culture in transition.

As in the Spanish case, Konrad Klejsa analyses how Bergman was received in the People's Republic of Poland (PRP) in those same years, another variation of the filmmaker's relevance within a European film-cultural context beyond its usual centres (i.e., France, Germany and Italy). In his chapter on the 'Bergman season' of 1959–60 (nine of Bergman films were released in the PRP between March 1959 and August 1960), Klejsa showcases the decision-making process of foreign film selection, traces in detail the circulation of the films in some cities, and dissects the interpretative patterns that operated in the critical reception of the titles.

As these first cases already implied, film critics were central gatekeepers in the general construction of Bergman as an international *auteur* and for his particular redefinition in each of the countries under scrutiny. Giulio Tosi offers an innovative approach on this topic. He illustrates the specificities of the Italian case covering a longer period (more than twenty years), highlights the ups and downs of Bergman's consideration among the country's film-critical establishment, and redefines Bergman's relevance by explaining how his promotion was also central to the career of star film critic Guido Aristarco (1918–96), who used the defence of his films as a tool in his own struggle to assert his authority as a critic and, later, as a university professor. Tosi concludes that Bergman's works contributed to tectonic changes in a cultural field searching for autonomy and relevance.

However, Bergman's films were also capable of generating a more visceral response from audiences, as demonstrated in Eirik Frisvold Hanssen's chapter. Hanssen examines fan mail currently preserved in the Ingmar Bergman Foundation's archive in Stockholm. In line with Steene's interest in 'actual' audiences (i.e., beyond academics, critics, state functionaries, festival directors or film archivists), these letters convey first-hand knowledge about reception, its historical diversity and the variety of ways in which audiences watched and interpreted Bergman's films over the years. Yet, these letters also illustrate, with a clarity seldom achieved, the way cinema influences people's existence and its capacity to change their lives.

This impact on individuals and communities is to this day an important part of Bergman's legacy, a theme explored by Ashvin Immanuel Devasundaram in the last chapter of this volume. Devasundaram analyses Bergman's resonant presence among film festival goers and film societies across India, temporally traversing the nation's postcolonial trajectory in the 1950s to the digital dimensions of the twenty-first century. He focuses on the impact on national audiences in the new millennium and shows how this was largely mediated by cultural intermediar-

ies and custodians through the interface of film festivals, societies and collectives devoted to showcasing preponderantly arthouse or alternative cinemas.

In its diversity, this colourful variety of approaches to Bergman and his films encapsulates a common theme: Bergman was more than just a filmmaker. This book tries to do this statement justice, convinced that the history of Ingmar Bergman cannot be limited to the history of his films. It presents a different story, expanded to other areas, methodologically challenging, geographically decentred, and intertwined with the profound transformations of the ways cinema has been consumed, discussed and publicly considered in the last seven decades, a history that shows how Bergman's legacy is still alive and well. We can't blame Kermit for that.

Fernando Ramos Arenas is a tenured Associate Professor (*Profesor titular*) for European Cinema at Complutense University in Madrid. He earned his PhD at Universität Leipzig in Germany in 2010; since then, his research has followed a comparative approach that focuses on the history of European film cultures, national cinemas and cinema heritage. He has edited three anthologies and is the author of three monographs, including *Cinephilie unter der Diktatur* (Springer, 2021).

Jono Van Belle is an Assistant Professor in Media and Communication Studies at Örebro University, Sweden. Van Belle earned her joint PhD in Communication and Cinema Studies at Ghent University and Stockholm University in 2019. She has previously worked on the reception of Ingmar Bergman in Sweden and Belgium, and, together with Åsa Jernudd, on cinemagoing in Sweden during the 1950s and 1960s. Van Belle's research interests include Ingmar Bergman, cinema memory, audience reception, gender studies and media policy.

María Paz Peirano is an Assistant Professor in Film and Cultural Studies at Universidad de Chile. Her research focuses on Chilean cinema and the development of local film cultures. She is the co-editor of *La vieja escuela: El rol del Cine Arte Normandie en la formación de audiencias (1982–2001)* (2020), and *Film Festivals and Anthropology* (2017). She was the lead researcher of 'Film Festivals, Educative Experiences and the Expansion of the Chilean Field' and 'Chilean Film Audiences: Film Culture, Cinephilia and Education' (Fondecyt 1211594). She is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Antwerp (Belgium).

Notes

1. Bennun, 'How the Muppets Made Us All Bergman Experts'.
2. *Ingmar Bergman Out of Focus* was funded by the Riksbanken Jubileumsfond for the Advancement of the Humanities and Social Science (2021–2023), grant registration number F21-0096.
3. This started to change in the late 1980s. In 1985, Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery published their seminal *Film History: Theory and Practice*, arguing for a more empirical approach to film history with proper attention devoted to the technological, social, aesthetic and economic contexts in which films are produced, distributed, exhibited and consumed.
4. Biltereyst, Maltby, and Meers, *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*, 2.
5. Van de Vijver, 'Gent Kinemastad', 3.
6. Ercole, Van de Vijver, and Treveri Gennari, 'Challenges to Comparative Oral Histories'. Other examples are the European Cinema Audiences project (<https://www.europeancinemaaudiences.org/>), Jernudd's Swedish Cinema and Everyday Life (<https://www.oru.se/english/research/research-projects/rp/?rdb=p2085>) and Treveri Gennari and Sedgwick's 'Five Italian Cities'.
7. Proof of the solidification of New Cinema History as an academic field is the upsurge of edited volumes that bring together the intersecting disciplinary approaches and variety of methodologies that NCH encompasses. See the following: Egan, Smith, and Terrill, *Researching Historical Screen Audiences*; Treveri Gennari, Van de Vijver, and Ercole, *The Palgrave Handbook of Comparative New Cinema Histories*; Biltereyst, Maltby, and Meers, *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*; Thissen and Zimmermann, *Cinema beyond the City*.
8. Meers, Biltereyst, and Lozano, 'The Cultura de La Pantalla Network'.
9. Treveri Gennari, Van de Vijver, and Ercole, *The Palgrave Handbook of Comparative New Cinema Histories*.
10. Biltereyst and Meers, 'New Cinema History and the Comparative Mode'.
11. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*.
12. Treveri Gennari, Van de Vijver, and Ercole, *The Palgrave Handbook of Comparative New Cinema Histories*; Oort et al., 'Mapping Film Programming across Post-War Europe'; Pafort-Overduin et al., 'Moving Films'; Meers, Biltereyst, and Lozano, 'The Cultura de La Pantalla Network'.
13. Biltereyst and Meers, 'New Cinema History and the Comparative Mode'.
14. Biltereyst, Maltby, and Meers, *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*; Egan, Smith, and Terrill, *Researching Historical Screen Audiences*.
15. To our knowledge, the only studies picking up on Bergman and other modernist auteurs in NCH are those conducted by Stokes et al. in the UK: Stokes and Jones, 'Windows on the World', and Stokes, Jones, and Pett, *Cinema Memories*. For a more elaborate discussion, see Van Belle, 'Scenes from an Audience'.
16. Allen, 'From Exhibition to Reception', 348.
17. Corrigan, 'The Commerce of Auteurism'.
18. Biltereyst, Maltby, and Meers, *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*, 13.
19. Ercole, Van de Vijver, and Treveri Gennari, 'Challenges to Comparative Oral Histories'.
20. Bergman and Bouraoui, *Artiklar, essäer, föredrag*; Bergman and Knausgård, *Arbetsboken 1975–2001*; Bergman and Nors, *Arbetsboken 1955–1974*; Bergman, Taia, and Koskinen, *Ofilmad, Ospelat, Outgivet*.
21. For example, Zern, *Se Bergman*.
22. E.g., Höök, *Ingmar Bergman*; Donner, *Djävulens Ansikte*; Macnab, *Ingmar Bergman*; Kalin, *The Films of Ingmar Bergman*; Thomasson, *Ingmar Bergman A-Ö*; Timm, *Lusten och dämonerna*;

- Duncan, Wanselius, and Josephson, *The Ingmar Bergman Archives*; Vermilye, *Ingmar Bergman*; Shargel, *Ingmar Bergman*.
23. Scott, 'The Achievement of Ingmar Bergman'; Borden, 'Bergman's Style and the Facial Icon'; Törnqvist, *Bergman's Muses*; Young, *The Persona of Ingmar Bergman*.
 24. E.g., Koskinen, *I Begynnelsen Var Ordet*; Koskinen, *Ingmar Bergman*.
 25. E.g., Lauder, *God, Death, Art, and Love*; Krook, *Rastlös Sökare Och Troende Tivlare*; Singer, *Ingmar Bergman, Cinematic Philosopher*; Livingston, 'Ingmar Bergman'; Bergom-Larsson, *Film in Sweden*; Hedling, 'Ingmar Bergman and the Welfare State'; Hedling, 'Konsten att inte sopa problemen under mattan'; Hedling, 'The Welfare State Depicted'; Hedling, 'Ingmar Bergman and Modernity'; Larsson, 'Ingmar Bergman, Swedish Sexploitation and Early Swedish Porn'; Humphrey, *Queer Bergman*; Blackwell, *Gender and Representation in the Films of Ingmar Bergman*; Tay, 'Politics of the Auteurial Subject'; Dahl, 'Scener ur ett äktenskap'.
 26. See Maltby, 'Introduction', 2.
 27. Rossholm, *Ingmar Bergman Och Den Lekfulla Skriften*; Holmberg, *Författaren Ingmar Bergman*; Hedling, *Ingmar Bergman*. Also noteworthy is Nicole Badylak's bachelor's thesis in Swedish: 'Bergmania i Río de la Plata', at Lund University, 2021.
 28. Koskinen and Wallenberg, *Ingmar Bergman at the Crossroads*.
 29. Balio, *The Foreign Film Renaissance on American Screens*.
 30. Stigsdotter and Bergfelder, 'Studying Cross-Cultural Marketing and Reception'.
 31. Van Belle, 'Scenes from an Audience'.
 32. Ford and Humphrey, 'Situating Ingmar Bergman and World Cinema'.
 33. Steene, *Måndagar med Bergman* and 'The Transposition of a Filmmaker'.
 34. To facilitate the reading, we have chosen to use the English titles throughout the chapters. A list with the original language titles is included at the end of the book.

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Introduction

The Surface of the Image is Political

Despite the successes of feminist film theory, we still do not have a model for imagining the radical potential of the image. This is where the pretty offers a profound reordering of aesthetics and politics: if the image has been consistently denigrated as feminine and perverse, then prettiness deconstructs this rhetoric and opens up the productive potential of the aesthetic as feminist form.

Rosalind Galt (2011: 36)

The discursive strategy that aims at repossessing the feminine through strategic repetitions engenders difference. For if there is no symmetry between the sexes, it follows that the feminine as experienced and expressed by women is as yet unrepresented, having been colonized by the male imaginary. Women must therefore speak the feminine, they must think it, write it, and represent it in their own terms.

Rosi Braidotti (in Burke 1994: 122)

To perform the terms of the production of woman as text, as image, is to resist identification with that image.

Teresa de Lauretis (1984: 36)

Author's Note

I want to preface what follows with a brief admission: I became a film scholar because of Sofia Coppola's films. Watching *The Virgin Suicides* (1999), aged seventeen, alone in a small cinema in London was a paradigm-shifting moment for me; it has taken me most of my adult life to comprehend the profound impact that this film has had on me (its affects and effect) and the ways in which it initiated a shift in my own personal course in life. This is, primarily, a work of scholarship, but it is also one written out of passion, anger and the limitations of personal experience. As Tania Modleski (1991: 45) puts it in reference to any scholar's claim to think herself outside of the limitations of subjectivity formed in ideology: 'Today, we are in danger of forgetting the crucial fact that like the rest of the world even the cultural analyst may sometimes be a "cultural dupe" – which is, after all, only an ugly way of saying that we exist inside ideology, that we are all victims, down to the very depths of our psyches, or political and cultural domination (even though we are never *only* victims).' Thus, all failures and faults of this text as follows are borne out of love and the limitations of my place as a feminist film scholar (a cultural dupe) in this world – and these are failings for which I alone take full responsibility.

Coppola beyond Celebrity and Postfeminism

Sofia Coppola possesses a highly sophisticated and intricate knowledge of how images come to work on us; that is, she understands precisely how to construct an image – what to add in and what to remove – in order to achieve specific moods, tones and cinematic *affects*. She knows that similar kinds of images can have vastly different effects on the viewer depending on their context: an image redolent with nostalgia and melancholy may contain or presage harm or threat in *The Virgin Suicides* (1999), and yet when transcribed to the setting of couture (Marc Jacobs' 'Daisy' campaign), it will signal bucolic and halcyon youthfulness devoid of any sinister atmosphere. This monograph is an extended study of Coppola's outstanding ability to think *through* and *in* images. In what follows, from a resolutely feminist perspective, I will explore the mood, texture, tone and multifaceted meaning of Coppola's aesthetic. In short, I will take my cue from Coppola herself and take images and the affect and effect of images seriously by reading surface in order to reach depth. It is my belief that this is the essential work that Coppola's

oeuvre asks of us as viewers: if we cannot engage with the surface of the image as a provocation, we miss its signification entirely. Surface, then, is deeply meaningful in Coppola's diegetic worlds.

Yet the surface of the image is continually denigrated as mere frippery – an insubstantial substitute for hard, scientifically rigorous, implicitly masculine knowledge (often associated with language rather than the image, or diegesis rather than mimesis). The image – especially the decorative image – is viewed all too often as seductive, beguiling, deceptive and false. In her groundbreaking study of the 'pretty' image, Rosalind Galt writes that 'even in the context of a positive evaluation of content, pretty images lead inevitably to the spectre of empty spectacle' (Galt 2011: 12). Film studies in particular has devoted a suspiciously copious amount of time to defaming decorative images and, moreover, associating this kind of image with femininity and femaleness; in other words, it is a discipline (alongside film criticism) that has worked assiduously to insist that there is nothing of import to consider once the curtain (surface and spectacle) is drawn back. As such, there is, I suggest, an alarmingly misogynist agenda at play here. My contention is echoed in Galt's suggestion that: 'The rhetoric of cinema has consistently denigrated surface decoration, finding the attractive skin of the screen to be false, shallow, feminine, or apolitical' (Galt 2011: 2). Moreover, Galt notes that: 'Many critics hear in the term (pretty) a silent "merely" in which the merely pretty is understood as a pleasing surface for an unsophisticated audience, lacking in depth, seriousness, or complexity of meaning' (2011: 6). Alongside Galt, I insist that the image itself as spectacle contains manifold signification and that this is what must be borne in mind when we are asked to attend to images such as those produced by Coppola. It is no coincidence, to my mind, that Coppola's latest film, *The Beguiled* (2017), overturns the clichéd priapic narrative of its original (*The Beguiled*, Don Siegel, 1971) by relating events from a female perspective through the trope of visual beguilement. Coppola has, after all, always displayed an acute understanding of how to use a phallic economy of images and words against itself. Feminist politics is, for her, a question posed through production design.

Therefore, it is telling, but sadly not surprising, that this lazy proclivity of critics and scholars alike to associate the surface of the image with superficiality and redundancy has extended into the popular and cultural reception of Coppola's films. Consider, for instance, the critical taxonomy and dismissive descriptors used on a regular basis to delineate Coppola's aesthetic appeal: 'tedious vacu-

ity' and 'uncritically rendered';¹ 'a day-dreamy and gorgeous-looking soufflé';² 'this is like a manicurist claiming to capture the inner experience of your pinkie';³ 'it's only for girls and gays';⁴ 'one of the daftest things I have seen for a long time';⁵ 'no weight, depth or particular story';⁶ 'shallow', 'superficial', 'psychologically diffuse', 'vague', 'vacuous', 'no depth' and 'blank'.⁷ Readers may be curious to note that it is male critics who nearly always perpetuate the infuriatingly gendered tone prevalent in this cultural discourse that has irrevocably shaped the reception of Coppola's films. The misogynist implication that is embarrassingly evident here is that Coppola's 'pretty' and decorative mise-en-scène is taken to signify nothing beyond its pleasing surface; indeed, her oeuvre is frequently likened to cinematic pastry, a delightful cream puff, full of delicious air but lacking in meaty (and masculine) substance (a metaphor critics employed with alarming alacrity with regard to *Marie Antoinette* (2006)).

This monograph is a concerted attempt to attend to the form of Coppola's films within both a feminist and modernist philosophical framework (high theory, if you will); I admit that my approach probably renders the tone and content of this study somewhat old-fashioned, especially given the fact that the majority of studies of Coppola's films tend to centre on or situate her work within both a postfeminist and postmodern context (much of which is referenced in the body of this study). However, I contend that Coppola is responding to situations of postmodernism and postfeminism not from within, but from without, and I must concede further that I loathe the notion of postfeminism as both principle and lifestyle choice. In her recent study of Coppola, Fiona Handyside (2017) also suggests that Coppola's work bifurcates due to the tensions inherent in the material she explores perennially, writing that:

Coppola's work straddles two differing, indeed possibly conflicting, definitions of postfeminism. On the one hand, her films participate in postfeminist cultural norms (interested in femininity, questions of female agency and power, and showcasing friendships, girliness, fashionable clothes and beautiful homes). On the other hand, they also draw on a significant feminist critical inheritance, showing her films as literally postfeminist (as in being able to learn from these interventions of feminist filmmakers from the 1970s, rather than disavowing them), and thus display a particular interest in questions of form that tend to be unusual in most female focused films. (Handyside 2017: 13)

Handyside draws out the finer points of what she views as Coppola's 'quintessentially postfeminist aesthetic' (2017: 5) by situating her work within the context of girlhood, adolescence and the rarefied settings of sparkle and light. As I do, she also intimates at the darker undertones of Coppola's representation of female adolescence as a period of time in which one's ability to flourish can not only be stifled but also brutalized by the sudden realization of what it means to become a woman within a patriarchal society – the often catastrophic results of which result in insidious forms of internalized, self-inflicted violence. However, this study, as my work on Coppola preceding this has demonstrated (see Backman Rogers 2012, 2015), will argue adamantly that Coppola's critique is situated almost entirely on the side of an outspoken and at times radical form of feminism. It is in attending to the form of her films with assiduous care and attention to detail that this becomes apparent. It is for this reason that this study, as we shall see, employs a panoply of now well-known feminist texts on the image in order to render Coppola's feminist agenda clear. As such, this study exists in respectful dialogue with that of Handyside from opposite ends of a feminist spectrum with a great deal of common ground and agreement.

As a study of form, this book does not engage with Coppola as a personality or figure of celebrity. To come to the point, I am not exploring here the notion, after Timothy Corrigan (1991), that in the contemporary moment, the cinematic auteur functions as a brand. I do not dispute that this is correct, but in the case of Coppola I believe that this, to my mind, somewhat prurient fascination, ripe with double standards, with Coppola's private life and background has occluded careful and respectful assessment of her work.⁸ After all, the fact that David Lynch and Terrence Malick (two American independent directors whose supposed brilliance is rarely questioned) have both made advertisements for high-end perfumes and yet that this has not become a central point of analysis for both their oeuvres is rather interesting; in contrast, critics appear to have read Coppola's work myopically through the lens of her own family history, her investment in the fashion industry and her admitted white, female privilege to the extent that every film she produces is assumed to be a hermetic iteration of her own life.⁹ Once again, then, we face that old adage that a woman is too bound up in her own experience and her own thoughts (in fact, far too narcissistic) to make work about anything other than her own life; in many ways, we have not moved on critically from that moment in which Freud instructed women to leave

his audience since they themselves are the problem. It should be clear, then, that I find this approach (which is in fact bloviating nonsense dressed up as analysis) to be not only tedious and churlish, but also cerebrally indolent and sexist. I am surprised critics and scholars alike continue to get away with this kind of writing.

I am not wilfully misconstruing Corrigan's thesis here; the fact is that Coppola has, in fact, all too readily been turned into a brand that resonates far beyond the boundaries of her films (unlike the majority of her male counterparts or contemporaries, such as Wes Anderson and Noah Baumbach). Indeed, scholars have devoted a lot of attention to the fact of her celebrity (see Diamond 2011; Lewis 2011), to the extent that Coppola's personal choices (as a facet of postfeminist discourse), especially in relation to commodity fetishism, have become inextricably bound up with the 'appeal' of her films and the manner in which they are read.¹⁰ In other words, it would seem that Coppola as a brand has become increasingly difficult to extricate from any consideration of the formal properties of her work. This is troubling; a case in point would be the way in which the aesthetic appeal of, for instance, *The Virgin Suicides* has been extrapolated and reified in order to appeal to a youthful demographic. This process of commodification actually belies the devastating core of the film that tells us that leading one's life within precisely such a hermetic environment as the one Coppola's brand is used to create is claustrophobic, corrupting and potentially irretrievably damaging. In short, reading Coppola's films through the Coppola brand distorts their meaning entirely. Moreover, I do not expect Coppola as a person to be consistent with her filmmaking; that women making work that pertains to feminist concerns are held to increasingly impossible standards by the media (namely that they should be able to speak on behalf of all women everywhere all of the time) is, I insist, a form of patriarchal sabotage. I will allow Sofia Coppola her contradictions – the Coppola I write of here is therefore possibly closer to Seymour Chatman's conception of the 'ideal author' (just as I might assume that anyone reading these words is my 'ideal reader') or Michel Foucault's notion of the 'author function'. The concern of this study, then, is not Sofia Coppola herself, but her work. Sofia Coppola as she exists within these pages will be characterized, taking my cue from Corrin Columpar (in Levitin, Plessis and Raoul 2003), as a feminist auteure.¹¹

Coppola as Feminist Auteure

Thus far, I have defined the remit of this book by stating what it is *not*. My aim is not to demur with existing scholarship on Coppola – I do believe we are all contributing to a useful conversation on female authorship after all – but to situate my ongoing scholarship on Coppola (2007, 2012a, 2012b, 2015) from an alternative perspective than postfeminism, adolescence, fashion and celebrity. I will examine Coppola as a creator, par excellence, of mood (Sinnerbrink 2013) and beguilement through images that reveal, upon close reading, radical critiques of the gilded worlds in which her films are set. As such, Coppola's powers of beguilement draw us with ease into worlds of psychic fracture, loneliness and abjection. This is the essence of Coppola's power as a filmmaker: her images appear as pleasurable, but denote something we can only grasp by looking askew or awry – her images are troubling and vexing. Coppola understands that, as Tania Modleski puts it: 'Ideology is as effective as it is because it bestows pleasure on its subjects rather than simply conveying messages, and so it cannot be combated only at the level of meaning' (1991: 57). Coppola's feminist form of politics is precisely 'bestowed' via visual pleasure and this is the central assumption of this study. Hers is not a counter-cinema that takes its cue from Teresa de Lauretis' (1984, 1987) call for the de-aestheticization of images of the female body. As we shall see, Coppola understands that visual appeal can be used subversively as a form of Irigarayan masquerade; that is, Coppola's strategy is to reveal the process by which an image comes to be meaningful culturally (how images function as clichés that, in turn, inform our understanding of relations of power). Coppola also knows that an image always comes into being *for* someone and that in the case of representation of the female body, the male gaze is nearly always present as a structuring device. By extension, Coppola understands how the very mechanics of cinema, as an apparatus, function as a technology of gender (de Lauretis 1987). Coppola's highly specific form of feminist counter-cinema aims to dismantle or decentre the inveterate patriarchal project of classical cinema from within – she uses its imagery and its language against itself. And so, in order to extract meaning from Coppola's films, we must take their pleasurable properties seriously. In reading Coppola, it is not a matter of listening intently to what is said – after all, very little is articulated – but in remaining alert to the multiform, highly complex nature of her production design and what this connotes philosophically. Coppola, after all,

is known for using images and sounds as the point of inception for her work and rarely starts with dialogue (in fact, the most significant words in her films are, infamously, muffled and inaudible – fans will know to which scene I am referring). She is primarily a director who *thinks in images*. She is intensely cinematic in this respect. This study enacts a similar process by thinking *through* Coppola's images,¹² which is to say that the philosophical framework employed here, which I will go on to discuss in the latter portion of this chapter, is suggested or made sense of *by way of the image*.

Coppola's work has, I would suggest alongside Sharon Lin Tay (2009), far more in common with European waves of filmmaking and 1970s American independent film than it does with the postfeminist and ironic styles of the contemporary 'brat pack' (exemplified by Wes Anderson, Noah Baumbach and Todd Solondz), which Claire Perkins (2012), taking her cue from Jeffrey Sconce, has elaborated on as 'smart cinema'. Coppola's 'blank' style, I counter, should not be read in an ironic mode because its existential import is soundly based in critique. The playful and quirky (see MacDowell 2010) tone of hipster irony is not something, I would suggest, that Coppola brooks in her deeply serious and engaged work. In this sense, Coppola recuperates the tropes of what Robert Kolker (2000, originally published 1980) has delineated as a 'cinema of loneliness' from within a feminist framework by situating her own work in response on the side of critique. As Kolker remarks of 1970s American 'indie' filmmaking (especially in reference to Francis Coppola, Robert Altman and Martin Scorsese), this canon of film rarely challenges: 'the ideology many of them [these films] find abhorrent . . . [they] perpetuate the passivity and aloneness that have become their central image . . . their films speak to continual impotence in the world, an inability to change and to create change' (2000: 10). *Somewhere*, by way of example, is a film that clearly evinces a nostalgia for American indie filmmaking of the 1970s and 1980s (Coppola uses the camera lenses deployed in *Rumble Fish* (1983) to create a specific grainy, washed-out aesthetic), but responds to that patriarchal and hermetically sealed historical moment in filmmaking from a feminist perspective. Indeed, the film sets out to critique the romantic notion of masculinity in crisis that the 1970s cinema of paranoia reified through the characters of Harry Moseby, Harry Caul, Johnny Boy and Travis Bickle. Coppola's work engages radically with American indie's cinematic inheritance by reconfiguring it as a critique of apathy and impotence. In a similar manner, we can read her engagement with feminist politics as an attempt to subvert and undermine the priapic nature of the cinematic inheritance upon

which she draws. After all, this is the woman who asks what a Clint Eastwood/Don Siegel film from the 1970s might look like from an admittedly white and privileged female point of view (a controversy on which I will elaborate in the first chapter of this study).

It will be clear to readers by now that I will be referring to Coppola as the central agent and creative force behind her body of work. This is not to detract from the artistic team that has worked so consistently and assiduously on her films throughout her career to date (cinematographers Ed Lachmann, Lance Accord and the brilliant, late Harris Savides, editor Sarah Flack, production designer Anne Ross, bands AIR and Phoenix, producer Fred Roos, and actresses Kirsten Dunst and Elle Fanning), but rather to stress that Coppola is the agential or centrifugal force that determines the aesthetic for which these films are renowned; that is, Coppola knows precisely who can help her evoke these particular shades, tones and moods. Moreover, she is known for her discerning taste and quiet determination to achieve the meticulous cinematic effects she desires (she famously refused to make *Lost in Translation* with anyone else but Bill Murray, despite the fact that the actor had neither signed a contract nor turned up on set in Japan by the first day of the film's notoriously tight shooting schedule). Here again, I must confess to adopting a somewhat old-fashioned attitude to the notion of authorship. Poststructuralist auteur theory that emerged in the wake of scholarship by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault who announced the 'death of the author' and proposed the 'author function' instead, sets forth that the author is but an organizing principle within a text's internal structure. From a feminist perspective, this is, at best, purely common sense (we cannot claim to know the complexity and contradictions of somebody intimately through their work); that is, the work possesses its own logic, which is in turn interpreted by a viewer or reader with her own unconscious bias and experience. Indeed, the contradictions of the text, the moment at which it begins to unravel itself (as Jacques Derrida might have it) signal the impossibility if not the outright falsity of positing a consistent, abiding and wholly self-aware subject as its origin. However, just as the auteur theory in its original manifestation was a highly patriarchal theory that was all too heavily indebted to the Romantic notion of the lone male artist as genius, the work of the poststructuralists who influenced this deconstructive reiteration of the theory (broadly speaking Barthes, Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze) were entirely blind to the realities and intersections of gender, class, race and their conterminous conferral of privilege or disenfranchisement. At the risk of sounding paranoid in tone,

it seems significant that the moment in which women started to make gains not only within society politically and economically but also culturally also happens to be the moment in which a theoretical course is set that is wholly inimical to any ability to lay claim to a name. To name is, after all, to harness a form of power. For feminist scholars, one cannot remain indifferent to the matter of *who* is speaking; as Kaja Silverman, who has resolutely rejected the notion of the author as a transcendent source of meaning in her work, argues: 'it is clearly not the same thing for a woman to speak with a female voice as it is for a man to do so, and vice versa' (Silverman 2003: 70). To divest a woman of her agency, to disregard her stance as the teller of her own tale is to deprive her of her own voice and her own authority and expertise.¹³ It is a vehemently sexist manoeuvre that serves to blind us to the manifold ways in which female subjectivity is inscribed within a text – and one of the central facets of this inscription is the author as speaker (or one of many speakers) of a film. Again, as Silverman so persuasively argues, 'the crucial project with respect to the female voice is to find a place from which it can speak and be heard, not to strip it of discursive rights' (1988: 189). I concur that we cannot, and must not, pronounce as obsolete and defunct a form of agency (female, feminine, feminist, femme) that is still yet to be realized fully. It is for this reason that I will, as a political strategy, centre the figure of the female and feminist auteure (Columpar 2003) in what follows.

Tania Modleski, taking her cue from Nancy K. Miller, has remarked that it is Foucault's 'sovereign indifference to the matter of who's speaking, and not the concept of authorship itself, that is the mask behind which phallogentrism hides its fictions' (Modleski 1991: 33). The matter of who is enunciating the text, then, is a feminist issue. To lay claim to one's agency as a practitioner is a feminist act. This is not a trivial issue for, once more, as Miller reminds us, the matter of the signature for women 'by virtue of its power in the world of circulation – is *not* immaterial. Only those who have it can play with not having it' (quoted in Modleski 1991: 33). It is especially crucial that women are able to author texts in terms of both form and narrative within a cultural arena such as film. Hollywood is an industry that almost singlehandedly powers the norms and ideals that shape our notions of what constitutes a successful and therefore nebulously 'good' life and, by extension, who is represented. At worst, it is a minacious form of ideology that enacts and perpetuates forms of systemic violence that function through hierarchy, separation, elevation and degradation. Hollywood is notoriously racist, sexist and ageist as an industry, and it is responsible (as the factory of dreams)

for the creation of a cultural subconscious on a global scale. Indeed, it is hard labour to work against the grain of Hollywood. In terms of its treatment of the female body, Modleski has written of ‘the monstrous hypocrisy of a system which could so exploit a woman’s body while infantilizing, idealizing, and sentimentalizing women with its belief in female fragility and spirituality’ (1991: 21). Feminist agency as authorship within the film industry works to deconstruct, decentre and disperse these dubious cinematic pleasures by offering alternative strategies of seeing and desiring. Feminist authorship can employ a number of incisive rhetorical strategies such as the subversive use of genre, the centring of the female gaze, female desire and the female voice, a holistic approach to representing the female body and the foregrounding of the cerebral female protagonist; it also readily appropriates sardonic and scathing humour in order to undermine Hollywood’s pompous determination to take itself so seriously.

Within this context, Coppola is a curious case in point since, from the perspective of many scholars and critics, she is frequently cast in the role of Hollywood royalty (indeed, as a rarefied, privileged princess) – a compliant cog in the wheel of the tumescent Hollywood system that swallows up whole most attempts to function independently of its own bloated organism. However, as I will go on to argue, Coppola is highly proficient in undermining the rhetorical strategies of Hollywood precisely because it is a language that she knows how to speak fluently, even if this is not adopted with ease. If, as Audre Lorde famously reminded us (within the intersectional context of race, gender and sexuality, which is admittedly not the world of Coppola), it is impossible to dismantle hegemonic cultural capital by using the patriarchal tools that built such a behemoth, Coppola’s strategy is to undermine the foundations of that structure by recuperating its central assumptions and tenets through a gendered form of politics – a process that casts much of received male rhetoric within an absurd light.¹⁴ In other words, she feminizes the master’s tools in order to reveal the weak and provisional foundations upon which his house is built. I would argue, by augmentation, that her relationship to the fashion and beauty industries functions in a correlative manner: Coppola understands intimately *how* images of femininity and ‘femaleness’ are constructed and used on women and young girls culturally, rhetorically and ideologically. Hers are the tools of the feminist auteure in that she seeks to interrogate those norms and not reify them: in this context, her fascination with whiteness in particular is crucial, for Coppola’s representation of whiteness is, in fact, one that hinges on impossibility and mortality.

Addressing the Viewer as Female

It is my belief throughout this study that Coppola not only functions as a feminist auteure within her own texts (the agential force and voice of the films), but that she also addresses the film viewer *as female*. A great deal of critical attention has been paid to the representation of the female figure or how ‘femaleness’ is constructed onscreen. Less, however, has been said about the female spectator. Indeed, Jackie Stacey’s study of stardom (1994) remains somewhat unique in its emphasis on the female spectator. Since Laura Mulvey (2001) argued in her celebrated polemic on visual pleasure that the female viewer is caught in a double bind and forced into a relationship of subjugation with – or is in fact made complicit in – the production of her own likeness as spectacle, feminist film theory has worked hard to grapple with the intricate complexities of the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and class both on and off the screen. To point out the deep imbrication of representation and embodied, phenomenological experience may seem somewhat redundant or evident, yet Hollywood, as the dominant mode of narrative filmmaking, continues to eschew dense description of female perspectives in favour of glossy commodification. Despite voluminous (and mostly, in my view, ill-conceived) criticism of Mulvey’s stance (to which she in turn has responded), it would seem that Hollywood in particular still regards the task of representing the reality of the female body and lived female experience (in all of its complexities and varied intersections) as a dull, lacklustre or even otiose and abject matter. In 1984, de Lauretis opined that ‘the position of woman in language and in cinema is one of non-coherence; she finds herself only in a void of meaning, the empty space between the signs – the place of women spectators in the cinema between the look of the camera and the image on the screen, a place not represented, not symbolized, and thus pre-empted to subject (or self)-representation’ (1984: 8). Writing this book, some thirty-four years after de Lauretis first surmised that women in their multiplicity and difference are nowhere to be found onscreen (which has a lasting and profound impact on how female subjectivities are formed), I would argue that we find ourselves in much the same position on a quotidian basis. There have been outstanding analyses made of late on the considerable progress that women’s cinema is making (I recommend especially Sophie Mayer’s wonderful *Political Animals: The New Feminist Cinema* (2015)) and I am loath to suggest that female filmmakers and women working in visual culture at large have had a negligible impact; such a suggestion would be in flagrant

contradiction to the mere existence of this study after all (although, notably, it is dedicated to a privileged white woman). However, the egregious barriers that women face working in creative industries are well documented and we are far from reaching a state of equilibrium and parity. In terms of the representation of women on screen, Laura Mulvey (with whom I coedited *Feminisms: Diversity, Multiplicity and Difference in Film Cultures* (2015)) and I have argued that we are facing new frontiers of misogyny that subject the female body to an extensive process of dematerialization that seems to sanction the exaction of wanton violence on our onscreen likeness. That Patty Jenkins' *Wonder Woman* (2017), which tightly bound and likened the female body to a war machine, could cause such a furore that grown female journalists admitted in print to crying in the aisles of the cinema due to the simple fact of viewing an athletic female body enact the asinine procedural movements normally reserved for the male action hero frankly speaks volumes.

That the Hollywood image is so deeply bound up with fantasy – indeed, *is* a creation of fantasy – is precisely what makes it powerfully seductive; this in turn affects the production of subjectivity by redirecting and repurposing desire (that Hollywood's history is intimately related to the birth of the production line of capitalism – in particular the Fordist model – should not be forgotten). In other words, Hollywood drives us towards the unattainable: it generates a form of madness. As de Lauretis puts it: 'In this manner cinema powerfully participates in the production of forms of subjectivity that are individually shaped yet unequivocally social' (1984: 8). This is dangerous territory if this highly particular image is not decentred and deconstructed because it becomes the benchmark, the standard by which we judge and measure our own worth simply because of its saturation, which all too often is taken for granted as a given. And as we are well aware, the continuity editing system (which David Bordwell argues has 'intensified' (2002) in its very form rather than lost cultural ground) ensures that narration as an ideological effect functions optimally. That is, we perform feminist labour when we demand that viewers read against the grain of the image. De Lauretis, taking her cue I suspect from Mulvey, has argued that this has a detrimental, if not nefarious, impact on the female spectator in particular (her form/likeness already being subjected to ever-more preposterous levels of specularity); she writes that 'if female spectators find themselves placed in virtually the same position . . . as they are in classical cinema, it is because the inscription of sexual difference in the image(s) is not questioned but taken for granted . . . narrativity is what over-

determines identification, the spectator's relations to the film, and therefore the very reading of the images' (1984: 9). Despite this statement being issued from what would now be considered the annals of feminist theory, we only need to consider the harmful postfeminist confluence of supposed 'feminist choice' and the horrifically rigorous standards of the burgeoning beauty industry – an industry that has brought Botox, fillers and all manner of ghastly cosmetic procedures to the high street in the name of 'self-care' and 'self-investment' (as Jessa Crispin (2017) recently stated, it is not 'self-care' if you are paying someone to paint your nails or wash your hair) – to re-establish its contemporary relevance; this is fundamentally a relationship of commerce that is regulated and facilitated *through* images. Hollywood, as it were, has facilitated a new form of aesthetic labour that is entirely founded on and bound up with fantasy (a fantasy with which women are encouraged to collude). As reality recedes, we are expected to subscribe increasingly tightly to our own virtual, airbrushed image (a dilemma to which Coppola has devoted an entire film: *The Bling Ring*). To intercede in this is to deconstruct, which is precisely a feminist manoeuvre. Above all, a feminist film must address the spectator as female (as opposed to portraying the female body or character as strong or weak, which is far too simplistic a response) and reveal to her the 'terms of production of woman as text, as image' (de Lauretis 1984: 36). This intricate process of unpicking *how* a specific image of woman has come to take hold culturally and ideologically enables, in short, a form of resistance: a refusal to identify with such an image. Moreover, it can reveal to us how the image is weaponized and how the image can be brought into confrontation with its own limitations. For de Lauretis, this is feminist labour, for: 'Women are constructed through gender (and other forms of ideology) and feminism is the practice and consciousness of that ideology's limits, a "de-re-construction"' (2007: 3). This is, fundamentally, a kind of cinema that is not merely made by, but *for* women; that is, it places the male spectator in the position of feeling the *affects* to which a patriarchal regime of images subjects the female body.

Coppola's films are notably marketed at women, and young women in particular. Indeed, distributors of her films have, somewhat infuriatingly, latched on to the pet themes and tones of a postfeminist aesthetic in order to appeal to a highly specific demographic of adolescent girl. I believe that in part, this has worked against Coppola's credibility and right to be taken seriously as a feminist auteure. To return to my earlier point, critics, viewers and scholars alike are all too ready to obfuscate surface with meaning when it comes to Coppola's work and

assume readily that the content of her films correlates to the pleasing exterior within which they are packaged; for instance, the DVD of *Marie Antoinette* in particular was encased in a shade of fuchsia that is normally adopted for trinkets and clothing marketed heavily at very young girls, thus ensuring that the film's politics of pretty and excess is nullified and infantilized by its own marketing campaign (the film's reference to this shade of fuchsia was actually meant as a homage to British punk, which its opening-credit sequence renders explicit). However, this somewhat misguided marketing of her films reveals, in essence, a core motif or concern of Coppola's oeuvre: that she assumes the viewer to be female. Coppola adamantly feminizes her cinematic worlds not in order simply to create a pleasing aesthetic (although her films frequently spur specious use of her visuals within the glossy innards of fashion magazines, proving perhaps how easily she is misconstrued), but in order to characterize vision (that of director and spectator) as *female*. Coppola's feminist politics lies in her offering to the viewer a *dispositif* in which the multifaceted construction of the eternal feminine is revealed as a new form of feminist counter-cinema. That is, Coppola gives to the female viewer (especially the young, white female viewer) what they *know already to be true* and she demands that the male viewer bear the burden of what it means to be made the object of the gaze; consider, for instance, the tracking shot of Marie Antoinette entering Versailles, in which her point of view registers a series of hostile and objectifying gazes that represent the power and authority of the patriarchal court. Likewise, *The Virgin Suicides* is a film that works to deconstruct how young girls are already always fashioned into suffocating roles that force them to internalize the role of *to-be-looked-at-ness* (Mulvey 2001) that patriarchal narratives set out for them. The film adapts the nostalgia and irreparable pain of the original novel, but recuperates the priapic narrative as an absurdity that nonetheless facilitates gendered forms of violence and control. To refuse a young girl her becoming, to re-direct her desire, to make her carry the burden of meaning, to force her to be the psychic mirror of man is to destroy her. The film's dark revelation is that a young woman can kill herself without in fact ever committing suicide. These are films that reveal fundamental truths of what it means to become a woman under patriarchy. Notably, Coppola's films that centre male experience alongside that of the female (*Lost in Translation*, *Somewhere*) render masculinity as a hermetic shell inside of which it is impossible to become or to thrive. And as Kaja Silverman (1992) has argued, to produce an analysis that divides received cultural notions of masculinity into its extant parts is also to decentre and deflate it of its dominance.

It is therefore crucial that Coppola's own cinematic dissection of masculinity (and, in particular, its fashioning as a dominant narrative by Hollywood) throws self-same, abiding identity into crisis – indeed, reveals it as, at best, a void and, at worst, a patriarchal farce.

A Feminist Politics of the Image

The task of defining the politics of Coppola's feminist imagery is rife with difficulty; scholars who write on her work often reveal its perplexing nature through their own choice of description. For instance, Amy Woodworth states that: 'Coppola's trademark slow pacing, privileging of *impression* over plot, and development of emotional texture and mood constitute a *kind of feminine aesthetic*' (2008: 151, emphasis added). Woodworth's intricate essay gets to the heart of why it is so hard to pin down what many view as the nebulous nature of Coppola's oeuvre (a presumption that is only shored up by Coppola's own reluctance to pronounce on the 'meaning' of her films – a track record she broke with only recently in reference to controversy over *The Beguiled*). In other words, Coppola's films are defined by mood and tone;¹⁵ they are paeans to the fleeting and ephemeral moments in life that are nearly impossible to capture, centred and grounded as they are in subjectivity and embodiment, but that nonetheless come to define the course of a life. Consider, for instance, the sound of Marie Antoinette's dress delicately caressing the underbrush as she wanders back home to an arranged marriage and away from a lover she knows she will most likely never see again, or the sound bridge that carries over the muted yet explosive sounds of *My Bloody Valentine* from Charlotte's taxi ride through Tokyo into the Park Hyatt hotel as Bob cradles her in his arms. Both of these moments are, without doubt, infinitesimal *and* profoundly altering events for both female protagonists. The slightness or brevity of actual time is distended and subsists within lived experience – that is, within the body. Coppola documents those moments that change us on an atomic level and that we carry with us internally. Yet bittersweet is not a quality that is easily defined; it is felt. This is the magical territory that defines Coppola's work, which externalizes the turbulence of the inner life. Likewise, the politics of her image is also hard to define because she is describing fractious situations in which any attempt to articulate oneself is thwarted by a patriarchal society that would seek to shut down dissent and to disarticulate the female experience; in

other words, she is often describing a fledgling feminist politics of the body in its moment of inception – a politics to come, if you will. Handyside has aptly noted that this kind of culture:

mitigates against connections across gendered, raced and class divisions. In the face of such a society, retreat to the domestic space, the comforts of home, or an attempt to fashion a new glamorous identity through fashion, seems an entirely logical response. It is not so much that Coppola and her female protagonists no longer enact collectivist feminist values, it is more than such collectivities fracture in the face of a society which promotes the model of the citizen as an active entrepreneur of the self. (2017: 31)

I concur with Handyside that Coppola's critical engagement with contemporary postfeminist politics reveals a near-outright rejection of any possibility of thriving within an environment that demands that female agency is reharnessed as the ideal model for late capitalist consumerism. Coppola's feminist politics, however, are not uniquely focused on the postfeminist moment and its affective damages; her oeuvre engages with a history of patriarchal culture that has sought to subdue, silence, trade and deny the female body and experience. Her feminist politics are wide-ranging and deeply imbricate with the history of cinema as a patriarchal model of subjectivity. In other words, her politics is of the image.

As I stated earlier, Coppola's is not a counter-cinema that adopts strategies of de-aestheticization and reflexivity; it is in no way Brechtian and has negligible allegiance with the epic theatre. She has, in other words, far more in common with 1970s American independent filmmakers and their deployment of tropes of European filmmaking than she does with, say, the *nouvelle vague*. She enacts a feminist recuperation of the image that is *already always* based on and in recuperation. This is why Coppola's engagement with the history of filmmaking is crucial to understanding her aesthetic appeal. Moreover, Coppola's films positively revel in the decorative and even florid or baroque (see Walton 2016) aspects of the image in order to evince a feminist politics as a question of production design. Coppola's use of the cinematic cliché (the generic image) is subversive in that she reveals the process by which someone or something *becomes* an image to be read collectively: how, for instance, the female body is cultivated as specifically meaningful (objectified, sexualized, dematerialized). In doing so, she lays open the mechanic through which an image always comes into being for someone else. Exposing the

burden of the male gaze as wrought on, in particular, the female form and its detrimental effects lies at the centre of Coppola's project. It is cinema's inveterate patriarchal politics that she addresses and its phallic economy of images that she, by extension, seeks to dismantle.

Coppola's fascination with the cliché as a form of cultural shorthand – an image that we already always know how to read and to assimilate – is born out of a wider project: how to free the female body from the burden of iconicity. If this is a position into which phallogentric culture has forced women, it is the aim of a number of feminist filmmakers, of whom Coppola is a prominent visionary, to find alternate paths to express female subjectivity and experience. Yet this is not a task that can be accomplished with alacrity or ease; as Rosi Braidotti, drawing on Irigaray, reminds us, 'the image of Woman, or of woman-as-other, is a culture-specific, historical system of material and symbolic representation, against which feminist women are struggling. Moreover, insofar as this imaginary has been internalized by women and has constructed female identity, it is by no means external to women and cannot be cast off like an old garment' (in Burke 1994: 122) It is this struggle, which is played out through external and internal stratification, that Coppola addresses in her films, often to heart-rending or devastating effect.

I suggest, then, that Coppola's films are more appropriately attended to through feminist philosophies of *difference* (many of which I refer to in this study) rather than purely through postfeminism. I must stress, alongside scholars who have sought to recuperate thinkers such as Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva from utterly inappropriate and naïve charges of essentialism (see in particular Bray 2003; and Burke 1994), that a feminism of sexual difference – despite what many Anglo-American feminists have argued – asserts difference positively so that one may speak *strategically* as a woman. 'Woman' in this sense does not denote a homogeneous, monolithic, static presence that can be exhaustively defined once and for all on behalf of all women everywhere; furthermore, it has nothing whatsoever to do with her biological body and everything to do with her place as a social subject within an ideological discourse that already shapes and delimits the terms and possibilities of her experience. On the contrary, 'woman', under these terms, stands in for the site where a nexus of relations constituted by multifarious and complex intersections of class, race and sex may be taken into account. Women are multitudinous and contradictory, and Coppola's work aims to represent but one margin of such compound and phenomenologically composite female existence in the world. To come to the point, as a filmmaker, she speaks,

thinks, writes and represents *through* the feminine and *as* a woman. This is imperative to the feminist project because women have been made to bear physically and symbolically the detrimental effects of white masculine privilege as his Other in order to shore up male identity as dominant.¹⁶ Materially, culturally and linguistically, women have been divested of a place from which to speak. Coppola speaks both *as* a woman and *to* women as her audience. To enact or activate a feminist politics through the image is vital because this is the site where dominant fictions come into being – the terms under which existence is, or is not, represented and given voice to. The dominant fiction of patriarchy does not exist in abstraction; Kaja Silverman, who defines it as ‘a reservoir of sounds, images, and narratives’, also asserts that ‘it has no concrete existence apart from discursive practice and its psychic residue. If representation and signification constitute the site at which the dominant fiction comes into existence, then they would also seem to provide the necessary vehicle for ideological contestation – the medium through which to reconstruct both our “reality” and “ourselves”’ (1992: 48). What Silverman defines here is a form of feminist counter-politics that attends carefully to the very construction of the dominant narrative that reveals itself through image and sound in order to expose it precisely as a creative fiction.

Similarly, Claire Johnston, writing in 1973, called for a determined confrontation with the ideology of mainstream cinema in order to challenge its depiction of women in particular – a representation that she argued is grounded in myths of the eternal feminine that Hollywood’s reality effect helps to pass off as natural and universal. She writes that ‘it is in the nature of myth to drain the sign (the image of woman/the function of woman in the narrative) of its meaning and superimpose another which thus appears natural’ (2008: 120). Critique of the image would therefore facilitate a dislocation between lived experience, identification and representation that would subvert patriarchal ideology and the phallic economy of words and images used to uphold it. It would render lucid the workings of myth (particularly in relation to cinema) as a form of cultural construction that suffocates those that live within its grasp (*The Virgin Suicides*, *Marie Antoinette*). Importantly, Johnston does not brook utopian thinking when it comes to forming a feminist counter-cinema (and nor, for that matter, do I). First, she points out that ideology does not function through deception – it is a reality within which we must live and we cannot erase it by mere effort of will. Second, it follows that the cinematic apparatus itself is part and parcel of that reality that we experience ideologically and is thus never neutral. In other words, it is impossible to capture

the so-called 'Truth' of experience. Bearing this in mind, it is therefore jejune to suggest that changing the conditions of production is enough to alter meaning. This concatenation of conditions, for Johnston, demands that new meaning must be made 'within the text of the film' (in Grant 2007: 124) – in other words, within the image itself. Johnston, unlike her contemporary feminist counterparts, argues that it is specifically Hollywood's dependence on stereotypes that renders it especially susceptible or open to subversion. If myth relies upon the use of certain iconographies, it is precisely this taxonomy of images that constitutes its most vulnerable and weak point: to denaturalize the icon, to push it to its limits is to foreground its textuality and, by extension, its place within received cultural discourse. Coppola's films work on us at the level of the image as a cliché; by drawing on a cinematic inheritance that works as a form of cultural and collective shorthand that serves the dominant narrative, she subverts the image by pushing it to its limit.

Coppola's strategy, I maintain, is to heighten and foreground the decorative and so-called 'feminine' aspects of the image in juxtaposition to a mood of crisis, disorientation, melancholy and rupture. The diffuse, light-filled and oneiric qualities of her images are always shot through with a dark and insidious undercurrent. It is within this disjunction between surface and depth, the cliché and its underside, symbol and mood that the feminist politics of Coppola's films emerge. In what follows, then, I argue that Coppola puts the pretty to 'critical, even political use' (Galt 2011: 6). For if, to return to Galt momentarily, 'the pretty is usually rejected as too feminine, too effeminate, and too foreign, it can surely provide aesthetic-political friction for queer or feminist film . . . Might prettiness in cinema be uniquely able to develop a politics that engages gender, sexuality, and geographical alterity at a formal level rather than simply as a problem for representation?' (Galt 2011: 6). Coppola, almost uniquely, takes the decorative surface of the image as a matter of high seriousness by addressing not only the problematics of 'pretty' as it is culturally conceived (even examining Hollywood masculine prototypes), but also as a way to directly reach questions of gendered identity. In reading Coppola, we must attend insistently to both surface and depth in order to garner meaning, for hers are films in which 'mood envelops and transfigures narrative meaning (and) . . . overrides conventional plot' (Sinnerbrink 2012: 161). Indeed, I suggest that mood and form are of far greater consequence in Coppola's work than narrative, for it is through the former that she decentres the latter as a stifling, if not violent, method of control and containment.

Notes

1. See Philip French, 'Marie-Antoinette – Review', *Guardian*, 22 October 2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2006/oct/22/philipfrench>.
2. See Sean O'Hagan, 'Sofia Coppola', *Guardian*, 8 October 2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2006/oct/08/features.review1>.
3. See Anthony Lane, 'Lost in the Revolution', *New Yorker*, 23 October 2006, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/10/23/lost-in-the-revolution>.
4. See Peter Travers, 'Marie Antoinette', *Rolling Stone*, 20 October 2006, <http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/reviews/marie-antoinette-20061020>.
5. See Peter Bradshaw, 'Somewhere – Review', *Guardian*, 9 December 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/dec/09/somewhere-review>.
6. See Tim Robey, 'Somewhere, Review', *Telegraph*, 9 December 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmreviews/8192556/Somewhere-review.html>.
7. For an excellent attempt at unpacking the critical language used to describe Coppola's work, see 'The "Problem" of Sofia Coppola', *It Equals*, 8 March 2017, <http://itequals.com/arts/the-problem-of-sofia-coppola>.
8. 'If, in conjunction with the so-called international art cinema of the sixties and seventies, the auteur had been absorbed as a phantom presence within a text, he or she has rematerialized in the eighties and nineties as a commercial performance of the *business of being an auteur*' (Corrigan, quoted in Wright Wexman 2003: 98).
9. For a recent and interesting celebrity study of Coppola in relation to white privilege, see Soraya Roberts, 'The Eternal Becoming of Sofia Coppola', *Hazlitt*, 19 June 2017, <http://hazlitt.net/longreads/eternal-becoming-sofia-coppola>.
10. See, for instance, but one example of a cornucopia of articles that centre on Coppola's guide to upmarket retail: Lynn Hirschberg, 'Sofia Coppola's Paris', *New York Times Magazine*, 24 September 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/24/travel/tmagazine/24coppola.html>.
11. Corinn Columpar coined the term 'auteure' in her article on Sally Potter's *The Tango Lesson* (1997). See Columpar 2003.
12. The philosophical framework I employ here has become meaningful to me *because* I have interpreted these thinkers through Coppola's images. It is Coppola who has made me understand and assimilate Luce Irigaray's work on the female body as commodity and object rather than the other way round (*Marie Antoinette*); it is Coppola who, for me, outlined and clarified Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject (*The Virgin Suicides*); it is Coppola who made a film that contextualized and took to its logical end Guy Debord's theory of the spectacle (*The Bling Ring*); it is Coppola who made Marc Auge's concept of the nonplace materialize for me (*Somewhere*); and it is Coppola who made me understand both Camus' notion of the absurd and Sartre's existential concept of human consciousness as nothingness (*Lost in Translation*), and that therefore an ethics of being in the world is always contingently founded as one of Beauvoirean ambiguity. That she has done all of this within the context of making a form of feminist cinema – one that privileges and centres the female point of view as both cinematic subject and cinematic viewer – is an achievement that should never be underestimated.
13. 'Feminist auteurship entails the impression of feminist authority, not necessarily that of the auteur herself, on screen. What is at stake here is the film's larger acknowledgment of an informing discourse that is ideological in both form and content. Whether visual, psychoanalytic, aural or

- narrative, this address transcends the personal; both the place and terms of address are derived from an understanding of the film's relevance to women' (Ramanathan 2006: 3-4).
14. See Audre Lorde, 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House' in *Sister Outsider* (1984).
 15. As Robert Sinnerbrink argues, mood is a difficult concept to define precisely because of its obviousness, yet it provides the backdrop to our cognitive and affective understanding of a film: 'Mood is one of those elements of cinema whose obviousness, like that of the everyday, is deeply mysterious. It is not simply a subjective experience or a private state of mind; it describes, rather, how a (fictional) world is expressed or disclosed via a shared affective attunement orienting the spectator within that world. Although mood remains a neglected topic in film theory, without it we cannot explain how meaning in film is communicated via style and composition' (2012: 148).
 16. Kaja Silverman astutely notes that 'disavowal also has a crucial part to play within the constitution and maintenance of sexual difference. However, whereas the Freudian account of that psychic mechanism explicitly posits it as a male defense against *female* lack, "Fetishism" implicitly shows it to be a defense against what is in the final analysis a *male* lack. Since woman's anatomical "wound" is the product of an externalizing displacement of masculine insufficiency, which is then biologically naturalized, the castration against which the male subject protects himself through disavowal and fetishism must be primarily his own' (Silverman 1992: 46).

CHAPTER 4

Somewhere (2010)

If we were in possession of an instrument which would permit us to penetrate deep into the innermost recesses of the human psyche, we would find not identity, but a void.
Kaja Silverman (1992: 4)

[A] world where people are born in the clinic and die in the hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions . . . where a dense network of means of transport, which are also inhabited spaces is developing; where the habitué of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures with an abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary, the ephemeral.
Marc Augé (1995: 78)

Somewhere, initially, seems to be Coppola's first foray into exploring and delineating male subjectivity, since it centres on the masculine body in crisis; however, when one considers this film alongside both *The Virgin Suicides* and *Lost in Translation*, *Somewhere* emerges as a film that effects a complex parsing out of the notion of identity and, more specifically, an intricate transformation of dominant fictions or narratives that hinge on male identity. R. Barton Palmer argues that: 'Coppola's "subject" thus far is at least as masculinist as it is feminist, her films offering sympathetic portraits of men puzzled, frightened, or frustrated by the elusive nature of the feminine' (quoted in Perkins and Verevis 2012: 53). However, it is my opinion, especially in relation to *Somewhere*, that Coppola's sensitive portrayal of the hackneyed trope of 'masculinity in crisis' is nearly always put in service more broadly to throw abiding notions of identity into crisis and to effect a change in the fabric of dominant patriarchal fictions *precisely as a feminist act*. Kaja

Silverman has argued, after all, that the location of crisis within the masculine body is deeply imbricated with the feminist project because: ‘to effect a large-scale reconfiguration of male identification and desire would, at the very least, permit female subjectivity to be lived differently than it is at present. In my opinion, it would also render null and void virtually everything else that commands general belief. The theoretical articulation of some non-phallic masculinities would consequently seem to be an urgent feminist project’ (1992: 3). I will argue in what follows that *Somewhere* is a film in which identity – and its extension in space – is held in abeyance and thus is reconfigured as nonidentity made manifest through nonplace. This is nothing short of a radical gesture, given that the film’s narrative in fact centres on the specificity of face and place (celebrity/stardom and Hollywood). As such, what Coppola reveals is the void at the heart of subjectivity within and through the very industry that fabricates, markets and sells abiding and dominant notions of identity, such as ‘masculinity’, in the first place. Space and time are vital tenets of the film because of the counterpoint this sets up between chronological/productive time and dead time or time as duration, and space as that which either renders us anonymous or opens up possibilities. As I have argued elsewhere: ‘*Somewhere* is a cinema of the body, which is to say that it explores the manifold ways in which time makes itself manifest through the body. That the weight of duration is brought to bear on a notably beautiful body . . . is significant. In an industry that tends to prize eternal youth, the process of ageing is akin to a slow slide into death’ (Backman Rogers 2015: 119). As is the case in *Lost in Translation*, at the centre of *Somewhere* is a confrontation between the individual and the void both within and without the body. Moreover, that body is placed on a timeline that posits and shores up the existential backdrop against which any human life is lived – namely, that not all things are possible and that death and ageing, regardless of how physically remarkable may be the body on which this process is wrought (in this case a hard, white male body), is a devastating force of equalization. We all come from and return to dust.

What the film offers, then, is a sedulous critique of hegemonic and systemic values that suffocate any ability to *live otherwise*. As Todd Kennedy notes astutely: ‘Coppola creates a film that subtly invokes – and comments upon – American identity, the postmodern culture of Los Angeles/Hollywood, and the central questions of modernity . . . the ability (or inability) of individuals to make a place for themselves in the modern world, a place where they can feel at home’ (2015: 52–53). How images create, delimit and contain processes of subjectivity is the

implicit concern, as I have argued thus far, of all of Coppola's films, but *Somewhere* takes this relation as its central theme, for the film explores specifically the detrimental effects of trying to live up to one's own cliché. From the perspective of postmodernism – since everything is reduced precisely to its surface appeal and *affect* – the film works to reveal the fundamentally perfidious nature of identity as created and positioned within a late capitalist context (namely, the film industry).¹ If it is the 'self' – as a highly particular image of celebrity – that is sold here, the film also suggests that complying too tightly with one's own manufactured image results in stasis and suffocation of life. Moreover, by rendering its main protagonist – who is sold as a 'someone', a consistent, abiding and recognizable entity – as 'nobody, not even a person' (as Johnny Marco comes to define himself), the film not only stages a critique of a spurious world in which true connection is always prevented (taking place as it does in a series of contemporary nonplaces and through a series of nonsequiturs), but also makes apparent the lie at the heart of ideologies of selfhood, whether this is made manifest in the form of celebrity culture or vacuous self-help philosophies, that one must be exhaustively *somebody*.

Feminist scholars who have written on male subjectivity, such as Tania Modleski (1991), Kaja Silverman (1992), Susan Jeffords (1994) and Donna Perbody (2011), Hannah Hamad (2013) and Stella Bruzzi (2013), have argued convincingly that masculinity admits cycles of crisis and fracture in order to re-establish its central convictions all the more strongly. Thus, masculinity is always reincorporated into the dominant grand narrative, precisely as a myth, in order, more often than not, to concretize and affirm identity at the both national (as grand narrative) and local levels. *Somewhere*, I will argue, is a direct challenge to franchises such as *Die Hard* and *Lethal Weapon*, which espouse a version of hard masculinity that Sharon Willis (1997) and Yvonne Tasker (1998) have unpacked through politically driven analysis, in which masculinity and male authority is reinstated all the more effectively and powerfully by the film's conclusion. Masculinity therefore only brooks crisis in this respect as a liminal moment, a caesura that works to shore up the very philosophy or set of ideals that is thrown into question by the body of its narrative. Johnny Marco, the film's central character, seems to specialize in or be renowned for – like Bob Harris – a certain kind of action cinema that plays precisely into the mythical ideals perpetuated and effected through an image of hard, white masculinity. Both of these films (but to the greatest extent *Somewhere*) tear asunder this image by not only revealing it as a cliché (that is, in exposing the very mechanics of this performance), but also by replacing plenitude

and strength with vulnerability and void. Most importantly, however, *Somewhere* refuses to assuage the viewer with a resolution of/to the crisis.² This is a profound gesture on Coppola's part because, having painstakingly pulled apart central components of identity and myth-making (cinema, advertising, stardom and celebrity culture), she refuses to recuperate this highly specific image as anything other than a void. Without a doubt, the film functions as an indictment of the specious, shallow and reductive nature of the Hollywood industry as machinery (a technology of selfhood), but it also functions as an investigation into the nature of selfhood as it exists within time. The image *Somewhere* leaves us with is that without genuine community and interaction – that is, if we live in an ethical vacuum – we cease to exist altogether for subjectivity is, indeed, founded upon a void and only comes into being interrelationally.³

Hollywood as a Dominant Fiction

In *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1992), her study of masculinity and subject formation, Kaja Silverman sets out how our governing ideological reality comes to be disseminated through the mode of 'dominant fiction'. She argues that 'it is through ideological belief that a society's "reality" is constituted and sustained, and that a subject lays claim to a normative identity' (1992: 15). The normative identity with which we tend to comply unquestioningly is, overwhelmingly, predicated on binary opposition pertaining to gendered stereotypes. Hollywood, precisely as an industry that manufactures and sustains the dominant fictions that come to stand in for reality, promulgates the notion that masculinity is, above all, phallic, potent, hard and active. Moreover, as Susan Jeffords has noted, this hegemonic ego ideal (as image) is powerfully intertwined with national narratives of identity and race so that: '[a] nation exists, in other words, as something to be *seen*. In such a case, examining one of the chief distributors of images in this country – Hollywood films – offers clues about the construction of American national identity' (1994: 6). The dominant fiction, in other words, plays out at both the national and local levels. We become bound to these images, argues Silverman, through unconscious processes that rely upon psychic mechanisms such as identification, projection and fantasy.⁴ However, unlike feminist screen theorists of the 1970s, Silverman posits the female spectator, and, by extension, her onscreen surrogate, as a vital presence that helps to confer phallic potency

upon the male figure (to read, in essence, the penis and Phallus as coterminous with one another): ‘Hollywood cinema conventionally calls upon the female subject to disavow the male subject’s castration, and – by looking at him with her “imagination” rather than her eyes – to confer upon him phallic sufficiency’ (1992: 8). Here, in contradistinction to woman as symbolically representative of void, it is the male body that is marked out as the site of lack and inadequacy; moreover, the female gaze – as made manifest through psychic projection – is crucial to the rectification and reification of masculinity as an image (nonetheless constructed) of plenitude and power. On a national level, the image of omnipotent masculinity is circulated further through the figure of the husband and father (the ultimate manifestation of patriarchal law). As Silverman suggests, ‘our “dominant fiction” or ideological “reality” solicits our faith above all else in the unity of the family, and the adequacy of the male subject’ (1992: 16). Indeed, the nuclear family is a perennial tenet of dominant narratives of ‘happiness’ and the ‘good life’ (Ahmed 2010) to the extent that any alternative existence is either condemned or co-opted (see Ahmed 2004, 2006, 2010) in order to uphold its cultural dominance.

It is in attending to the gap – the margin – between dominant fiction as a pervasive and potent set of images and embodied, durational existence as lived reality and the failure to coalesce or ‘stick’ to that fiction that critique is able to come into being. As Silverman sets forth: ‘the dominant fiction doesn’t exist in the abstract. Although I have defined it as a reservoir of sounds, images, and narratives, it has no concrete existence apart from discursive practice and its psychic residue. If representation and signification constitute the site at which the dominant fiction comes into existence, then they would also seem to provide the necessary vehicle for ideological contestation – the medium through which to reconstruct both our “reality” and “ourselves”’ (1992: 48). *Somewhere* is a film that situates its critique of this dominant fiction about masculinity from within the very industry that manufactures and maintains its hegemony through tropes of projection, disavowal and fetishism. Its dismantlement of that fiction functions through failure: failure to act, failure to identify, failure to cohere and adhere, failure to be ‘somebody’ and failure to go ‘somewhere’. Its very form, constructed out of repetition, stasis, extreme duration, misdirection and misunderstanding, works to undermine the highly specific and cohesive masculine identity that the central male character cannot even identify as part of himself (precisely because it is a myth). As such, *Somewhere* stages a performance of crisis in extremity and masculinity as performance.

From the film's outset, identity is imbricated with performance; moreover, the formal use of repetition (via the calculated use of graphic matches, matches on action, doubling and replication) serves to remind the viewer that performativity, especially in relation to gender norms, functions through exacting, painful and often oppressive forms or repetition.⁵ In placing emphasis on the trope of repetition, *Somewhere* examines how the mechanics of identity work on us in the first place. *Somewhere* opens with a static shot of a Ferrari circuiting a racetrack;⁶ this shot is held for some two minutes before the driver is revealed to the viewer (a dishevelled Stephen Dorff as Johnny Marco). The car's engine powerfully pitches and purrs, its sound rising and falling in tempo as the car continues its seemingly endless loop. Time is experienced as duration in potential extremis here and human activity is represented as a repetitive set of gestures that reinforce sameness within duration. This is to say that within the opening moments of the film, we are not only presented with the idea that this character is somehow 'stuck' within his environment (indeed, we have a literal representation of this), but that he is, in actual fact, fixed within a recognizable cliché, since the Ferrari stands in as his identity (we know this must be a man in crisis with a point to prove to the world – he's driving a fast car!)⁷ Indeed, the fast car, as commonly conceived, stands in for a paucity or lack of prototypical masculinity, since this is predicated on the idea that the man who occupies such a vehicle must feel compelled to make up for something, very possibly his lack of sexual prowess or physical endowment. This image is therefore presented precisely as a cliché – an image that we automatically know how to read and assimilate – but its repetition ensures that the generative force of this cliché comes unstuck. As such, what the film suggests is that Johnny Marco is a cliché that is running on empty and fittingly, we find out that he is a film star associated with action genre franchises that are invested in the exact replication and recycling of stereotypes (especially that of the sclerotic masculinity of myth).

Performance, in particular cinematic performance, is often intimately and obliquely linked with commerce and prostitution, especially within the context of gender.⁸ Indeed, Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (2011, originally published in 1949) allies the figure of the female film star and more specifically the sex goddess (as incarnated through a number of 'bombshell blondes' from Jayne Mansfield to Brigitte Bardot to Marilyn Monroe throughout cinematic history) with the prostitute.⁹ As Mandy Merck, taking her cue from de Beauvoir, argues: 'the woman star relies upon male protectors and pursues male consumers ... she may never cross the ambiguous line dividing the display of beauty from its

direct sale . . . but her function is no different . . . the paradox of such a profession is that its practitioners come to be active, independent subjects only through the strictures of self-objectification' (1993: 62). De Beauvoir sets forth that the female actress is divested of creativity, power and control, all of which lies only on the side of the (implicitly male) director and producer, to the effect that, she argues, 'the prostitute who simply yields her body is perhaps less a slave than the woman who makes a career of pleasing the public' (de Beauvoir 2011: 583).¹⁰ This is a problematic claim, but what de Beauvoir foregrounds is the lack of agency an actor or actress has over his or her own subjectivity once that identity is solidified, commercialized and rendered as a commodity. In fact, Merck, following de Beauvoir, asserts that the subjectivity of the film star *comes into being* precisely for someone else (a presupposed audience). Alienation, as such, exists both in front of the camera (as Walter Benjamin famously outlined already in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2008, originally written in 1936)) as the human figure is reduced to a two-dimensional image that can be infinitely reproduced (effectively as a cliché, as the French etymology of the term suggests) and within the commercial environment that profits from this production of images of stardom.

On two separate occasions, Johnny (presumably) pays two female erotic dancers to perform for him in his hotel room. Both of these scenes serve to foreground the perfunctory and commercial nature of these erotic spectacles and, as such, provide a comment on the commodification of (female) sexuality itself. In fact, the women who perform as Cindy and Bambi (identical twins Kristina and Karissa Shannon) work as Playboy 'bunnies', and thus their very presence onscreen already reads as a clichéd image. Visually, both women are seemingly modelled on the prototype of healthy, blonde 'American Beauty': they are lithe, athletic and spray-tanned; their bodies are hairless, smooth and brown; their hair is bleached to an unnatural shade of blonde and cut into long layers; their teeth are whitened; their attire is chosen to veil selectively their bodies in order to emphasize their near-nakedness. The routine they perform is captured in a static framing that works to de-eroticize their dance as sexual display; a more typical editorial treatment would cut into the dance so as to fetishize and distort the female body precisely as spectacle, but here the static framing naturally fragments the body as it moves in and out of the film frame. They frequently appear as disarticulated figures, without heads or feet; undoubtedly, this is played to comic effect,

but it also renders the scene implicitly violent, since the static framing represents a supposedly objective viewpoint that works to dissect the body through a dispassionate gaze (which here stands in for that of Johnny's narcoleptic and indifferent stupor – he extends no care to the 'products' he consumes). The corporeal, fleshy nature of their performance resonates as a series of awkward sounds between their limbs and the poles that they work their way up and down. Whilst the symmetry of their appearance (they are identical twins and, in fact, Johnny mistakes Bambi for Cindy) lends the scene an almost grotesquely comic air that serves to undercut such a tired priapic fantasy, their dance is not fully synchronized and comes off as amateur-like and stilted. Moreover, the song to which they perform is the loud and bombastic 'My Hero' by the Foo Fighters, the chorus of which proclaims 'there goes my hero, watch him as he goes, he's ordinary . . . don't the best of them bleed it out while the rest of them peter out' and to which Johnny fittingly falls asleep.¹¹ Taken together, these elements of the scene formally work to foreground the labour behind the production of fantasy and spectacle. As such, a gap is effected between performance and image in order that the latter be re-inscribed precisely as construction and notably the tired artifice of this spectacle bores Johnny to the point of losing consciousness. For he is all too familiar with the mechanics of affected public performance; indeed, it is possible that he does not call upon Cindy and Bambi to embody an erotic fantasy for him, but rather because they reveal his own existential predicament to him.

The performative nature of these moments and the banal, pedestrian manner in which they are rendered suggests something about the world in which Johnny lives; he too is paid to perform and, at that, to perform a prototypical role that promulgates and shores up 'strong' and 'hard' masculinity. Outside of this role – which is the mode in which we always observe him – he exists in a provisional and temporary manner, unable to state anything unequivocally about himself. At his press campaign, he spectacularly fails to answer the question 'who is Johnny Marco?'; in fact, it is his sycophantic assistant who feeds him generic descriptors with regard to how to speak about 'Johnny Marco' and assuages his ambivalence about his performance as 'Johnny Marco' with a series of platitudes ('that was awesome!') There is therefore, I would argue, an implicit link between Cindy and Bambi's gregarious display that promotes the commodification of sexuality and the insufferable enactment Johnny must go through on a quotidian basis: they are all acting out roles within and for a public space. They come into being

through performance, but the nature of the performative self is that it ceases to exist within a void or in isolation. Again, *Somewhere* works to insert a discrepancy or holding space between the actor and the performance in order to characterize the nature of celebrity as fickle, insubstantial and specious. Any sense of self that is constructed on a foundation of public celebrity is too constricted and constricting for anyone to thrive within in its confines, let alone lead a meaningful life.¹²

A scene that depicts Johnny's promotional activities in support of his most recent film (*Berlin Agenda*) foregrounds the ludicrous and highly superficial nature of his celebrity standing within the film world. There has clearly been some former sexual liaison between Johnny and his co-star Rebecca (Michelle Monaghan), but he has proved to be woefully disappointing and predictable by fulfilling that most perennial of all romantic clichés – sleeping with her, but not bothering to call her back. In fact, since Johnny himself is nothing but a host of clichés conjoined together and collectively labelled as a personality, he is perhaps fulfilling or playing his role to the hilt. Rebecca puts forward a well-groomed and attractive presence in contradistinction to Johnny's dishevelled and rumpled appearance (having broken his arm by drunkenly falling down a staircase at the Chateau Marmont Hotel and thus being unable to wash or dress himself properly). As if to add to his humiliation, Johnny is not of an equal height to Rebecca, who, wearing heels, towers over him in the publicity photographs for the film; in order to rectify this situation, Johnny is forced to stand on a step to adjust the disparity in their heights. Rebecca's disparaging comments about his lack of sexual prowess are matched visibly by his lack of height and his injured arm. While Johnny tolerates the mortification of Rebecca's sardonic comments, whispered discreetly into his ear, the pair has to maintain all the while a professional and friendly façade for the photographer, who instructs them to look at one another and smile sweetly. The discrepancy between this farcical errand and the polished publicity campaign that will presumably result from it again serves to remind the viewer of the performative labour that is put into constructing and maintaining the products that Hollywood upholds – products that sell highly specific and unattainable lifestyles and norms of beauty. As if to consolidate his bond, however superficial, with Cindy and Bambi (perhaps, as mentioned earlier, because he recognizes the performative nature of his own public identity in theirs), Johnny tries to mollify his shame over his experience during the publicity campaign by heading directly to their house, presumably to engage in sex with one if not both of them (another clichéd and specifically male fantasy).

Masculinity as Crisis

In her study of the action genre, which she calls ‘Men’s Cinema’, Stella Bruzzi notes that the very form of this kind of film works to attenuate rupture and discontinuity in order to command and convey a highly specific image of masculinity as an omnipotent and dominant force to which we either aspire or submit:

[S]uperficial smoothness is used to make and elide ambiguities . . . there is a clear sense . . . that the men are in control and that internalised ambiguities and uncertainties are being suppressed or brushed aside quite literally by the momentum of their walk. In turn, the spectator’s ability to remain impervious to the effects of this momentum is limited. Coupled with the symbolic alliance to sexuality (these kind of) sequences coerce their respective audiences into falling in love with masculinity as well as with power. (2013: 143)

One of the central features of men’s cinema is movement, since the narrative centres on tracking the movement of a (male) body through space. It is therefore the trajectory of the male character that binds together the diegetic space of the narrative and, moreover, even determines the temporality of the filmic experience. Since time, in the action-image genre, as Gilles Deleuze (2005b) has delineated is subordinate to movement, we encounter time as a precise, chronological measurement of movement that compliments the Euclidean clarity of the space within which the male protagonist fulfils or acts out his destiny (more often than not to resolve a crisis and domesticate and bring the female body under control). In other words, coherence of time and space affords little opportunity to unpack or attend to the representation of masculinity being proffered, since unity of time and space also ensures unity of thought. This is not to say that one may not read against the grain, but that it is active and hard labour to do so in this case.

Men’s cinema cannot admit cracks, fissures and discontinuities that open up its dominant or abiding narrative to questioning. Critique is rarely held within its scope. The ease with which movement seems to take place, which allows us to believe in the male figure who always knows how to (re)act, functions as a force of coherence for this highly specific representation and, in particular, its seeming given-ness or naturalness. As such, this is nothing less than a superstructure that upholds a mythic version of masculinity as dominant phallic power. As Tania Modleski has argued persuasively, Hollywood and its coterminous norms and

ideals (based in the imaginary) promulgate the allegiance between phallic power (as the centre that holds and to which everything refers or gains subsequent meaning) and the anatomical penis.¹³ This alliance, though, is in fact highly arbitrary and contingent. She writes that:

Lacanian feminists have found it valuable to insist on the discrepancy between phallus and penis and, in their critical practice, to expose or 'unveil' the lack at the heart of patriarchal representations, thereby attempting to undermine the stability of the power structure appearing to sustain them ... Hollywood cinema, easily the largest and most influential such system of representation, has been massively and continually devoted to perpetuating myths of phallic potency. (Modleski 1991: 91)

Whilst I am loath to argue that *Somewhere* is a film that stages a Lacanian feminist intervention in film history, I believe the centrality of discontinuity and void to its very form as a film is vital to understanding what it does extend: a sensitive critique of dominant Hollywood narratives that centre on masculinity. In its refusal to smooth and elide gaps and ruptures – indeed, in its fascination with the liminal and the inbetween – *Somewhere* opens up a space in which we can parse out this construction of mythic masculinity and its accompanying aesthetic. This is a bold manoeuvre, for, as Silverman suggests:

[A] given symbolic order will remain in place only so long as it has subjects, but it cannot by itself produce them. It relies for that purpose upon the dominant fiction, which works to bring the subject into conformity with the symbolic order by fostering normative desires and identifications. When the dominant fiction fails to effect this interpellation, it is not only 'reality' but the symbolic order itself which is placed at risk. (1992: 50)

At the heart of *Somewhere* is a character who cannot identify with his own image precisely as a dominant fiction – a situation that results not only in a fracturing of psychic identity, but also the attrition of mental health and the wherewithal to continue carrying on (we infer that Johnny is taking medication for the sake of his mental health, and the activities in which he indulges could also be viewed as a form of anaesthetic or self-medication). *Somewhere* sedulously examines the coping mechanisms that are invoked to deal with situations that alienate one pro-

foundly from one's own sovereignty and a connection to others and the world. In such an environment, life is replaced with indifference and detachment from feeling – there can be no affective mode of being in the world. As such, I suggest that *Somewhere* recuperates masculinity precisely as a mode of psychic crisis.

Donna Perbedy has outlined in her study of the performance of masculinity in crisis that the figure or trope of the 'angst-ridden' male is already in and of itself a challenge to the dominant fiction, but it is when crisis is not assuaged or alleviated that a more challenging critique emerges:

images of angst-ridden men immediately challenge the idea of a 'true' masculinity (Butler) or 'dominant masculine' (Buchbinder), no more so than when their narratives fail to be resolved or, if resolved, fail to re-establish gender binaries that reinforce male power and domination. Furthermore, the 'unmasked' men . . . exhibit the damaging effect of a 'true' masculinity and imply that it is only in attaining a particular standard of maleness that they can be considered successful 'men'. Their failure to achieve such a standard can be seen as the crux of their downfall. (Perbedy 2011: 173)

Moreover, Perbedy asserts that crisis is usually only invoked thematically in order to recuperate and reassert the central tenet of dominant masculinity; therefore, it is rarely utilized inchoately and does not brook ambiguity. Moreover, she suggests that the crisis of masculinity 'operates according to cycles of crisis and resolution; ultimately, the aim is to restore men and masculinity to their dominant societal position: to reassert patriarchy. If "crisis" occurs when the gendered binaries between masculinity and femininity break down, the threat posed by femininity must be suppressed and the gendered binaries re-established in order for male dominance to be restored (or, at least, the illusion of dominance)' (2011: 28). I have argued elsewhere (Backman Rogers 2015) that the indeterminate extension of a liminal period, in which there is an alleviation of the norms and ideals in relation to individual and group identities, is a radical gesture precisely because in refusing to attenuate or foreclose a period of crisis, dominant or hegemonic value systems are no longer perceived to be the foundation on which everything else is constructed. It is within that liminal holding space that we can remake and reconfigure dominant narratives. Crisis is made manifest on the level of content, but its infiltration of form is more rare; it is this latter sense of crisis, one that infects the very mode or fabric of life, that is more far-reaching and incontrovertible. In

relation to masculinity in crisis, Bruzzi argues that ‘normative masculinity is, even in the most ostensibly straightforward Hollywood films, an unrealisable ideal, and it follows that the anxieties and contradictions that surface as a result of this conclusion having been reached will frequently be resolved at a non-narrative level’ (2013: 38). In other words, masculinity, within such a scenario, is played out or inhabited *as crisis*. *Somewhere* stages a *mise-en-scène* of crisis in which masculinity is perpetually conveyed as a crisis mode of being-in-the-world. World and body are deeply imbricated *as crisis*.

This *mise-en-scène* of masculinity as crisis is effected on a formal level in a manner akin to Deleuze’s delineation of the breakdown of the action-image cinema, the symptoms of which are made manifest as ‘the form of the trip/ballad, the multiplication of clichés, the events that hardly concern those they happen to, in short, the slackening of sensory-motor connections’ (2005b: 3). Additionally, the protagonist in this world is struck by the notion that he or she is living in a bad film that is strung together by an interminable series of clichés and vacuous people with shallow opinions who can only communicate through prefabricated platitudes. In an industry such as Hollywood, this effect is compounded: everything is ready-made and pre-formed in a manner that already delimits how a person may exist and grow (one must adhere to one’s own clichéd image or ‘bad film’). Within this diegetic environment, the protagonist feels struck by something ‘intolerable’ within the context of banal, quotidian life and feels himself or herself to be no longer concerned with ‘love and life’ (Deleuze 2005b: 165). The protagonist is prone to function as a ‘seer’ rather than an ‘agent’ (Deleuze 2005b: 3) who contemplates what is before him or her, but cannot react decisively to it. Here, it is time that comes to the fore, since it is no longer subordinate to the coordinates of an agent who always knows how to act (to choreograph the space around him). From the outset, movement in *Somewhere* is presented as a circular, repetitious process that leads to nowhere – Johnny’s Ferrari is a sleek machine that facilitates and exacerbates his own lack of direction. Johnny is someone who – despite his onscreen persona – is passive to an extreme extent. His stardom is the result of a happy accident to which he cannot really lay claim as an achievement; he admits to an obsequious male fan that he has had no professional training of any sort and thus, in effect, his career is merely something that has happened to him (he is fortunate enough to possess a beautiful face). Johnny passes his time by driving around the nondescript and anonymous suburbs of Los Angeles; his journeys are conveyed through a discontinuous editing style that foregrounds jump-cuts, vio-

lations of screen direction, the suturing of noncontiguous spaces and temporalities (for example, the inexplicable transition from day to night in one sequence), and repetitious matches on action that convey a lack of transition or change. As if to emphasize the essential purposelessness of his perambulation, one scene features Johnny pursuing a woman he sees at a set of traffic lights, only to lose sight of her as he follows the seemingly maze-like system of roads that make up the borough he is exploring (lest we forget, this beautiful man is also something of a sexual pest). In other words, his travel proves to be fruitless, aimless and without purpose (other than to fill up time). Moreover, the interior shots taken from inside his car, which taken together characterize these scenes, suggest his essential passivity: it is the car that transports him and, more specifically, cocoons him from the outside world. In other words, there is no transportation effected. Visually, he seems to remain immobile whilst the outside world rushes past him and he misses it. Johnny is someone who misses connections, people and life continuously.

Scenes set in the Chateau Marmont Hotel correspond to the lack of movement and passivity evidenced in the sequences set in the car. A series of graphic matches serves to reveal Johnny's life as a series of tedious routines that allow him to tune out from the world. The prevalent use of dead time is central to our understanding of him as a man who is constantly waiting for something to happen to him. Inbetween moments in which he must promote his celebrity-self as a commodity, we see the void of his private life; namely, that he is entirely absent and disengaged from himself and the world. He leads his life as a mode of nonexistence in which sitting on the sofa, smoking cigarettes and staring into space constitute the major activities of the day – essentially an extreme form of nonactivity. There is no differentiation in his routine – tellingly, he does not seem to know what day of the week it is most of the time – so he cannot distinguish one moment from the next. He lives out his days in always provisional and present mode, passing from moment to moment. This profound detachment from the world in which he lives results in a form of myopia that aesthetically typifies the infrequent but notable use of point of view or focalization from Johnny's perspective. Like Bob Harris, Johnny is assaulted by a cornucopia of images that seem to sell a highly specific version of 'self' via specious product placement; the generic Hollywood star system, which claims to isolate the unique and the special, is recuperated here as a machinery that works to depersonalize and commodify individuality. Indeed, individuality can only be favoured insofar as it is marketable. Airbrushed, digitally altered images emblazon billboards and cut-out cardboard figurines that

litter the Los Angeles skyline. These dematerialized and flattened images constitute an extrapolation and reduced version of reality, yet are the dominant narrative to which we are told we must aspire.¹⁴ Complexity is thus replaced with an artificially constructed and false alternate reality that comes to stand in for – if not erase – what does not fit into this virtual, postmodern reality.¹⁵ In other words, one aspires to be a cliché (an image of a person in contradistinction to a person) in a world in which depth is reduced to surface. And as I have argued elsewhere, this revelation of the cliché as an image of crisis reveals an even more pernicious aspect: ‘that when you are not seen (when you are not rendered as “surface”), you cease to exist altogether’ (Backman Rogers 2015: 122). When Johnny tells Cleo’s mother over the telephone that he is ‘nobody – not even a person’, his devastation evinces not only his inability to live up to his own cliché, but also the detrimental effects that this flattening out and siphoning off of one’s affective capacities creates. A life lived on the surface results in a kind of internal death and a flattening out of all experience (Johnny alternates between checking his phone and watching Cleo perform her ice-skating routine; virtual life holds as much sway over him as his vivacious daughter’s embodied reality).

Hollywood and Celebrity as Nonplace and Nonidentity

Somewhere is set in the definitive and iconic location of Los Angeles and, more specifically, the Chateau Marmont Hotel; these are locations that are part of collective cultural consciousness, in that we can invoke or conjure images of this landscape – especially from films and advertising – as a visual correlate for predetermined ideas about the specificity of this place. In effect, the cultural signifiers exceed the signified (Los Angeles). Yet one of the most striking features of *Somewhere* is the manner in which the diegetic space is rendered as anonymous, sterile and transactional, which is to say that Los Angeles is divested of its signification and is presented as a highly fragmented series of spaces that do not connect or cohere – indeed, in which it is hard to find one’s coordinates. Place (*this* place) is transfigured as space (*any* space). Moreover, the Chateau Marmont, a hotel that has housed many a Hollywood legend under its roof and is therefore historically tied to the myth of Hollywood and is an integral part of its landscape, is not presented as an aesthetically pleasing and luxurious hotel, but rather as an empty holding place that one might ‘check in’ to in a state of crisis. Coterminous with this

divestment of iconicity is the manner in which the face – the signifier of extraordinary celebrity and uniqueness – is treated as a tabula rasa. As such, by way of conclusion, I will suggest that *Somewhere* portrays both Hollywood and celebrity as a void of nonplace and nonidentity, and, by extension, sets forth a critique of the manifold ways in which contemporary Hollywood as a (late capitalist) industry reduces all forms of life to the level of surface image and value.

In his study of supermodernity, Marc Augé (1995) outlines a theory of nonplace, which he believes characterizes the contemporary, late capitalist experience. For Augé, historical and definitive (*this*) space is intimately tied to identity, whereas nonplace effects a decentring of self;¹⁶ in nonplaces, the individual becomes an anonymous passenger who travels through space, but is never ‘at home’ there.¹⁷ He argues that the world of supermodernity is:

a world where people are born in the clinic and die in the hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions . . . where a dense network of means of transport, which are also inhabited spaces is developing; where the habitué of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures with an abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary, the ephemeral. (Augé 1995: 78)

The world that Augé describes is one of disconnect in which anonymity is the defining feature of space and its population; to be sure, Augé’s study is not a critique of post or supermodernity, but rather an attempt to describe and think through our encounters with the proliferation of nonplaces and why this may precipitate a nostalgic sense of longing for a mythical past.¹⁸ I suggest, as I stated in the opening chapter of this study, that in contradistinction to scholars who have described Coppola’s work as postmodern, careful reading of her images reveals that her critique is often situated on the side of modernism. I therefore suggest in what follows that *Somewhere* offers precisely such a critique of the postmodern environment that is ripe with nostalgia (even the lenses she uses to create the film’s specific aesthetic hark back to the golden age of 1970s and early 1980s American independent cinema).¹⁹

What Augé delineates as nonplace could be described as a series of disparate spaces that are not connected organically, but rather that can only be traversed through various modes of transport (car, plane, train); crucially, these are also

spaces of commerce that are designed purely for functionality and in which the interaction is recuperated as transaction – one is defined by one’s market value and productivity. Moreover, if specificity of place fosters connection and community, nonplace tends to produce isolation, solipsism and void. Since, for Augé, space and identity are imbricate with and implicated within each other, the former determines the latter. Thus, nonplace affords non-identity; as Augé suggests, ‘a person entering a non-place is relieved of his usual determinants: he becomes no more than what he does or experiences in the role of passenger, customer or driver . . . he surrenders himself to . . . the passive joys of identity loss, and the mere active pleasure of role playing’ (1995: 103). Identity is reduced to a series of tropes which one can be made to abandon at various transit points – as Augé reminds us, ‘it is in the manner of immense parentheses that non-places daily receive increasing numbers of individuals’ (1995: 111). As such, identity is transactional – it is something that is bestowed upon you by appropriate officials and, conversely, can be taken away. In fact, in *Somewhere*, it is consistently the staff at hotels and airports that recognize and acknowledge Johnny by naming him (he is reduced to his most superficial attribute: his stardom). The nonplace is precisely such a liminal zone in which one is emptied of identifying characteristics and reconfigured into the role of neophyte or passenger (that is, a ritual subject).

Indeed, as Augé states, ‘the passenger through non-places retrieves his identity only at customs, at the tollbooth, at the checkout counter . . . the space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude’ (1995: 103). This is identity instilled on a superficial level and does not facilitate connection or community. In fact, the attribution and acquisition of identity has to do with one’s correspondence to type; that is, how well one correlates with a predetermined ideal of what it means to be a person in a public or culturally shared space. This categorization (which is a form of violence) has to do with adherence to (arche)type (racial profiling in airports would be but one example) and is based entirely on spurious assumptions extrapolated from one’s appearance. Vitally, the effective corroboration of certain stereotypes is not internally but externally driven by a visual culture saturated with images purloined from advertising and mass entertainment. Augé notes that this is a distinctive feature of postmodernity and the postmodern subject’s interaction with that world: ‘Assailed by the images flooding from commercial, transport or retail institutions, the passenger in non-places has the simultaneous experiences of a perpetual present and an encounter with the self. Encounter, identification, image’ (1995:

105). This external identification with an ego ideal (more often than not, an air-brushed, dematerialized body that is reduced to ‘attractive’ prototype) is, Augé argues, predominantly phallic in nature: ‘if these invitations to identification are essentially masculine, it is because the ego-ideal they project is masculine; at present, a credible businesswoman or woman driver is perceived as possessing “masculine” qualities’ (1995: 105). In other words, the superstructure of supermodernity is held in place by culturally dominant fictions, which are often predicated on a potently masculine culture that promulgates certain ideals and ideas about what it means to be a man in a public space (dominant, expansive, extrovert, confident, active).

Somewhere recuperates the nonplace as a space of crisis in order to critique ‘the passive joys of identity loss’ and life lived through a series of ahistorical and perpetually present moments.²⁰ The inability to enchain a past to a present, and thus to envision a future, results in nihilism and a repetitive existence. Indeed, the film explores the pernicious effects of leading out one’s life in an always provisional (yet not creative or experimental), clichéd and hedonistic fashion, for it is quite clear that Johnny Marco is someone for whom the failure to live up to his ego ideal (a packaged image of himself) has resulted in the attrition of his mental health (for which he self-medicates). As such, it situates its critique of an industry that is overwhelmingly responsible for the production of dominant fictions from *inside* that industry. Johnny is but one casualty of the dominant fiction, but we are also reminded that this is a fiction that denies the existence of lives lived otherwise and does not offer anyone existing outside of hermetic clichés, which image a very specific form of ‘the good life’, any form of mirror or representation. In short, it suffocates the actuality, richness and the complexity of daily life in favour of what it promulgates and centres as the common denominator (white masculinity) – the perceived normality of which requires unpacking. That this is a culture that reinforces repetition and homogeneity is not only evident in the way in which *Somewhere* is structurally built out of, as we have seen, motifs of circularity and sameness, but also in the way in which specificity of place and time work to shore up these themes as well. For instance, Johnny’s itinerant hotel life offers no variation or difference; rather, regardless of whether he is in Los Angeles or in Europe, his routines and outlook remain the same. This is evidenced by a canny match on action that renders a seamless transition between LAX Airport and Malpensa in Milan. Johnny and Cleo travel from one liminal zone to another and never leave the behind the status of passenger. Moreover, Johnny’s rote of distraction contin-

ues unabated in the Principe di Savoia hotel – and Cleo is noticeably annoyed by the presence of a woman she hardly knows at their breakfast table.

Augé remarks that time in supermodernity is defined by the present moment – it is ahistorical: ‘What reigns . . . is actuality, the urgency of the present moment . . . Since non-places are there to be passed through, they are measured in units of time’ (1995: 104). This results in an extreme isolation of the present moment that renders everything (including space) as noncontinuous and fractured: ‘Everything proceeds as if space had been trapped by time, as if there were no history other than the last forty-eight hours’ (1995: 105). *Somewhere* explores the tension between scientific, chronological (and modern capitalist) time (a teleological timeline that is predicated on productivity and profit) and time as a lived duration felt in the body as ‘the revealer of the deadline’ (Deleuze 2005b: 182). As a cog in the Hollywood machinery, Johnny Marco’s experience of time is sharply binary, which corresponds to the discrepancy between his public and private selves: on the one hand, his every manoeuvre, gesture, statement and appearance is choreographed by a team of personal assistants (his time is not his own) and his star personage is synonymous with a kind of action genre film that precisely subordinates time as the measure of movement; on the other hand, his ‘own’ time is felt as an almost unbearable duration that he seeks to flee from through repetitious routine. His nightly activity of sitting on the sofa, smoking cigarettes, drinking beer and staring into space is not only an attempt to vacate himself from the measured activity of his professional life, it is also an attempt to kill time – to make time, and by extension his life, disappear. Extradiegetically, the viewer experiences these moments as ‘dead’ time in which nothing is quite literally made to happen onscreen. What comes to the fore in such moments is the ‘tiredness and waiting’ (Deleuze 2005b: 183) inherent to human existence that is then sedimented within the body. Notably, this is also not a productive or active body, but one that registers the process of ageing. Throughout *Somewhere*, key lighting is eschewed in favour of more natural or low-key lighting. In fact, Johnny’s face is frequently underlit or ill-lit, which serves not only to deflate his ‘star’ qualities (since the ‘film star effect’ is in no small part due to the technicalities of manipulative and strategic lighting), but also to immerse him in or merge him with his anonymous surroundings. In the scenes in which he merely sits on his sofa, he appears as one object amongst a world of objects or as part of a still-life portrait – it is only his slight movements that distinguish him from the inanimate world around him.



Figure 4.1. Dead time. Screenshot by the author.

In this regard, a scene in which Johnny has a plaster cast mould made of his face in order to fashion a prosthetic facemask that will artificially age him is, in my view, the fulcrum of *Somewhere*. After the plaster paste is applied, Johnny is left alone to allow the mask to set and dry. A process of forty minutes is reduced to approximately two minutes of screen time, but despite its relatively short duration, this sequence has a similar effect to the film's opening scene set at the race-track. The camera painstakingly tracks inwards in slow motion to hold Johnny's face in midshot and finally in close-up; the soundtrack, which foregrounds the diegetic noises of the make-up studio, complements the increasing sense of anxiety the scene conveys in spite of its slow pace. As the camera draws into proximity with Johnny, his breathing is heightened within the sound mix and this functions as a form of metronome that precisely measures out the duration of the scene. As the camera pulls in, the foreground and background planes of the image flatten out so that the prosthetic masks of ghouls, zombies and creatures that adorn the studio walls seem to encroach in on Johnny. This moment is, I would suggest, an exemplary use of the Deleuzian time-image – or specifically *time as series* (2005b: 183) – in which duration is the prevailing and central force of the image in contradistinction to movement. As I stated earlier, in such moments, what the

image sets forth is ‘the attitudes or postures of the body . . . which puts the before and after into the body, time into the body, the body as revealer of the deadline’ (Deleuze 2005b: 182). Johnny becomes a liminal entity here, for his body contains at once his relatively youthful face and body (although he is on the cusp of middle age and thus perhaps experiences time more pressingly or with greater urgency) and the aged and depleted body that he will inevitably come to inhabit. This is what those ghoulish creatures – themselves inherently liminal creatures called back from the dead – seem to taunt him with. The effects of this scene dovetail together to function as a visual *memento mori* for Johnny – and, by extension, us. Moreover, the use of the close-up here works to depersonalize rather than isolate and individuate the face. Deleuze reminds us that in close-up ‘the actor himself does not recognise himself’ (2005a: 124), and here the misrecognition that is the basis on which all identification is based (especially in relation to the ego ideal) is extended to the future self. As such, what this moment suggests is that nobody, regardless of the arbitrary gift of beauty, is sacrosanct or kept from the levelling that mortality necessitates. Johnny’s identification with his own commodification as *image* is damaging and has far-reaching consequences for his ability to exist within the world (a world that views him precisely as an object and wants a piece of him), but it is also highly foolish. The false version of himself – the one he is paid to be – is as ephemeral and fractious as his own beauty. When he finally admits he is ‘nothing, not even a person’, it is because he has confronted, albeit in artificial form, the ultimate or final nothingness that is certain mortality. His life has been parsed out on a different form of timeline to the one his obsequious and shallow team of personal assistants feed him; this is, very possibly, a moment of emergency for him both as crisis and revelation. The question, then, is how to become awake to and not somnambulate through life.

Notes

1. Todd Kennedy asserts that: ‘*Somewhere* is, aesthetically speaking, a postmodern film that is about images – the degree to which they are shallow, the degree to which they both attract and repel us, and the degree to which they dominate our identity’ (2010: 59). Furthermore, he suggests, in line with my argument outlined in this chapter, that: ‘In short, the film is, at its heart, about the lack of authenticity and connection available in a postmodern world’ (2015: 62). However, we differ in the sense that I believe the film persuades us that there is not a central core of selfhood from which we have been alienated. It is my contention, therefore, that the film addresses the primarily psychological notion, after Lacan, that subjectivity is founded on a void.

2. Todd Kennedy has also noted the film's lack of resolution or moment of epiphany, but in a different context: 'By not showing, emphasizing, or showcasing any actual moment of transformation or connection – in fact she denies both – Coppola seems to accept the basic postmodern tenant that authenticity is impossible. That image is all. But, unlike Baudrillard, she refuses to accept that such surface imagery is a desirable destination' (2015: 64).
3. Silverman suggests that a renegotiation of our dominant fiction would entail that we 'collectively acknowledge, at the deepest level of our psyches, that our desires and our identity come to us from outside, and that they are founded upon a void' (1992: 50).
4. As Silverman puts it, 'this belief is less an effect of consciousness than of identification and fantasy' (1992: 42).
5. These arguments are now well-known and established through the work of Judith Butler and theorists and writers who have taken their cue from Butler's theory of gender as performance. See especially Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1999) and more recently Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* (2015).
6. I attended a screening of *Somewhere* at the London Film Festival in 2011. Members of the audience became uncomfortable during the film's opening sequence and thought that the film had somehow become stuck on the opening shot. Although the scene is relatively short by avant-garde standards, its duration of approximately two minutes was enough to provoke unrest and boredom amongst film viewers, which I found most curious.
7. Coppola already utilized this cliché in *Lost in Translation* by having Charlotte ask Bob about his midlife crisis, the severity of which she links humorously to whether he has bought himself a Porsche or not.
8. Jean-Luc Godard has made this an explicit concern of his film oeuvre to date in films such as *Vivre sa vie* (1962), *Two or Three Things I Know about Her* (1967) and *Sauve qui peut* (1980), all of which thematically link performance, gender, commerce and prostitution.
9. Simone de Beauvoir wrote an article on Brigitte Bardot and 'the Lolita syndrome' for *Esquire* magazine in 1959; she considered this to be one of her most important pieces of work, despite it being a piece of popular journalism in which she outlined the ambiguity of Bardot's sexual persona and emphasized the importance of her as an agent of her own desire. See <https://www.scribd.com/doc/106130845/Simone-de-Beauvoir-Brigitte-Bardot-and-the-Lolita-Syndrome-1959>.
10. The problematics of linking sex work to slavery are addressed in a variety of texts by feminist scholars and writers, but it is not within the scope of this book to provide a full account of this; as such, this spectrum is perhaps best exemplified at either end by Kathleen L. Barry's *Female Sexual Slavery* (1984) and Virginie Despentes' *King Kong Theory* (2010). I recommend both of these studies highly.
11. The Foo Fighters are a hard rock band initially formed after the demise of Nirvana and Kurt Cobain's suicide. Their music is a far more palatable, commercial and 'pop' packaged version of the grunge sound that made Nirvana a groundbreaking group alongside bands such as the Meat Puppets and Sebadoh. The demographic to which the Foo Fighters now appeal is largely made up of middle-aged men – indeed, Johnny Marco would arguably be one of them. Moreover, the song 'My Hero' is a tribute to Kurt Cobain by the former drummer of Nirvana and now lead singer of the Foo Fighters, Dave Grohl, which is to say that while Cobain has been immortalized as a punk-grunge poet (if not god) of rock music, Grohl suffers the distinct dishonour of being a fading rock star who is no longer as 'cool' as he used to be and, by extension, his music lacks the cultural cachet that Nirvana's oeuvre still carries for many fans. 'My Hero' is therefore not

- only a testament to Cobain, but also arguably to Grohl's own former glory and could be read as an anthem for masculinity in dissolution and crisis. The lyrics 'there goes my hero, watch him as he goes, he's ordinary . . . don't the best of them bleed it out, while the rest of them peter out' is especially evocative of the different trajectories Cobain and Grohl's public personas have taken: one now immortal and the other middle-aged and tame.
12. Todd Kennedy notes that Johnny: 'is controlled and commodified by the image-machine that is Hollywood . . . Coppola reveals how culture creates spectacle via images that Johnny fails to live up to. Thus, her depiction of Johnny trapped by an empty world of room service and strippers acts as a treatise on the denied potential for movement in a postmodern world. Her Los Angeles is anything but the "paradise" that some postmodern critics, such as Jean Baudrillard, describe, and Johnny Marco's powerful Ferrari that circles LA's freeways never gets him anywhere . . . it is a crisis of identity depicted almost entirely along spatial lines' (2015: 55).
 13. Likewise, Kaja Silverman also contends: 'indeed, that equation (penis/phallus) is so central to *vraisemblance* that at those historical moments when the prototypical male subject is unable to "recognize" himself within its configuration of masculine sufficiency our society suffers from a profound sense of "ideological fatigue"' (1992: 16).
 14. Interestingly, Coppola has admitted her admiration for the photography of Helmut Newton (indeed, there is an implicit reference to the car crash in which he died in *Somewhere*). Newton was celebrated for his images of high fashion models that work through and explicitly reference the male gaze. As such, Newton's images also deconstruct and thus comment on the commodification of the body as cliché. Images that feature in *Somewhere*, such as the bare-breasted woman having her hair cut in a blunt Louise Brooks-style 'bob' and the models ambling down a corridor in haute couture clothing, could be viewed as an homage to the work of Newton.
 15. Todd Kennedy (2015) argues that *Somewhere* constitutes a critique of Jean Baudrillard's celebration of the postmodern landscape of contemporary America. In this environment, one is highly constricted in one's ability to flourish, he suggests.
 16. '[I]f a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined (as such) . . . will be a non-place' (Augé 1995: 77).
 17. 'In a world of supermodernity people are always and never at home' (Augé 1995: 109).
 18. For an excellent analysis of Augé's argument, please see Buchanan (1999).
 19. Coppola borrowed the lenses her father, Francis Ford Coppola, used for his film *Rumblefish* (1983) – a film that is itself an homage to avant-garde new-wave movements, especially the films of La nouvelle vague period (roughly 1958 to 1968).
 20. Elsewhere I have argued that *Somewhere* is a film that utilizes Deleuzian *any space whatever* in a similar manner to the effects wrought by the nonplace: 'it is a space in which perception leads not to reaction and action, but rather to delayed reaction and protracted states of contemplation . . . this often transpires as a crisis of the "everyday", a suffocation from the banal or pedestrian . . . there are many facets to the any-space-whatever, then: as a state of possibility, and as a space of profound crisis (political, personal and existential). Moreover, this space does not need to be extraordinary' (Backman Rogers 2015: 126).

Introduction

Political Fellini?



This book sets out a “political” reading of Fellini and discusses the relationship between his films and Italian ideology.

In the popular mind, Fellini is synonymous with dream, creative freedom, visual inventiveness, poetry. The notion of a political Fellini might therefore seem rather odd.

And yet, at the filmmaker’s funeral, Ettore Scola said that, in his opinion, Fellini “contrary to all appearance” had been “the most political Italian film director.” Scola did not seem to mean that Fellini’s films espouse a political thesis or enshrine specific political ideas. What he appears to have been suggesting is that Fellini’s imaginative “elsewhere,” beyond any sort of political grouping or affiliation, shows a deeper and better understanding of the essence of the Italian identity than other filmmakers had been capable of demonstrating.

Fellini is part of a long line of intellectuals and artists, from Leopardi to Pasolini, who investigated the relationship between the Italian identity and modernity in its many social, cultural, and political manifestations.

Fellini’s lack of interest in politics is well known and is an essential part of his myth. In the history of Italian cinema, Fellini was the least “engaged” director. In some ways, the insistence of critics and of Fellini himself on this aspect of his work served to justify the anomaly of his films within the rather regimented context of postwar Italian cinema.

Camouflaged behind the myth of the artist outside history, Fellini was the great exception in Italian culture. When in *Amarcord* he told the story of Italian fascism as no political film had ever managed to do, or in the allegory of *Prova d’orchestra* he portrayed the profound crisis of Italian democracy, he demonstrated what he had always been: an auteur whose

imagination fed off the conflicting trajectories of Italian modernity, a kind of seismograph, able to pick up even the faintest tremors in customs and the political and cultural life of the country.

Seen in a political light, the motifs of his work, the nostalgia for childhood, the phantoms of femininity, the invention of memory, the dreamwork—dwelled on at length by the critics—take on a pathological connotation, i.e., they become the allegory of a nation unable to leave its adolescence behind it, trapped by its own history in an immaturity that is uniquely Italian.

The apparent repression of the “political” in his work has an emblematic significance:

I realize that mine may be a neurotic attitude, a refusal to grow up, determined perhaps in part by growing up under fascism and hence uneducated, disinclined to take part in any form of politics that was not demonstrative, people parading in the streets; while feeling throughout that *politics is for grown-ups* The whole Anglo-Saxon mythology of *democracy*, this lesson of civilization and political awareness, has perhaps passed us by, has not been an integral part of our culture, and in some way has left us with the conviction that politics is always something done by someone else, people who know how.¹

While Italian comedy investigated these motifs above all sociologically, Fellini turned them into powerful visions. The symbolic forms, such as the figure of Christ lifted by helicopter and the monstrous fish in *La dolce vita*, the transatlantic liner *Rex* in *Amarcord*, the obscure wrecking ball in *Prova d'orchestra*, the rhinoceros in *E la nave va*, and similar examples, are—among other things—a commentary on the traumatic dimension of Italian modernity.

* * *

At the end of the sixties, the theoretical journal of the Soviet Communist Party, *Kommunist*, attacked the prevailing criticism of Fellini's films, affirming that the subjective deformation of the world by no means concealed “the acute representation of the agony of capitalist civilization.” The journal took issue with Fellini himself and the way he talked about his films. “There is an objective sense to his films,” the house organ of the PCUS went on, “which opens up far vaster horizons than those the director himself wishes to deal with, even at the expense of—and contradicting—his own artistic conceptions.”²

These horizons, I think, have not been investigated systematically by criticism.

In a book by Peter Bondanella, one of the leading experts in the field of Fellini literature, there is a chapter on *Amarcord* and *Prova d'orchestra* entitled *Fellini and Politics*; there are some hints of politics in Tullio Kezich's biography of Fellini; look hard and something comes to light from the essays and almost endless amount of material dedicated to individual films and aspects of his cinema. Interesting is a piece by Pietro Angelini, published in 1974, with the significant title *Controfellini* (Counter-Fellini) which, in line with the cultural Marxism of the time, analyzes the ideological ambiguities of Fellini's cinema. Of a more documentary nature is Angelo Olivieri's booklet on Fellini's work as a political cartoonist from 1938 to 1947 for some satirical and humorous newspapers of the period, notably *420*, *Marc'Aurelio*, and *Il Travaso delle idee*. It shows how in the postwar period Fellini managed to work both as a neorealist screenwriter and as an anti-Communist satirist for *Il Travaso*.

This book does not attempt to interpret the whole of Fellini's work. What I seek to do principally is to outline an area of investigation that has been largely neglected and that I hope may stimulate further research into Fellini and the cultural history of Italian cinema.

Some films, such as *I clowns* and *Toby Dammit* (an episode in *Tre passi nel delirio*) are barely mentioned. Others, for reasons of space, are discussed only briefly. I do not deal with the films chronologically. I have decided to focus on just a few topics. For example, *La dolce vita* crops up repeatedly and many different aspects of the film are analyzed in chapters 1 and 4, as well as in the chapter dedicated to it.

I have looked at contemporary sources, the newspapers and journals of the day—not only specialist publications—and I have attempted to reconstruct some of the important debates that accompanied the films. They include the discussion of *La strada* in the mid fifties and the raging polemics that were prompted by *Prova d'orchestra*, *La città delle donne*, and *Ginger e Fred*. Today, these indicate how paradoxical and emblematic the artistic trajectory of Fellini was, from fascism to the symbolic end of the First Republic. Where *La strada* indicated the political point of no return for neorealism and for the engagement of Communist intellectuals, *Ginger e Fred* can be considered the first anti-Berlusconi parody, ten years before Berlusconi entered the political arena.

Chapters 1, 2, and 4 are more theoretical. From a number of different points of view, the introductory first and second chapter set out the essential thesis of the book, i.e., the political dimension of the perpetual childhood represented in Fellini's films. If Fellini is now a major figure in the anthropological history of the country, and emblem of what is quintessentially "Italian"—alongside Dante and, say, Ferrari sports cars—the ways,

reasons, and mechanisms involved in this process of symbolic acquisition are far from simple and should not be taken for granted, particularly in view of the fact that Italian culture has always been so closely related to politics.

Chapter 4 focuses on the “elective affinities” between Fellini and Rome, and revisits them in the light of the visual culture of fascism and the mirroring effects of the relations between Fellini’s imagination and the pursuit of the myth of Rome harbored by Mussolini.

Three chapters constitute a reading of Italian modernity, partly stimulated by, and borrowing from, Giulio Bollati, Silvana Patriarca, and Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg in relation to the construction of national character and identity, as well as the important studies of fascism by Emilio Gentile.

The Appendix at the end of the book includes intriguing materials and documents from the Andreotti archives, including the correspondence between Fellini and the many-times prime minister of Italy.

Notes

1. F. Fellini, *Intervista sul cinema* (Interview on the Cinema), ed. Giovanni Grazzini, (Rome/Bari: Laterza, 2004 [1983]), 15–16.

2. The opportunity arose from the publication of a book edited by Georgi Bogemski, *Federico Fellini: Stat’i: Interov’ju: Recenzii: Vospominanija* (Moscow: Isskustvo, 1968). Also see C. Fracassi, “Così vedono Fellini in URSS. Un realista suo malgrado” [How They See Fellini in the USSR: A Realist Despite Himself], *Paese Sera*, 22 September 1969.

Introduction

An Embattled Discourse

What, I want to ask, is a film author? Why is it that the notion has become so central to our thinking about cinema and yet remained so fraught? The film director is recognized as the film's *auteur* insofar as she or he acts as a centering creative force, an ordering intelligence who controls and choreographs the multiple voices at work in any given production. The film author demonstrates marks of individuality, a recurring set of themes and patterns, as well as a singular way of shaping space and time. This unique manner of organizing film worlds, which French auteurist critics spoke of as *mise-en-scène*, is said to provide a distinct vision, indeed a distinctive world view.¹ "The auteurist idea at its most basic (that movies are primarily the creation of one governing author behind the camera who thinks in images and sounds rather than words and sentences)," Kent Jones recently argued, "is now the default setting in most considerations of moviemaking, and for that we should all be thankful. We'd be nowhere without film auteurism, which boasts a proud history: the lovers of cinema did not just argue for its inclusion among the fine arts, but actually stood up, waved its flag, and proclaimed its glory without shame."²

Although there were noteworthy earlier pro-auteur mobilizations by European film critics and filmmakers, auteurism gained its definitive form and focus as the *politique des auteurs*, a polemical method of criticism practiced by contributors to the *Cahiers du cinéma* during the mid-1950s. Imported from France and transformed by Anglo-American film critics into the so-called *auteur* theory, the *politique des auteurs* would become highly resonant, shaping the ways in which cinema is appreciated, criticism is framed, and careers are established. Indeed, the notion of the *auteur* would assume an auratic luster. Both suggestive and influential, it would nonetheless cause occasion for sustained debate. Despite serious misgivings about the concept's ability to account for the collaborative nature of film production, self-branding, and marketing, or alternative modes of

production both within and outside the film industry, film theorists and historians have not been able to dispense altogether with the figure of the author.³ Although the question of the “author” constitutes a site of ongoing controversy, the notion remains an inordinately resilient category. Auteurism still retains a great amount of cultural capital, even in the wake of discourses that have declared the author dead and superseded by cine-structures, texts, and readers.

Accounting for modes of authorship associated with Hollywood cinema, Stephen Crofts emphasizes the use value this concept enjoys across a wide range of institutions, from film production and distribution to film criticism and academic film studies.⁴ Throughout its long history, auteurism has prompted waves of criticism; the appearance of new cinemas, new filmmakers, new discourses, and new social conditions has repeatedly given rise to interventions that urge us to question this paradigm. Mindful of the entrenched status of authorship in discussions about cinema, we would do well to “locate the rules”⁵ that formed this concept, to recall the conditions that brought about its triumph, as well as rehearse the arguments that have challenged it. Given its highly persuasive presence over many decades and still now in the age of digital media, it makes sense both to review and reassess its considerable legacy. That is the project of this book.

Reconsidering film authorship in ways that might allow us to work beyond the uneasy face-off between conceptual discomfort and critical consensus, this study pursues three main endeavors. First, it interrogates the ideas that have dominated discourse on authorship: the authority of the filmmaker, the celebration of genius, and the affirmation of an inimitable style generally referred to as *mise-en-scène*. It then extends the discourse of authorship beyond the veneration of directorial style by scrutinizing and laying bare the dynamics of the director’s status as a professional and a worker; by broadening the discourse of authorship beyond the dominant paradigm of singularity, this study probes the workings of communities of authors and examines them as “communities of the senses” to use Jacques Rancière’s term. Beyond that, this book confronts the two most dramatic challenges to discourses of film authorship: claims regarding the “death of the author” (and the implications of these claims for our understanding of film authorship) and the so-called “end of cinema” thesis that laments how personal filmmaking—which is to say *auteur* cinema—is a thing of the past.

Taking its cue from Michel Foucault, this study scrutinizes the question of the film author within the longer Western history in which authorship figures as “a privileged moment of individualization.” Foucault urged that we examine

*how the author became individualized in a culture like ours, what status he has been given, at what moment studies of authenticity and attribution began, in what kind of system of valorization the author was involved, at what point we began to recount the lives of authors rather than of heroes, and how this fundamental category of “the-man-and-his-work criticism” began.*⁶

He spirited us back to the late eighteenth century, at which time a strong tie was established between “the juridical construction of authorship and the legal definition of the bourgeois conceptions of the individual and private property,”⁷ a link that would circulate in various permutations during the next two centuries and have a fundamental impact on the constitution of film authorship and its critical discourse. In order to understand the importance of this legacy, let us take a slight detour in the form of a flashback.

The Author’s Lawful Rights

In the midst of heated exchanges between dramatists and actors during the 1770s, the French playwright Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais made a heartfelt appeal to Louis XVI: “Is not the foremost of all honors, Sire, to assure to dramatic authors, by a law, the ownership of their work and the just fruit of their labors?” He requested that the King recognize *by law* the intellectual property of authors in matters of copyright and financial remuneration. Authorship should have a legal basis, argued Beaumarchais in his letter; it should not just be an empty concession, a form of lip service accorded to artistic endeavor. After the success of his *Barber of Seville* in 1777, Beaumarchais sided with other playwrights and received from the Duke of Duras permission to present a reform plan, which, after extensive negotiation on many fronts, gained approval in 1780. “It is very strange that it has taken an express law to attest to all of France that the property of a dramatic author belongs to him and nobody has the right to run off with it,” stated Beaumarchais in his petition to the Committee on Public Instruction on 23 December 1791:

This principle, taken from the first rights of man, went so much without saying for all the other property of people acquired through labor, gifts, sale, or even heredity, that it was believed derisory for it to be established in law. My sole property, as a dramatic author, is more sacred than all other kinds because it

*comes to me from nobody else and is subject to no contestation for fraud or seduction. The work coming from my brain, like Minerva fully armed with the work of the gods, my property alone had need of a law to pronounce that it belongs to me.*⁸

The debate leading to the legislation was both memorable and symptomatic. And Beaumarchais's victory would be substantial; its impact was strong and its legacy would be lasting. The law of 1791, with a few minor alterations, still regulates French copyright to this very day. It confirmed, quite dramatically, that French discourse of artistic sovereignty had crystallized at the end of the eighteenth century. This discourse figured centrally in the legal battle for the recognition of artistic creation as a professional practice, conferring upon its "makers" social legitimation and material rights. One immediately recalls John Locke's theory of property which holds that a man, as the proprietor of his own person, is also the owner of the products of his labor. As these perspectives on authorship and property over time assumed even clearer shape, a specific aesthetic category, namely originality, would acquire a crucial importance. To grant originality central significance in the appreciation of literary compositions ensured that they would be subject to their own criteria of evaluation and no longer judged by the policies used for mechanical inventions (which were subject to patents). "Literary compositions were not identified with any of their material forms," argues Roger Chartier in a study about scientific and literary authorship in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. "Their identity was given by the irreducible singularity of their *style, sentiment and language* present in every duplicate of the work. The inalienable right of the author was thus transformed into an essential characteristic of the discourse itself, whatever the vehicle of its transmission might be."⁹

Beaumarchais's petition arose from and resonated at a moment when, as Foucault observed, the social order of property within French culture had become codified. In the wake of Beaumarchais's intervention, a system of ownership and strict copyright rules gained official sanction and, as a result, a modern understanding of authorship took shape, which Foucault would later speak of as the author-function.¹⁰ The law of 1791, slightly revised in 1794, constituted a revolutionary mutation in the institution of art. For all its lasting values, it also became the site of further conflicts, among them an ongoing disagreement about the egalitarian promise of a new working field and the elitist principle of singularity and originality known as talent.

This tension between workers within the creative community and original artists would find an especially dramatic enactment in the field of cinema. The collective nature of film production, as well as its technology that relied on mechanical reproduction, made it particularly difficult to assign authorship and authority to a single individual. Early film critics who relied on interpretive models used for the other arts, especially for literature and painting, could not agree whether the rightful author should be the director or the scriptwriter, or perhaps even the producer. Banking on the privileges granted to them by the copyright law of 1794 that recognized writers as the proprietors of their creations, scriptwriters discredited directors, describing the latter's endeavors as the mere application of technique and the deployment of technology rather than the creation of original art.

As early as 1920, in the pages of *Ciné pour tous*, the critic Pierre Henry insisted that the film author is “the person who conceives the film from beginning to end and *thinks* cinematically.”¹¹ Louis Delluc and Marcel L'Herbier concurred.¹² In Germaine Dulac's film from 1927, *Invitation au voyage*, we see the director literally stake her claim to authorship, displaying her hand as she signs her name at the end of the credits. Taking a theoretical step further, Jean Epstein assigned to the filmmaker's vision the property of “photogénie,” the capacity to reveal the “inner nature of things” that are mechanically captured by the lens. Although “the lens alone can sometimes succeed” in this endeavor, Epstein wrote in 1926, “the proper sensibility, by which I mean a personal one, can direct the lens towards increasingly valuable discoveries. This is the role of an author of film, commonly called a film director.”¹³ A few years later, in 1930, in the *Panorama du cinéma*, Georges Charensol envisioned a “complete” work (that would even include films deemed to be “quite marginal”) organized according to national production and the category of *auteurs*.¹⁴ Heated debates about the rightful author would continue, but would not find resolution until much later. Interrupted by the war years and complicated by the switch of film production from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Art and Culture to that of the Ministry of Industry, the discussion concerning copyright and authorship would assume renewed prominence after the Liberation.

Numerous professional associations and organizations, among them the SACD (La Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques), AAF (L'Association des Auteurs de Films), and SRF (La Société des Réaliateurs de Films), would wage a successful battle for legal recognition that produced new legislation enacted on 11 March 1957.¹⁵ At the same time, celebrating the postwar success and popularity of films by Jean Renoir, Charlie Chaplin, Carl Theodor Dreyer, and

Roberto Rossellini, a group of young film critics and cinephiles drafted polemical theses regarding film authorship in what became consecrated as the *politique des auteurs*. To be sure, the assessments of these critics who would become the leading lights of the Nouvelle Vague, the most prominent being Claude Chabrol, Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer, and François Truffaut, did not seem at all burdened by or even aware of the professional debates raging around them in the French film community. For the so-called Young Turks, there was no doubt where authentic authorship resided. The filmmaker alone was the master of cinematic creation, using the camera to create a unique sense of time and space and, in so doing, a singular world. In this way they reiterated the claims of Alexandre Astruc's essay of 1948, "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: *La Caméra-Stylo*": "The film author writes with his camera just like the writer with his pen."¹⁶

Distinguishing *auteurs* from the lesser likes of *metteurs-en-scène* or "mere filmmakers," the young critics at *Cahiers du cinéma* formulated a "*politique des auteurs*" that raised directors to a higher power, positioning them as the organizing principle in any understanding of single films as well as any informed appreciation of film as an art. By the early 1950s, critics and spectators alike would in large measure come to think of the director as the film author. Indeed, over time the *politique des auteurs* would succeed to such an extent that the term *auteur* would almost exclusively find use in reference to cinema. The impact of the *politique des auteurs* has been so strong and compelling that subsequent history has all but overlooked, even forgotten, the numerous discussions in postwar France that gave rise to and attended it, the heated exchanges among professionals, journalists, and filmmakers regarding the rehabilitation of cinema as the seventh art and the valorization of the film artist.

The principal concern of the *politique des auteurs* was not as much the legitimation and recognition of French directors, whose superiority to the mere *metteurs-en-scène* remained uncontested.¹⁷ Hollywood studios, the often decried site of industrialized fantasy production, would become the primary ground on which the young critics would wage their campaign. In the words of Derek Schilling, they sought to revive "the romantic notion of artistic genius in a domain largely defined by economic and institutional pressures."¹⁸ In spite of constraining circumstances, the *auteurs* defended by the *Cahiers* critics were considered capable of conveying themes and obsessions in a distinctive fashion that was the equivalent of a signature. The practitioners of the *politique* formulated standards of evaluation that would assure even popular features by American directors a

place within the established arts. To grant Hollywood productions the status of art was a bold move—and a decidedly discriminating one as well. For by linking the medium’s industrial hegemony to the West’s aesthetic, the *politique* critics excluded from consideration vast stretches and far reaches of film history.¹⁹

The heyday of the *politique*, especially between 1955 and 1965, diminished any lingering sense of inferiority that cinema might have harbored vis-à-vis the other arts. In the estimation of film director and critic Olivier Assayas, the success of this enterprise was so substantial that *auteur* would come to mean first and foremost *film auteur*.²⁰ The triumph of the *politique des auteurs* provided much cause for celebration; it brought aesthetic recognition to the cinematic medium, and sealed the victory of, in Jean Renoir’s words, “the *auteur*’s fight against the industry.”²¹ But at the same time as it reproduced the romantic cult of personality and celebrated the filmmaker’s singularity and genius, its practice over the following decades became conventionalized, reducing the author to a useful, albeit predictable function within a critical and theoretical discourse. Indeed, a reciprocal relation between what determines authors and what authors determine would play a shaping role in the evolution and practice of *auteurism*.

Towards an Archeology of Film Authorship

As it celebrated individual artists, the *politique des auteurs* foregrounded the author-function, to employ Foucault’s famous category. Indeed, the film author fulfilled the role ascribed to an individual author within the modern episteme. The author’s crucial function, maintained Foucault, was to grant unity to a body of work, to provide a “means of classification,” to “differentiate” and “establish forms of relationship” between films and authors. In this way, one might say that the author-function serves to “guarantee the authenticity” of a film as well as to “characterize the existence, circulation and operation of certain discourses within a society.”²² Especially during the 1960s, in the wake of political and ideological challenges to authority that led to the events of May 1968, the place and function of the film author would come under serious attack. Among the critical interventions which argued for the irrelevance of the author, Foucault’s archeology is no doubt the most famous. In *The Order of Things*, his method presents the work of individual thinkers as entirely determined by epistemic configurations; in this dynamic, individual authors above all become functionaries of these epistemes.

Since the overarching project of Foucauldian archeology is to analyze discourses as epistemic configurations subordinate to impersonal forces, one might well assume that “What is an Author?” is no less adamantly anti-authorial than Roland Barthes’s famous essay, “The Death of the Author.” Indeed, “What is an Author?” begins with a phrase by Beckett—“What does it matter who is speaking?”—and concludes with the answer that it should not matter at all. Nonetheless, Foucault’s essay provides an incisive—and most compelling—example of why the question *does* matter. The key passage of his argument comes after a number of preliminary and schematic observations on the author-function:

I seem to have given the term “author” much too narrow a meaning. I have discussed the author only in the limited sense of a person to whom the production of a text, a book, or a work can be legitimately attributed. It is easy to see that in the sphere of discourse one can be the author of much more than a book—one can be the author of a theory, tradition, or discipline in which other books and authors will in their turn find a place. These authors are in a position which we should call “transdiscursive.” This is a recurring phenomenon—certainly as old as our civilization.²³

Foucault maintains that the principle of authorship exceeds the bounds of the body of texts bearing an author’s name. Thus the idea of an author exercising his jurisdiction over his own texts has not only been accepted in principle but is also considered to be too narrow and restrictive in particular cases. It is easy to see how in such an understanding one might well ascribe a transdiscursive status to a number of authors. Indeed, whenever an ‘ism’ attaches itself to a proper name, one might say that some degree of transdiscursivity has arisen. Nonetheless, in Foucault’s view, transdiscursive authors are not a set of exceptional individuals or schematic models. Rather, they should be seen as “founders of discursivity,”²⁴ because they “have produced something else: the possibilities and rules for the formation of other texts.” The notion of “founder” has, not without justification, earned Foucault much disapprobation, putting him in a position diametrically opposed to an archeological endeavor dedicated to uncovering the discourse’s epistemic strata. As he seeks to analyze discourses as configurations of knowledge entirely subordinate to impersonal forces, he in fact proves why it does matter who is speaking—especially if the speaker is the founder. Foucault recognizes that there is an “inevitable necessity for a ‘return to the origin’,”²⁵ but is careful to stress

that this return, which is part of the discursive field itself, never ceases to inflect our understanding.

The present endeavor, in rethinking the conceptual and historical shapes of film authorship, takes an essential impetus from Foucault's notion of a "transdiscursive" authorial position. Who, among the authors of French cinema, can claim a "transdiscursive" status and what precisely lends itself to this transposable and transmittable category? We could look at the original distinction between the Lumière Brothers' project of documenting everyday life and Georges Méliès's animated world of fantastic stories and magic tricks. But to position them as "transdiscursive" authors would require first that we ascribe to them the role of authors, which would be anachronistic, especially since they thought of themselves as inventors rather than artists. Film critics and scholars of French cinema have often reflected on who might be thought of as cinema's founders. "There have always been in the French cinema two great movements," argues the influential critic Michel Ciment, "the source Renoir, and the source Bresson. Whatever one might think or say, there are no others." Any others, he insists, come from other countries, from the United States, from Sweden, Asia, Iran, and elsewhere.²⁶

The two defining French legacies, the Bressonian and Renoirian, are well-known to film historians and cinephiles alike. Additional attempts to position other directors as points of origin have involved earlier filmmakers like Jean Epstein or Jean Vigo, or Nouvelle Vague luminaries such as Jean-Luc Godard or Alain Resnais. Bresson constitutes an obvious example, and yet is full of surprises and challenges; his career provides a particularly effective vehicle to study the dynamics of authorship, its canonization as well as its influence, within the context of French cultural history. Unlike the very popular Jean Renoir, whose retreat to Hollywood during the war generated an altogether different career that made him an ideal object of focus for *politique* critics eager to defend the American features of European film directors, Bresson appears to be a typically French artist. Bresson's formidable Frenchness, as well as the longevity of his career, enable an understanding of the various discursive formations around authorship over half a century, from the striking victory of the notion both in film criticism and copyright legislation to the internationally acclaimed crisis of the "death of the author" and the reactions that ensued in its wake. In ways that are self-evident, but also elusive, the director's estimable heritage exemplifies the essential factors that have shaped both the French film canon and the access of filmmakers to the Pantheon of French culture. The choice of Bresson has shaped the analysis of film authorship

that this book offers; another choice, say Renoir or Resnais, much less the usual suspect Godard, would without question have prompted us to take different paths and involved a quite different cast of players and constellations.

The Trans-Position of the Author

Bresson's uncompromising cinema of restraint, inordinately poignant in its style, and inflected by the artist's own interpretation and promotion as the sole creator of a visionary art, has provided an imposing model of authorship. No single phrase describes Bresson's art and life better than his own declaration: "I am a maniac of truth." His modest, minimalist style is both eccentric and exemplary, at once intense and subdued. How could someone so seemingly elitist and elusive become a French *auteur* par excellence? How do his imperatives of artistic excellence and creative singularity function within the pluralistic community of the film profession? Addressing these questions, my book examines Bresson's legacy as a transdiscursive model of authorship. Within such an approach, the notions of style and signature, so central to classical *auteurism*, might seem insufficient, related as they are to a conception of the film *auteur* as an indivisible entity. Authorial signature and style often serve to justify the artistic status of individual filmmakers, but such a circumscribed focus occludes our appreciation of artistic communities and their historical determinations.

From the extended list of filmmakers working in the wake of Bresson, I will particularly focus my attention on Jean Eustache and Maurice Pialat. One might argue that they should be accompanied by the likes of Jacques Rozier, Philippe Garrel, Bruno Dumont, to name just a few of those who might be said to share Bresson's attitude towards the medium. Had this study aimed to gather all the Bressonians and to account for their work, the scope and shape of this book would have increased exponentially. My interest here, however, is not encyclopedic. Above all I want to see how a community of Bressonians might be constituted and how it can work, or, as Jean-Luc Nancy brilliantly put it, can become "operative."²⁷ Within this community, as well as in the history of French cinema, Eustache and Pialat have played an influential and to this day not adequately appreciated role. They presented far different and decidedly more unsettling images of French life than their renowned counterparts such as Alain Resnais, François Truffaut, and Jean-Luc Godard. The cinemas of these Bressonians arose outside of, and in

crucial ways despite, the Nouvelle Vague, while nonetheless confronting the political and economic imperatives of French cinema. In order to find a place in the history of French authorship for these figures, whose remarkable films are both striking and haunting, we need to consider their precarious operating base and tenuous professional status.

With this in mind, my book revisits the terms “signature” and “style” and theorizes them as dynamic concepts enmeshed in both aesthetic and political formations. Rather than the mark of an individual, style, in this assessment, has in fact the potential, indeed the property, to differentiate cinema from the other arts, granting it autonomy, but also emphasizing the consequences of such differentiation, especially in the creation of new aesthetic values and communities. Style is not only a filmmaker’s unique vision, but a modality bound to the community of the senses. Bresson’s clear vision of what cinema should and could be provides us with a striking example of the new art’s autonomous place next to and among the arts of painting, literature, and theater. In addition to his formal prowess, Bresson’s legacy has taught generations of filmmakers moral lessons in maintaining the integrity of the cinematic art.

Following Foucault’s cue and providing a more specific elaboration of the larger dynamics at play here in the form of a case study of “Bressonianism,” this project examines the ways in which filmmakers position themselves in relationship to their “master” and to their peers and form communities bound by a shared formal and moral attitude towards the medium. What I will be referring to as the “maniacs of truth” constitutes such a community. Neither a school nor a movement, it is rather a rubric that unites filmmakers and spans generations. Driven by a fierce embrace of filmmaking as a personal and professional vocation, the directors I will be discussing remain uncompromising in their pursuit of film as a form of truth-revelation. That pursuit, however, is complicated and conflicted; it would be better defined by the “manic” commitment to truth than by any actual truth possession. The “mania of truth” is an ethos and, in crucial regards, also a pathology.

Authenticity and truth are terms often invoked in discussions of Bresson and comparisons of his work with that of filmmakers who defer to him, like Eustache and Pialat. “Despite their very different approach to actors and to the act of filming, Pialat was no less obsessed with authenticity than Bresson,” writes Marja Warehime in her monograph on Pialat. “Yet where Bresson aimed to arrive at truth through the discipline of rehearsals,” she presses on, “Pialat worked more instinctively.”²⁸ In developing a highly personal approach to filmmaking, the two

film directors, argues Warehime, are linked by “an obsession with a particular kind of cinematic truth, each representing a different kind of absolute.” Here, as in much auteurist discourse, these terms remain taken for granted as signifiers of profundity and deeper meaning without being clearly defined or carefully questioned. What, after all, is truth or authenticity? Such usages resemble what Theodor W. Adorno has called the “jargon of authenticity,” a mode of discourse that employs a “Wurlitzer organ of the spirit” to extol existential adventure and imbue it with metaphysical authority and grant it cultural currency.²⁹ Clearly, authenticity and truth are slippery terms, especially when they lack a historical ground and a concrete point of reference. That these categories so frequently appear in auteurist discourse at the very least confirms the power and authority ascribed to them and, for that reason, provides a good reason for us to consider their use with care and caution. This book does not celebrate the discourse of truth, but rather tries to comprehend its operations and its consequences. In this sense, the study offers neither a general overview of film authorship, nor a circumscribed case study of an individual film author. Rather, it provides a conceptual model for a communitarian understanding of film authorship.

The demystification of truth has motivated my endeavor to elucidate the constitution of discursive formations of authorship and to lay bare the complex mechanisms that led to the promulgation of *auteur* theory in film criticism, film studies, and film spectatorship. This book’s methodology might be described as archeological: it aims to uncover the various layers that led to the constitution of the author as a function of the work. The author-function, writes Foucault, “is not formed spontaneously through the simple attribution of a discourse to an individual. It results from a complex operation whose purpose is to construct the rational entity we call an author.”³⁰ Although these complex operations vary according to “the period and the form of discourse concerned,” he continues, “there are nevertheless transhistorical constants in the rules that govern the construction of an author.”³¹ The present book locates precisely these rules and in this sense traverses crucial aesthetic dimensions of French film authorship while paying equally close attention to its socio-economic, political, and legal determinants.

Postwar discourses on authorship stressed individual volition while downplaying the collective character of film production, exhibition, and reception. The inextricable bonds between vocational concerns and professional constraints, long considered to be of central importance within French understandings of authorship, figured less notably in the Nouvelle Vague’s conceptual renegotiations.

The agency of the author, a key element within cinema's own legitimation as an art, seemed in this construction to function outside of—or apart from—film's institutional operations, particularly in regard to economic and legal factors. Indeed, previous film scholars have repeatedly overlooked the seminal French copyright law of 1957. Still in place today, this law grants the “*droit d'auteur*” not only to the film director, but also to the producer, scriptwriter, and sound track composer. Any understanding of authorship in France, my book argues, must take into account the economic, legal, and political considerations that are essential factors in its constitution.

My approach dwells on the attributes that made *auteurism* so controversial: the very notion of cinematic style and its reliance on the vague term “*mise-en-scène*,” the anti-historical, anti-social, and anti-economic penchants that put the *auteur* in an ivory tower and films in a dusty Cinémathèque, the opposition between *auteurs* and *metteurs-en-scène*, the notion's failure to transcend the pamphlets of a critical discourse and give rise to an aesthetic theory, and most especially the contradictory destiny of a revolutionary concept carrying a promissory democratic flag only to become an elitist discourse with an international reach.

Although scholars of French film have in recent years reconsidered the many myths attending the *Nouvelle Vague*,³² the legacy of the *politique des auteurs* has yet to be reevaluated in the light of expanded discussions in aesthetics, epistemology, and sociology. In this book, the essential questions about film authorship—originality, signature, *mise-en-scène*, and the question of truth in artistic matters—are examined from philosophical, socio-economic, and legal perspectives. The study ponders in particular the interplay between the singularity of individual filmmakers and the plurality of the professional community, talking about film authors not as solitary geniuses but as working artists.

While the conceptual questions at the heart of this study are informed by discourses of film authorship, they also derive from a sweeping view of French film history and my deliberate choice of certain films and filmmakers to the detriment of others. Strongly aware of the numerous factors that affect the work of filmmakers, I want to avoid the commonly travelled roads and to traverse other routes that might afford us a wider view. From a methodological point of view, sociological perspectives regarding the conditions of authorship and professional organizations complement the examination of the discursive formations that led to the legitimation of the director as the film author, both aesthetically and legally.

The first and last chapters are especially concerned with elaborating these determinants and drawing more general conclusions about authorship as a function of both creative endeavor and material circumstance. In addressing key concepts in the study of authorship, this book relies on close analyses of exemplary films. The materials under discussion reflect significant factors in previous assessments of film authorship—authorial signature and style (chapter 2), legacy, originality, and influence (chapter 3), the crisis of authorship or the so-called “death of the author” (chapter 4), and responses to critical discourse proclaiming “the end of cinema” (chapter 5)—and reenact the evolution of the category of authorship from celebration to crisis.

The Road Ahead

The opening chapter employs Robert Bresson as a point of reference in the study’s reflections on the history of French film authorship. His long career (1934–1983) inspired great veneration among the country’s filmmakers and filmgoers, and later international cineastes. This chapter augments existing scholarship on Bresson’s work, paying careful attention to the social, economic, and legal conditions of film authorship that informed his career. Caught between the liberal arts (scriptwriting) and the mechanical arts (photography), French cinema waged a long struggle for both cultural regard and legal legitimacy. Subject to antiquated authorship laws dating back to 1794, French filmmakers applauded new legislation in 1957 that nominally recognized the filmmaker as *auteur*. This breakthrough, however, would prove to be at best a partial victory, for attempts to implement the new law would catalyze challenges on a variety of fronts. Reflecting this history and its vicissitudes, Bresson’s career—from his artistic elitism to his professional commitment, from his quest for a personal style to his prominent role in the 1958 defense of the Society of French Auteurs—provides a compelling instance of self-conscious film authorship equally informed by creative impulses and driven by political determinations. Bresson’s track record as a film activist complicates the framework of the Nouvelle Vague’s *politique* and compels us to reconsider it in light of a larger archeology of authorship in post-Liberation France and well into the 1960s.

The second chapter turns to the aesthetic categories that served to consecrate auteurism, and reconsiders them in the light of active tensions between individual vocation and membership within a community of artists. In their early writings,

auteurist critics claimed that what distinguishes an *auteur* is the ability to think in audiovisual terms, a capacity they deemed to be the mark of elevated style in contrast to the mere mechanical exercise of technique. Like the careers of many recognized filmmakers, Bresson's offers a privileged object for the investigation of critical categories like style, technique, cinematic writing, and montage. In particular, his example allows an opportunity to understand these categories in their ardent endeavor to free cinema from the influence of theater and literature. Why is Bresson's "transdiscursive" position more transparent than that of other filmmakers? Using the tools of aesthetics, my demonstration turns to the arguments of the philosopher Jacques Rancière. In *Les Écartés du cinéma* (*The Intervals of Cinema*), Rancière suggests that Bresson's cinema constituted more than a singular style, indeed that it provided a new "distribution of the sensible." For Rancière, Bresson envisioned the cinematograph as an experience that might offer individual citizens and their communities both a new world of art and a new sense of life. Within this specific approach, the second chapter focuses on three aspects that render Bresson's style singular and exemplary: his project of literary adaptation that negotiated cinema's autonomy in the artistic field; the signature iconography of his expressionless, unaffected *models*; and the spare economy of his cinematic means, particularly in his use of ellipsis.

Film critics and scholars have raised Bresson to the status of a saint, in the words of one critic, the "father of this land we call the Cinematograph."³³ He is praised not only for the invention of a new, original, and powerful filmic form, but also for providing a point of departure for a distinct cinematic tradition, for creating the very possibility of this tradition. Bresson's legacy and influence, reflected in the indelible traces he has left in the history of cinema, play as much a role in his creative position as in his actual films. Focusing on the prominent French directors Jean Eustache and Maurice Pialat, the third chapter examines Bresson's remarkable influence on the world of cinema and how the reverence for an *auteur* role model legitimates the new creators in their own quests to become singular artists. What unites these filmmakers and indeed links them to Bresson is their understanding of filmmaking as an existential necessity. As *auteurs*, these remarkably difficult and fiercely uncompromising figures at once seek to maintain their personal singularity while nonetheless sustaining their predecessor's legacy. They attempt to become Bresson's equals in terms of film style and aesthetics, both acting in accordance with his example and yet, in crucial regards, acting out against it. The Bressonian iconography of Eustache's films includes an anti-

Bressonian dramatic structure, while Pialat's use of ellipsis outdoes and, in the process, undoes Bresson's inimitable narrative fragmentation. In adapting Georges Bernanos's *Under the Sun of Satan*, Pialat writes his way into French film history, at once with and against Bresson. The impact of these two directors, who are often mistakenly seen as extensions of the Nouvelle Vague, is unthinkable without Bresson's example, both as an artistic legacy and a creative burden with which each director reckoned in different ways. These exemplary instances provide novel case studies of French film authorship in the wake of Bresson.

The first three chapters examine the discursive formation of the film *auteur*, from the making of the author to the negotiation and recasting of authorial legacy. They elucidate the factors that determine how individual filmmakers are raised to the status of *auteur*, as well as the dialectic between individual originality and collective artistic endeavor. This discourse of *auteurism*, as we know, would play—and still does play—a central role in the creation of film studies curricula, the writing of *auteur* monographs, and the programming of film festivals. For that reason, film scholars faced significant challenges when the “death of the author” was declared by leading theorists in the late 1960s and had a seismic impact on subsequent discussions within the humanities and social sciences. The demise of the author would figure within a larger crisis of a cinematographic medium deemed to be essentially visual; it would also impact on larger discussions about the denigration of vision.³⁴ The Bressonian tradition plays an important role in these conversations, for his defense of cinema as “the art of the image where one must lose the notion of image”³⁵ inspired what Eustache declared to be his anti-*auteurist* project, one that Pialat embraced as well. In the wake of the author's loss of authority and power, Eustache deliberately installed the narrator as the master on the set. This replacement was motivated by an ethical impulse and a sense of duty: the narrator could articulate the “truth” while the image could not help but conceal it. In order to account for this major negotiation of the moral dilemma created by the absence of the author and allow for a related but in crucial ways different perspective, the fourth chapter will position Eustache's late films vis-à-vis another cinematic project preoccupied with ethics, that of Eric Rohmer.

Responding to *auteurism*'s penchant for ocularcentrism, filmmakers like Eustache and Rohmer drew on an important Bressonian legacy: the director's singular negotiation of sound and silence. Both make elaborate use of dialogue and diegetic sound to accentuate their narrators' duplicity and dissimulation, employing the spoken word to quite different ends. Eustache sees language as the

only possible recourse in the face of the image's corrupted access to truth and knowledge. Rohmer's moral tales transform speech into a diversion from and a supplement to the camera's capacity to show things as they are. Often described as literary in its constitution, Rohmer's cinema challenges the possibilities of language and sound as well as the most hallowed premises of *mise-en-scène* criticism, reassessing the role of literature in the making of the film *auteur*. Both directors feature narrators afflicted with doubt, ignorance, and falsehood, and inscribe them in their films' formal framework. The moral weight of these projects lies in their appeal to the audience and the opportunity granted to viewers to find truth within the maze of the narrators' prevarications. While Eustache succumbs to despair and humiliation, questioning cinema's ethical values, Rohmer trusts in the power of the image and grants to it an ethical authority; truth, he submits in the venerable *Cahiers* tradition, is recorded by the eye of the lens, and that lens is objective.

Bresson's extreme artistic singularity ensured his status as *auteur* within and beyond the realm of the *politique des auteurs* that as a rule privileged directors working in the American studio system. Capitalizing on the romantic notion of the film *auteur* as genius, saint, or hero, classical *auteurism* paid far less attention to the undeniable fact that their hallowed *auteurs* were also professional artisans. The fifth chapter illustrates the fraught and contradictory legacy of the artist-artisan opposition in the larger discourse about the "end of cinema." European cinema at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s seems to perform a sacrificial model of the artist; film narratives are organized around characters of struggling individual artists who are subject to financial constraints. Relying on the specific case study of Cannes's official selection of 1991, I will examine two key French features in that year's competition, Maurice Pialat's *Van Gogh* and Jacques Rivette's *La Belle Noiseuse*. In quite different and very striking ways, both Pialat, the often-embattled employee of Gaumont, and Rivette, the Nouvelle Vague exponent, reflect on the question of art appreciation and the place of the artist in the working world. Their two productions enhance our appreciation of the ways in which *auteurs* are also workers and subject to the laws of the market, as well as members of professional communities.

While film scholarship positions *auteur* cinema in striking contrast to the dominant sphere of commercial film production, the relationship between art and the market requires more nuanced conceptual models. By probing the professional identity of the artist, these two films reveal how artistic endeavor inhabits various

sectors of the working world. Engaging with recent sociological research, this chapter elaborates the identification of the artistic activity with the “métier” whose exercise is deeply individual, as well as the profound professional inequality that governs the work of artists. Rivette’s and Pialat’s films afford us a deeper appreciation of the intrinsic link between film authorship and a notion of art as an “expressive” pursuit that issues from and figures within the realm of labor.

While recent publications devoted to film authorship have provided useful overviews of the subject, this book seeks to be at once broader and, in its use of paradigmatic examples, more focused.³⁶ It is broader in that it incorporates into the study of film authorship more careful attention to the socio-economic determinations of a society facing successively the Second World War as well as the anti-bourgeois (and anti-auteur) revolution of May ‘68. It is also broader insofar as it apprehends the continuity between film authorship and other discourses of the author-function, from discussions that go as far back as the eighteenth century to others that reach into the new millennium. Although English-language film scholarship includes a number of estimable studies on Bresson, as well as several monographs on individual directors like Rohmer, Rivette, and Pialat, the work of Eustache has been woefully overlooked, all the more since access to his films has been blocked by his heirs. Despite their undeniable international cachet as *auteurs*, maverick filmmakers like Eustache and Pialat have not received the penetrating analytical attention that their rich and stirring work deserves. This book reconsiders their accomplishments, engaging with their films and putting them into dialogue with the works of more critically acclaimed contemporaries such as Rivette and Rohmer in order to find useful points of comparison and contrast as well as to appreciate significant moments in the history of French film authorship. Throughout I review critical commonplaces and problematic constructions within this singular history.

While it revisits the formation of modern French film authorship, both historically and conceptually, this book does not propose a counter-model of authorship. Nor does it offer a comprehensive history. Rather, it reviews an important legacy of thinking about authorship and provides much-needed additional augmentation, especially in regard to the relations between the singularity of the individual filmmaker and the plurality of the professional community. In examining a “situation” of what I call Bressonianism, my book negotiates larger conceptual stakes within the framework of a concrete case study.

Notes

1. This account follows John Caughie's presentation in *Theories of Authorship* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).
 2. Kent Jones, "Critical Condition: From the *Politique des Auteurs* to the *Auteur* Theory to Plain Old *Auteurism*. How Clear of a Picture of Actual Movies Are We Receiving?," *Film Comment* 50.2 (March–April 2014): 40–41.
 3. In this regard, a marked tension between film criticism and film theory has continued and catalyzed some refreshingly novel contributions to authorship studies. See Dana Polan, "Auteur Desire," *Screening the Past* 12 (March 2001). Recent endeavors, such as Tom Gunning's magisterial monograph on Fritz Lang's films, seek to counter the *politique's* hagiographic discourse with the "more progressive assumption that meaning is made by readers and viewers in an ongoing interaction with texts whose energy should not be frozen by being referred back to an authoritative source." See Tom Gunning, *The Films of Fritz Lang* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 3.
 4. Stephen Crofts, "Authorship and Hollywood," in *American Cinema and Hollywood: Critical Approaches*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 84–98.
 5. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 114.
 6. Foucault, "What is an Author?," 124.
 7. Roger Chartier, "Foucault's Chiasmus: Authorship between Science and Literature in the 17th and 18th centuries," in *Scientific Authorship: Credit and Intellectual Property in Science*, ed. Mario Biagioli and Peter Galison (New York: Routledge, 2003), 13.
 8. Maurice Lever, *Beaumarchais, A Biography*, ed. Jean-Pierre Thomas, trans. Susan Emanuel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 180. Cited from the "Petition to the National Assembly," a statement against the usurpation of the authors' property by theater directors, presented by Beaumarchais to the Committee on Public Instruction on 23 December 1791 and published shortly afterwards.
 9. Chartier, "Foucault's Chiasmus," 17–18.
 10. See Antoine Compagnon, *Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur? Cours de M. Antoine Compagnon* (Cours de Licence LLM 316 F2, Université Paris IV–Sorbonne, 37–39: <http://aphelis.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Compagnon-Auteur.pdf>).
 11. Pierre Henry, "L'Évolution de l'art de l'image animée," *Ciné pour tous* 55 (17 December 1920): 5–6.
 12. See Christophe Gauthier, *Cinéphiles, ciné-clubs et salles spécialisées à Paris de 1920 à 1929* (Paris: AFRHC, 1999), 289.
 13. Jean Epstein, "On Certain Characteristics of *Photogénie*," trans. Tom Milner, *Afterimage* 10 (1981): 23.
 14. Georges Charenso, *Panorama du cinéma* (Paris: Éditions du Sagittaire, 1930).
 15. See the text of "Loi sur la propriété littéraire et artistique, Loi du 11 mars 1957:" <http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/fr/km/km003fr.pdf>.
 16. Alexandre Astruc, "La Naissance d'une Nouvelle Avant-Garde: La Caméra-Stylo," *L'Écran Français* 144 (30 March 1948): 22.
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17. See for example François Truffaut, "Crise d'ambition du cinéma français," *Arts* (30 March–5 April 1955). Truffaut suggests four categories to classify the French filmmakers in 1955: 1) the ambitious (*Ambitieux*), a mere 17 filmmakers, among them only half the writers of their own scripts; 2) the semi-ambitious (*Semi-ambitieux*) in number of 15, having made 52 films in ten years; 3) the honestly commercial (*Commerciaux honnêtes*), 27 with 190 films shot in ten years; and finally 4) the 30 deliberately commercial directors (*Délibérément commerciaux*) who "executed" 247 films in ten years.
 18. Derek Schilling, *Eric Rohmer* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 79.
 19. *Ibid.*, 78.
 20. Olivier Assayas, "Que d'auteurs, que d'auteurs! Sur une politique," in *La Politique des auteurs: Les Textes*, ed. Antoine de Baecque and Gabrielle Lucantonio (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2001), 172–75.
 21. Quoted by the French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin during the closing ceremony of the conference "Le Cinéma à venir," at Cannes on 10 May 2000: <http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/003001179.html>.
 22. Foucault, "What is an Author?," 119–24.
 23. Foucault, "What is an Author?," 131.
 24. This is a category that has emerged in the modern episteme, and more particularly in the nineteenth century.
 25. Foucault, "What is an Author?," 132–33.
 26. Michel Ciment, "Editorial: Bresson et Kubrick," *Positif* 468 (February 2000): 2: "Il y a toujours eu dans le cinéma français deux grands courants, la source Renoir et la source Bresson. Quoi qu'on en pense ou en dise, il n'y a pas eu d'autres. Le reste vient d'ailleurs, d'Amérique, de Suède, d'Asie, d'Iran, etc., et cela risque de continuer encore longtemps, même si Godard, Resnais, Pialat commencent peu à peu à constituer eux aussi des pôles magnétiques assez puissants."
 27. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. and trans. Peter Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
 28. Marja Warehime, *Maurice Pialat* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 11.
 29. Theodor W. Adorno, *The Language of Authenticity*, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 17. See Scott Durham, "On the Authenticity of Jargon: From Barthes and Adorno to Godard," *The World Picture* (2008).
 30. Foucault, "What is an Author?," 127.
 31. *Ibid.*
 32. In this sense, see particularly Geneviève Sellier, *Masculine Singular: French New Wave Cinema*, trans. Kristin Ross (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Richard Neupert, *A History of the French New Wave Cinema* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002); Jill Forbes, *The Cinema in France: After the New Wave* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992).
 33. Thierry Jousse, "Bresson souffle où il veut," *Cahiers du cinéma* 543 (February 2000): 30–31.
 34. See Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).
 35. See Robert Bresson, "Entretien avec François-Régis Bastide," *Le Masque et la plume*, 30 April 1966, reprinted in *Bresson par Bresson: Entretiens (1943–1983)*, ed. Mylène Bresson (Paris: Flammarion, 2013), 165.
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36. In addition to edited volumes gathering seminal essays, recent studies have updated the scholarship on film authorship. C. Paul Sellors, *Film Authorship: Auteurs and Other Myths* (London: Wallflower, 2010) and Sarah Kozloff, *The Life of the Author* (Montréal: Caboose, 2014) justify the relevance of the concept of film *auteur* and supply an overview of the most important moments in the concept's development.

Introduction

A Private Universe

Kamila Kuc, Kuba Mikurda, and Michał Oleszczyk

In a seminal image from *Astronauts* (*Les Astronautes* [1959]), the first film Walerian Borowczyk made after immigrating to France, a DIY space shuttle traverses what looks like the most cluttered galaxy one could possibly travel to. All sense of proportion is gone: a vast landscape turns out to be someone's shoe, and tiny details acquire cosmic dimensions and surprising meanings. All this is fueled by a single man's curiosity: the titular astronaut, whose crazy quest seems to be to connect with and explore everything there is, from celestial bodies in the sky to a particularly heavenly body he sees in a lit window of an ordinary brownstone building ... In one of the letters donated to Cinémathèque Française, Borowczyk writes of *Astronautes*:

Man has always dreamt of making outer space into his home. But that's still impossible without a special garment. It would be a peculiar sight, indeed: a run-of-the-mill dreamer, traversing galaxies in his typical gray outfit. With a basket of tomatoes as provisions. That's exactly the guy I decided to make a film about.¹

It is not very difficult to see this figure of an explorer and craftsman as a self-portrait of Borowczyk himself.

The usual story, which has become something of a film-historical cliché, goes that Walerian Borowczyk was an acclaimed filmmaker who went from art house stardom in the 1970s, to soft-core oblivion in the 1980s. Once hailed as one of the greatest visionaries of European cinema alongside Buñuel and Fellini, he ended his career as the director of late-night TV erotic series. As is often the case, the actual picture is much more nuanced and difficult to grasp. However it's certainly

true that his films are equally cherished by fans of art house refinement as they are by fans of (s)exploitation flicks; the “rise and fall” or “artist turned pornographer” narrative simply cannot hold when confronted with the diversity and scope of Borowczyk’s extremely prolific career.

Boro, L’Île D’Amour: The Films of Walerian Borowczyk is the first English-language edited volume exploring the work of this label-defying auteur — an “escape artist,” if there ever was one, passionately countering people’s attempts to pigeonhole his work. The book coincides with the revival of interest in Borowczyk’s work (retrospectives, film restorations, new editions), which nonetheless remains marked by the lack of a comprehensive source on this maverick director. This collection serves as an introduction and a guide to the complex and ambiguous body of Borowczyk’s work. Consisting of sixteen chapters, contributions range from panoramic views of the director’s entire work and analytical takes on particular movies, to more personal, impressionistic pieces, thus offering a wide and diverse perspective on the filmmaker’s work. This collection constitutes a platform for a wide array of writers (from the United Kingdom, United States, and Poland) to explore previously unnoticed aspects of Borowczyk’s oeuvre.

“I conceived all my films in an instant”

It’s fair to say that Walerian Borowczyk’s body of work presents a significant challenge to any historian’s attempt to classify it and ascribe it to a single narrative. For one thing, the sheer scope of the work, ranging from shorts and features to animation and vérité-like realism, suggests a sensibility so eclectic and voracious as to be positively unclassifiable. Borowczyk’s multifaceted talents, which allowed him to excel in fields as diverse as drawing, poster art, advertisement, sculpture, animation, film, poetry, and prose, at first seem an ocean too wide and too deep to navigate, much less place firmly on a map and confine to a particular location.

Borowczyk famously claimed that he “conceived all [his] films in an instant, and only objective factors prevented [him] from making them in that instant” (Borowczyk 1973). He does not believe in artistic evolution; he’s a creationist, pure and simple. And indeed, there is something instantaneous about his works—rather than present the development of a style, a sense of emerging mastery, a

process of artistic self-recognition, they are defined and self-aware from the start. They are not a succession, but a constellation of works, where every element is as important as the next. Indeed, one is often puzzled when asked about “the best” piece in Borowczyk’s oeuvre — his works are at their best when one approaches them all together, side by side.

Borowczyk’s cinematic universe is a vast archive of multilayered collections of objects, texts, and images. These are interwoven in an audiovisual spectacle very precisely arranged by the eclectic stylist that Borowczyk was. Having studied painting techniques (particularly lithography), it is perhaps not surprising that his films explore, intentionally or not, the relationship between stillness and movement. The director’s fascination with Étienne-Jules Marey’s experiments further confirms this. Much has been written about Borowczyk’s use of diverse imagery, but let’s stress the most striking tendencies here.

Borowczyk’s oeuvre can be characterized by a strong presence of more traditional art forms. These often constitute the very stuff of which his films are made: photography (*School* [1958]; *Rosalie* [1966]), collage (*Grandma’s Encyclopedia* [1963]) and animated objects, watercolors and drawings (*House* [1958] made with Jan Lenica; *Angels’ Games* [1964]; *Joachim’s Dictionary* [1965]). More direct references to painting can be seen within the actual frames of his films, as in the case of *The Beast* (1975) in which Władysław Podkowiński’s painting *Frenzy of Exultations* (*Szał uniesień*, 1894) decorates the wall. Not to mention Borowczyk’s magnificent still life compositions (*Renaissance* [1963]). Moreover, a few of Borowczyk’s works are composed of filmed paintings (the repollero technique) (*Rewarded Feelings* [1957] made with Lenica), and he also developed a new technique — pulverographie — “dustography” — which involves color photocopying. Borowczyk employed this method to illustrate his collection of short stories, *The Anatomy of the Devil* (1992). But his engagement with static art forms does not stop there. Borowczyk’s fascination with the realm of painting is also visible in a calculated flatness that characterizes films such as *Blanche* (1971), where the impact of medieval iconography is particularly evident. Borowczyk frames the shots as if they were a painting, with the characters looking out of its frame. Though not medieval in its visual composition, a corresponding shallowness of picture can be found in *Goto, Isle of Love* (1968).

To the Moon and Back

One aspect that was often neglected by authors writing about Borowczyk was the adequate placement of him within cinematic trends that either coincide with his activity or precede and anticipate it in illuminating ways. More than any other auteur within a select group of international cinematic provocateurs (including such figures as Pier Paolo Pasolini, Oshima Nagisa, Andy Warhol, Dušan Makavejev, Russ Meyer, and Barbara Rubin), Borowczyk's sensibility is easily traceable to the influence of three major filmmakers that helped shape his own aesthetic: Georges Méliès, Sergei Eisenstein, and Luis Buñuel.

Each of the three represents a different aspect developed by Borowczyk: Méliès stands for the DIY film magic so often employed in Boro's animation (most notably in *The Astronauts*, which can be seen as a free-associative riff on *A Trip to the Moon* [1902]); Eisenstein for the ongoing fascination with montage; and Buñuel represents the methodical rebellion against bourgeois morality and religion, often enacted in terms of an absurd comedy of manners that surfaces even in the wildest of Borowczyk's features, such as *Theatre of Mr. and Mrs. Kabal* (1967).

Of the three, it is arguably Eisenstein that Borowczyk owes the most to: the entire Soviet school of montage seems to have had a profound effect on his sensibility (not a surprise in an artist taking his first significant steps amidst the heavy onslaught of propaganda in postwar communist Poland). In fact, one may be surprised by how many instances of inventive editing are to be found in Borowczyk's most famous sequences, including intensely erotic ones — climaxes in both "The Tide" and "Lucrezia Borgia," segments of *Immoral Tales* (1974), are dramatized less in terms of body movement or the actors straining to enact pleasure, but chiefly by inventive fragmentation of bodies, props, and costumes, which are then suggestively merged by the editing process. Screen sex in Borowczyk's films is more a matter of editorial splices than of physical thrusts: a strategy that echoes classic Soviet sequences, such as the thawing river in Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Mother* (1926), in which running torrents equal revolutionary fervor by means of rhythmic juxtaposition (see "The Tide" and witness the virtual repetition of that strategy in which the rising sea equals the oncoming ejaculation). In Borowczyk, the careful singling out of trembling limbs, furtive gazes, slightly parted lips and slowly hardening nipples all amount to an effect far more titillating than any conventional porn (focused on documenting intercourse, rather than on suggesting it) has to offer.

The work of Luis Buñuel, in some ways as eclectic and iconoclastic as Borowczyk's, is another strong influence — doubly appropriate, since *Immoral Tales* had in fact been awarded the L'Âge D'Or Award upon its initial release, thus displaying a link with Buñuel's notoriously explosive 1930 screen provocation. Borowczyk's interest in sex, surrealism, fetishism, as well as his biting critique of the Catholic Church all make him a direct heir to Buñuel, even if the latter's propensity for satire and elaborate dramatic structure was significantly stronger. Even allowing for all the differences, it has to be said that the sharp awareness of class divisions that Borowczyk so often brings forth in his work (most evidently in *Diptych* [1967]) seems very close to Buñuel's own take on society, consistently present in films as different as the documentary short *Land Without Bread* (1933) and *The Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964). Last but not least, sexual obsessions that Borowczyk habitually scrutinizes are explored with equal fervor by Buñuel, in such masterpieces as *Un Chien Anadalou* (1929) and *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz* (1955). It's not difficult to imagine the latter being paired with Boro's *A Private Collection* (1973) to form a perfect late-night double bill.

If Buñuel and Eisenstein represent the “revolutionary” strand in Borowczyk's influences, there is also a much more conservative framework one could apply to a reading of his work: that of strict, highly moralistic realism, represented by Roberto Rossellini and Eric Rohmer. While neither of the two seems an obvious influence at first, there are in fact close ties to be found between Borowczyk's approach and theirs. Rossellini's late work, in particular, provides a fascinating background for what arguably is Borowczyk's most accomplished feature film, *Blanche* (1971). The master of Italian neorealism, famous for such classics of post-war humanism as *Open City* (1945) and *Paisan* (1946), had shifted at the end of his career toward exploration of philosophical ideas rooted in the distant past, which allowed him to produce a number of works that remain absolutely original in their presentation of historical events and figures. It was in *The Taking of Power by Louis XIV* (1966) that Rossellini presented an entirely new way of staging history for the screen. Freed from the bombast of the standard Hollywood approach, which stressed visual opulence over meaning, Rossellini presented the everyday existence of the French royal court as matter-of-factly as possible, with its casual richness neither denied nor emphasized by the *mise en scène*. The result was uncanny: a documentary portrait of life two centuries ago, rich in detail and unburdened by trickery. It's difficult not to think of Rossellini's approach when one is watching *Blanche*: possibly the most successful depiction of the European

Middle Ages on screen (at least until Robert Bresson's *Lancelot du Lac* [1974], itself influenced by Borowczyk). Even though Borowczyk's film is slightly more stylized than Rossellini's (lighting and framing are often at odds with total transparency that Rossellini advocated so much), the basic impulse to liberate oneself from the established convention of staging the distant past in terms of a grandiose spectacle is identical.

The tie to Eric Rohmer is much subtler, as well as easier to define in terms of opposites that he and Borowczyk represent: while Rohmer gained international fame by producing *Six Moral Tales* (1962–72), Boro struck commercial gold by unleashing his *Immoral* ones (even though the first segment, "The Tide," starred Rohmer's regular, Fabrice Luchini). While Boro explored liberated sex rather freely, Rohmer applied a slightly secularized Christian ethic to matters of desire and fidelity — a chief difference between them. Both directors, however, shared a distinctive interest in minimalist expression by their actors, as well as attentiveness to landscapes, props, costumes and detail that make their work strikingly alike upon formal scrutiny. The frequent inserts of isolated objects and written text (notes, letters, signs) that is so plentiful in Borowczyk, also constitutes one of the stronger formal traits in Rohmer. Both artists were almost compulsively prolific and both were fascinated by highly formalized erotic behavior (courtship in Rohmer, seduction and coitus in Boro). What's more, both displayed great affection for historical costume, even though Rohmer ventured into that particular territory more rarely (*The Marquise of O* [1976] is probably the most famous example). Taken together, their bodies of work form two strikingly opposite artistic reactions of intellectually minded men variously shaped by Catholicism to the power of counterculture — all the more fascinating for sharing so many intellectual and aesthetic traits.

The greatest irony of Borowczyk's career is that he initiated so many movements and tendencies that thrived independently of his work that it's sometimes difficult to trace them back to their original source (one of the tasks of this book is to rectify that, of course). In fact, the entire montage-saturated decade of the 1980s, which saw the rise of the erotically charged music video, owes a lot to Borowczyk, who by that time had been relegated mostly to less personal projects, such as *Emmanuelle 5* (1987) and directing episodes of *Série Rose* (1989–91). Even such classics of commercialized erotica as Adrian Lyne's *9 ½ Weeks* (1986) or Zalman King's *Wild Orchid* (1989) seem to bear the influence of Borowczyk (as does Bob Fosse, whose famous "Airrotica" number from *All That Jazz* [1979])

could have been influenced by Borowczyk's aforementioned use of fragmented bodies and isolated erotic gestures).

In a way, it's through Borowczyk's limitations that we can best place him within specific film traditions. For one thing, his art is not easily classifiable as progressive, since it's so completely isolated from any traces of queer sensibility — Boro's erotic utopia is almost exclusively heteronormative. Furthermore, his relationship to issues of race is also problematic and often verges on colonial smugness: from the silently submissive black servant in *The Beast* (1975) to the cartoonish, Daffy Duck-dubbing of the Japanese tourist in *Love Rites* (1988). What's most important, though, is that Borowczyk's definite lack of interest in individual personality may be the ultimate key connecting all of his work, as well as the feature that sets him eons apart from the other great Polish émigré director, Roman Polański.

With the exception of his sole Polish feature, *Story of Sin* (1975), which used the strong narrative arc provided by Stefan Żeromski's 1908 novel to present a character-driven story of *l'amour fou*, all of Borowczyk's films are premodern in their obliviousness to individual motivation and psychology. In one of the interviews included in the magnificent "Boro" box set, issued by Arrow Films just as this book neared completion, Borowczyk explains that his main theme is "the way we as people interact with the world around us," which is tantamount to saying that his interest is in epistemology, not psychology. In other words, just like Jean Painlevé, Jan Švankmajer, and the Quay Brothers (not to mention Wes Anderson), Borowczyk's universe is intensely focused on processes and objects that surround and envelop individuals, without ever truly penetrating them. His cinema is not that of immersion, but of analysis and fragmentation: even at its most erotic and illicit, it presents us with a collage of fragments — apparently incongruent at first — that achieve a synergy so complete, it occasionally reaches the intensity of a powerful climax.

Contributors' Chapters

This book offers a peek into Borowczyk's macrocosm, but in no way does it propose a fixed reading of it. If anything, it is hoped that in its experimental character, it will point toward areas of Borowczyk's work that still need further attention. We were extremely fortunate to have excellent writers and scholars sharing their expertise with us. Together, they form what the reader is about to experience in *Boro, L'Île D'Amour: The Films of Walerian Borowczyk*.

The volume opens with an extended biographical chapter by Kuba Mikurda. By means of researching his documentary film on Borowczyk, he has gained access to various archives in Poland, France, and the UK, including the Cinémathèque Française collection, donated by Borowczyk himself. He also met with many of Borowczyk's collaborators, as well as with people who corresponded with him. He then put the results of his research into a historical perspective, framing Borowczyk's work within the larger context of world cinema. The Borowczyk emerging from Mikurda's chapter is a true "escape artist": a filmmaker who defies all simple classification, crosses all possible borders and searches for new forms of expression and fresh challenges. He's a trickster, a provocateur, an eternal rebel, who replenishes his energy by entering into conflict with the critics, the audience and the film industry alike.

The distinguished historian of film and animation Marcin Giżycki argues in his chapter that three phenomena are key to Borowczyk: surrealism, Hy Hirsch, and *Kunstkamera*. He describes the way in which Borowczyk looks at animate and inanimate objects, and in the second part of the chapter addresses the influence of Borowczyk's background as an animator on his live-action films, in particular the construction of *mise en scène* and directing actors.

In an informed conversation, Kuba Mikurda and visual artist Jakub Woynarowski discuss various facets of Borowczyk's animated works, which defy easy definition and still inspire with their innovative mixture of playfulness, provocation, and formal audacity. Contrary to received opinions, they suggest there is a deep consistency between Borowczyk's animated and live-action films, which have largely been viewed as belonging to separate phases of the director's work.

In her pioneering chapter, "Cruel Imagination: Borowczyk's Post-Traumatic Surrealism," Iwona Kurz explores the influence of World War II traumas on Borowczyk. This theme is discussed relatively rarely in the context of his films, which at first glance can seem untouched by politics or ideology. As Kurz aptly shows, contrary to other distinguished Polish filmmakers of his generation — such as Andrzej Wajda or Stanisław Różewicz — Borowczyk never approached those issues head-on, choosing indirect strategies instead, such as the employment of surrealist imagery. Kurz closely analyzes two films by Borowczyk: *Angels' Games* and the "Erzsébet Báthory" segment of *Immoral Tales*.

Kamila Kuc's piece, the most unorthodox in this book, constitutes an exploration of Borowczyk's take on Guy de Maupassant's *Rosalie Prudent* (1886) through the lens of the original source. Kuc's text explores a fictional dialogue between a

number of cultural icons, which are brought together in this scenario because of the subjects and themes that dominate their work. The players here, apart from de Maupassant and Borowczyk themselves, are Nietzsche and Tolstoy, while Ligia Branice makes an appearance as Rosalie Prudent. The aim of this fictional piece was mainly to draw attention to Borowczyk's use of camera and sound, as well as his employment of rigorously minimal *mise en scène*. Kuc also wished to highlight certain themes that underpin many of Borowczyk's films, namely his take on motherhood.

Fernando C. Croce, known in the cinephiliac universe as the master of the short critical form, turns his eye to four of Borowczyk's films, only to discover a disquieting richness of textures indicative of the films' power to seduce.

James Snazell's piece investigates the importance of Borowczyk's visual background (particularly his preference for lithography) to the later development of his visual sensibility, from *Goto*, *Isle of Love* to *Behind Convent Walls*. The emphasis here is on Borowczyk's use of still imagery in his films, as seen in his employment of photography, collage and painting techniques. As Snazell aptly puts it: the attachment of Borowczyk's films to such tags as surrealism and eroticism fall apart, as "Borowczyk's work slips and slides when you attempt to shoehorn his work into neat categories."

A Private Collection is the subject of Edwin Carels' chapter, in which he argues that the film announces Borowczyk's aesthetic strategy, centered on attacking the hypocrisy surrounding pornography and sex. Carels proposes that Borowczyk's "insistence on the evasion of the eye of the law," turns *A Private Collection* into more "than a straightforward documentation." Carels also draws the reader's attention to Borowczyk's engagement with sculpture.

Never before have Borowczyk's films been written about in regard to any connection with Shakespeare. In his gripping and original chapter "The Beast with Two Backs," Phillip Warnell draws parallels between *The Beast*, "a tale of tails," and *Othello*, via Jean Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast* (1946). Warnell argues that in Borowczyk's film the beast and the monarch are treated as a palimpsest, "a duo of refinement and perversion." Using Derrida's understanding of the sovereign, Warnell argues that the figure of the beast in Borowczyk's film is treated as one beneath the law, thus beauty and the beast eventually becomes beauty as the beast.

As its title suggests, Marta Rabikowska's chapter "Enjoying Excess: A Bataille Interpretation of *Story of Sin* (1975) by Walerian Borowczyk and Stefan Żeromski," uses Bataille's writings to investigate the relationship between Żeromski's 1908

novel and Borowczyk's 1975 adaptation of it. Rabikowska provocatively argues that there is not one film made by Borowczyk in which "love does not smell like death." Her chapter addresses a significant gap in Borowczyk scholarship, as she not only discusses contemporary responses to both Żeromski's novel and Borowczyk's film but offers new translations of Żeromski's complex novel in an attempt assess its impact on the film.

Kamila Wielebska introduces an original notion of "victorian surrealism," which she recognizes in Borowczyk's films, particularly in *Immoral Tales*, *The Beast*, and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Miss Osbourne*. Her investigation into these films is strengthened by a wide literary and philosophical perspective. She also asks an uncomfortable question in trying to establish whether Borowczyk's films are chauvinist or pro-feminist in their approach.

Jonathan Owen focuses mainly on *A Private Collection* and *Immoral Tales* in his discussion of the meeting spaces of Borowczyk and his friend and fellow traveler through the erotic, André Pieyre de Mandiargues. Owen argues that the latter's affair with the cinema was at its best when collaborating with Borowczyk. Both men were, as Owen points out, united by their sympathy for surrealism and fascination for objects.

In his erudite chapter entitled "Sex and the Sacred: The Obstacles to Desire Becoming its Objects," Jakub Majmurek shows how Borowczyk's films often feature religion and religious imaginary, or to be exact — symbols, images and rituals associated with the Roman Catholic Church. Majmurek explores the dialectics of desire and law/prohibition, which fuels Borowczyk films with an ever-present erotic tension. Addressing Borowczyk's fascination with objects, Majmurek suggests that it may have been triggered by his Catholic background and this religion's relation toward sacred artifacts.

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Miss Osbourne gets a close reading in a sparkling chapter by Budd Wilkins (of *Slant Magazine*, amongst other publications), who connects it both to surrealist tradition and exploitation cinema.

Simon Abrams, Odie Henderson and Michał Oleszczyk engage in a vivid dialogue about what is perhaps the least loved of all Borowczyk films, *Emmanuelle 5* — widely seen as Borowczyk's ultimate act of succumbing to mainstream commercial erotica. They try to identify the film's redeeming features, as well as discern differences between the European and American cuts.

One of Borowczyk's final efforts (his last finished feature), *Love Rites*, gets a reading by the supreme director of visual essays, Kevin B. Lee, who starts by

singling out a particular image and uses it to fuse the film's complicated relationship to touch, sex, and speech.

Note

1. A typescript, dated 28 August 1961, found in the collection of the Cinémathèque Française.

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Kamila Kuc, Ph.D. is a writer, experimental filmmaker and curator. Co-edited with Michael O'Pray, her most recent publication is the first study of Polish avant-garde film (*The Struggle for Form: Perspectives on Polish Avant-Garde Film 1916–1989*, Columbia University Press, 2014). She publishes widely on the subject of experimental film and has also curated programmes of experimental film for international film festivals and venues (New Horizons Film Festival, Poland; Cinephilia, UK; Experiments in Cinema, USA). Her short films have been screened at international film festivals, most recently the Alternative Film/Video in Belgrade, Serbia (December 2014) and Experiments in Cinema, Albuquerque, New Mexico (April 2015). She is currently a Postdoctoral Research Assistant in the Department of Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Kuba Mikurda, Ph.D. is a film critic, curator, broadcaster, and "Linia Filmowa" book series editor (Korporacja Ha!art Press). He has edited and co-edited books about contemporary filmmakers (Terry Gilliam, Brothers Quay, Guy Maddin, Tsai Ming-liang) and surrealism in Polish cinema (with Kamila Wielebska). He teaches at the Film School in Łódź. In 2013 he published *Corpus Delicti*, a visual essay about Borowczyk's objects (designed in collaboration with Jakub Woynarowski). He is currently working on a feature documentary film about Borowczyk, forthcoming in 2016.

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INTRODUCTION

Aronofsky, Auteurship, Aesthetics

After the twentieth century's predominantly ocular-centric understanding of cinema, 'cinema of the senses' and 'cinema of the body' have become new catchphrases in film studies over the last two decades. In what could be called a carnal understanding of cinema, emphasis is placed on the lived experience and sensation, while vision and cognition are often understood in terms of affect and embodiment. Tim Palmer defines this type of film as the 'cinema of brutal intimacy', characterized by 'bold stylistic experimentation' and 'a fundamental lack of compromise in its engagement with the viewer', demanding 'a viscerally engaged experiential participant' (Palmer 2006: 64, 172). Cinema of the body exploits the ability of the filmic medium to induce vivid, truculent sensations and unsettling aesthetic experiences. Thus, one cannot help but shiver in involuntary terror and pain when witnessing the feverish climax of Darren Aronofsky's *Requiem for a Dream* (2000). Here, graphic scenes of sexual abuse interweave with physical and emotional torment, accompanied by images of decaying flesh. These scenes are presented to the spectators by means of a cacophonous interplay of various dissonant aesthetic elements that directly engage the spectators' bodies in particularly disturbing fashion. Repulsive to watch, yet impossible to avert one's eyes from, this climax is perhaps the ultimate instance of cinema of the body.

The phrase *cinema of the body* is normally used to indicate the aesthetic style of such French filmmakers as Catherine Breillat, Claire Denis, Philippe Grandrieux, Gaspar Noé and Marina de Van. But it is equally relevant for understanding the cinema of, for example, Andrea Arnold, David Cronenberg, Michael Haneke, David Lynch and Lars von Trier.¹ The corporeal aesthetics of 'body cinema' are best characterized as affective, immediate and sensuous. It is a cinematic style that aims at bodily immersion and affective sharing within the cinematic event. This is not brought about by identification with the film's characters, but through the spectator's full participation in the 'life-space' of the film. As Bruce Isaacs argues, 'cinema . . . is an inherently participatory art' (Isaacs 2008: 77). The sensuous quality of body cinema triggers deeply felt physical and affective responses, both on the pre-reflective and the (self-)

reflective levels of consciousness (Laine 2011). For the purposes of this book, the cinema of the body is defined as a sensuous bodily event that offers the spectator the chance to participate in it by means of its affective-aesthetic system. I shall focus on the cinema of Darren Aronofsky and on how his films engage the spectator's lived body by means of their sheer corporeal film style. Aronofsky as a filmmaker could be also considered 'cerebral', insofar as his films often explore such topics as mathematics, madness, hallucinations, obsessions, social anxiety, addiction, psychosis, schizophrenia and neuroscience. Yet this interest in intelligence and mental processes in Aronofsky's films is deeply embedded in the affective operations of the body, shared with the spectator by means of cinematic gestures and postures. As Jennifer Barker explains, this process of sharing is based on the spectator's close bodily connection with cinema in 'texture, spatial orientation, comporment, rhythm and vitality' (Barker 2009: 2).

As far as the body is concerned, Aronofsky is a very special filmmaker. His films are full of tension-filled conflicts between body and mind, bodily (self-) injuries and cognitive disorders. There are combinations of bodily experience and technology as 'extensions of man' involving computers, televisions and microscopes, but also conflicts between psychological expression and bodily performance (wrestling, ballet). He is fond of cinematic techniques that aim at sensorial and bodily engagement. There are hip-hop montages with accompanying sound effects (scratching, sampling). He often uses extremely tight framing, lengthy follow shots and SnorriCam. He also alternates between extreme close-ups and extreme long shots to create a sense of isolation. He favours alternative special effects, such as the macro photography combined with fluid dynamics used in *The Fountain* (2006). For his biblical tale *Noah* – which is in production at the time of writing – Aronofsky had a full-scale ark constructed in order to avoid computer-generated imagery. But others of his films boast abundant visual effects. In *Black Swan* (2010), painted, photorealistic images of a baby bird's skin and quills had to be tracked digitally to an actress's arm, while a camera vividly rotated around her body during the climax of the film.²

Four of Aronofsky's actors have received Oscar nominations for best performance – Ellen Burstyn, Mickey Rourke, Marisa Tomei and Natalie Portman, who also won the award. In cinema in general, and perhaps in Aronofsky's

films in particular, it is the physical performance of the actors that enables the spectator to grasp the attributes and affects of specific characters. As Vivian Sobchack puts it, it is the actor's lived body that makes the character intelligible, because the character's 'inner' experience is only manifest through the actor's 'outer' performance (Sobchack 2012: 434). As the same time, such performance is inextricably intertwined with the aesthetic specificity of the film. In other words, the performance of the actors is incorporated into the film's performance. This means that there is reciprocity among their bodily energy, affect, rhythm, valence and the very same attributes of the film's aesthetic system. Thus Rourke's physical on-screen performance in *The Wrestler* (2009) becomes the vehicle for the protagonist's masochistic exposure and self-deception in and through interaction with the cinematic aesthetics, e.g. the setting, the close-ups. In *Black Swan*, Portman's performance embodies a doubling rather than an enactment of character, reciprocated by the film's digital aesthetics, in which a human being is doubled by an animal. This is enhanced by 'actorly transformation', a self-imposed alteration of the body, which not only lends greater fidelity to Portman's performance (Esch 2006), but also draws an analogy between Portman and the self-mutilating dancer Nina in the film. Another example is found in *Requiem for a Dream*, in which Burstyn inhabits Sara's corporeal rhythm, which is punctuated by specific editing and sound. These augment the spectator's awareness of Sara's bodily pace and cadence as they change in response to her growing addiction to amphetamines. It would, however, require a separate research project altogether to concentrate fully on the performance of screen actors in Aronofsky's films – and in my view, performance is not restricted to what film actors do to create characters. Suffice it to say that while this book concentrates on the performance of cinematic aesthetics, this by no means aims at diminishing the importance of actors' performances. Without their spectacular renditions, the films would be hollow and fleshless.

Acting and performance apart, it is this particular 'hybrid' quality of his films that has made Aronofsky famous. He blurs the line between fantasy and reality, and employs the signature styles of various genres, such as science fiction, psychological thriller, melodrama, fantasy and body horror. His films often create uncomfortable viewing positions, something already evident in his early works, which have not been released commercially. These

are student films entitled *Supermarket Sweep* (1991), *Fortune Cookie* (1991), *Protozoa* (1993) – also the name of Aronofsky’s production company – and *No Time* (1994). Unfortunately, despite my best efforts, I have not been able to track down any of these titles, but extracts of *Fortune Cookie* and *No Time* can be found on YouTube.³ *No Time* depicts two fishermen, framed in a two-shot with a wide-angle lens, attracting fish with one continually repeated, silly line: ‘Come on, fish’. *Fortune Cookie* is based on a short story by Hubert Selby Jr., who is also the author of *Requiem for a Dream*, on which Aronofsky based his second commercial film. It features a salesman being harassed by a ‘pervert’, who fires obscenities at him. These are not merely amusing, but also embarrassing, scenes to watch, because they violate the ‘contract of looking’ by appearing too strange and unfamiliar to relate to. In 2011 Aronofsky directed the music video for the song ‘The View’ by Lou Reed and Metallica, which is strongly reminiscent of the aesthetic style of his first feature film, *Pi* (1998). The ‘migraine aesthetics’ of this black-and-white video are characterized by shaky camerawork, blurry, distorted images, double superimpositions and flashes of engulfing white frames.

Michel Foucault (1977) maintains that an author functions as a classifying principle that serves to constrain, but not to determine the interpretation given to a text by the reader. In this line of thought, the author is not a particular individual, but a discursive function that unifies the reader’s perception of the artistic whole of the text. Within film studies, Daniel Frampton has recently proposed that the concept of author should be rejected on the grounds that it denies any film’s own ‘meaning creativeness’, the way in which cinema can be considered its own ‘mindscreen’ (Frampton 2006: 29–30). Although this is an interesting approach, it fails to take into account the process of *making*, by which things visible in the world are rendered what Mikel Dufrenne terms the *sensuous* in cinema. The *sensuous* is the internal organization of the aesthetic object, with affective qualities that enable expressive resonance between the work of art and its perceiver (Dufrenne 1987).⁴ It is the very element in a work of art that enables fundamental, affective reciprocity between the aesthetic object and the spectator: ‘the *sensuous* is an act common to both the person who feels and to what is felt’ (Dufrenne 1973: 48). The *sensuous* enables the spectator to respond to the work’s ‘*desire-to-be*’ in a way that corresponds to the author’s engagement with it; both are ‘called upon by the work to be

done'. In other words, for Dufrenne, the process of making is embedded in the work as the author's 'gesture', in which the spectator takes part by means of 'carnal familiarity' (Dufrenne 1987: 148–49). Therefore I argue that 'author' is still a relevant concept or construct within the affective-aesthetic system that invites co-creative engagement from the spectator. This process is linked to valuing cinema. Aesthetic appreciation of a film seems to be at its most intense when one is somehow able to 'compare' one's own sensory perception and intelligent deliberation with those of the film's 'author' in the very event of cinematic experience. In this context, Paul Crowther writes that we each embody a unique being-in-the-world. This becomes manifest in the quality of an artwork, as it is borne out by the artist in reaction to and while forming the sensuous. It is this particular quality to which we seek to relate in an aesthetic experience by means of engaged reciprocity with the artist 'inscribed' in the work of art (Crowther 1993: 57–59).

In the same vein, I propose that the author be considered an integral part of the process that makes a film what it desires to be, and in which the spectator can participate by engaging with the film as an affective bodily event. This notion understands the author to be a plural and hybrid phenomenon that contains both aesthetic and signifying elements embodied in the film – and nowhere else. Furthermore, this has methodological consequences in that it requires us to reverberate with the embedded 'authorial' gestures of the film. These gestures guide us to think about the affective significance of the film, which prevents us from attempting to master its formal system only. Such 'mastering' is described in Aronofsky's *Pi*, when the protagonist aims to reduce the natural world to the purely intelligible (mathematics) in order to exert control over it. In the process, he loses his sensuous relationship with the world, which has devastating consequences. As Dufrenne writes, 'if [something] becomes an object of knowledge, it is on condition that it be welcomed initially by the body, and perhaps in order to be more intensely savoured by it' (Dufrenne 1987: xi).

My own response to sensuous qualities in the cinema of Aronofsky has brought me to the conclusion that his films are independent of any definable genre or unique signature style. Nevertheless, throughout his oeuvre a certain aesthetic and thematic continuity can be observed. On a stylistic level, there is for instance the specific "on-location" aesthetics', inspired by places

such as Aronofsky's childhood neighbourhood on Coney Island in southern Brooklyn, New York City (*Pi*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *The Wrestler*), the NYC subway (*Pi*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *Black Swan*), and run-down supermarkets (*Pi*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *The Wrestler*). There are also recurring characters such as 'Uncle Hank' (*Fortune Cookie*, *Pi*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *Black Swan*) and the interest in religious elements (*Pi*, *The Fountain*, *The Wrestler*, *Noah*). Furthermore, Aronofsky is known for his extensive use of SnorriCam (*Pi*, *Requiem for a Dream*), or chestcam, a camera rigged to the actor's body, facing the actor directly. It creates a hyper-subjective effect, 'freezing' the character at the centre of the frame while the background is in constant 'movement'. Aronofsky's famous use of hip-hop montage (*Pi*, *Requiem for a Dream*) is also a recurring technique that attempts to apply the principles of music sampling to the affective-aesthetic system of film.

On a thematic level, Aronofsky's films are also marked by his constant interest in severely obsessive characters. Their obsessions often lead to a sensuous and affective shutdown that disturbs the relationship between the 'inner' and 'outer' worlds of these characters. This is not merely an issue on the level of cinematic content; it also plays a part in the spectator's emotional engagement with the film as an experiential aesthetic event. As will be re-emphasized throughout this book, Aronofsky's films engage the spectator in an affective form of viewing that involves all the senses. The book can therefore be seen as a contribution to the ever-increasing interest among film scholars in the senses. This interest is driven by the rejection of what is felt to be an unjustified privileging of some of them over others. In Cartesian thinking, it is said, for example, that vision is the sense most in congruence with reason, because it renders us separate from objects in the world. By contrast, the more physical senses of smell, taste, and touch rupture distinct boundaries between the self and the world. In the philosophy of embodiment, a different perception of vision has developed. Starting from the assumption that sight involves more than locating an object of look in space separate from one's viewing position, the emphasis is now on the meaningful, affective relationship between the embodied vision and the material world. Vision is a matter of seeing the objects 'out there' with the whole body as a sense organ entangled with the world 'in here'. Similarly, cinematic experience is simultaneously a matter of distance and proximity (Burnett 2005: 7). True, the spectator has to sit far enough away

from the cinema screen in order to see the film's content. But viewing is essentially about affective participation in the cinematic event. As cinema addresses the spectator's imagination through all the senses in ways that are immediately felt in the body, it evokes a mode of vision that is best described as *seeing feelingly*.

In Aronofsky's films, this state of seeing feelingly originates from the spectator's direct engagement with cinematic aesthetics, instead of from, for instance, character identification. It is an interesting paradox in his cinema that all his films plunge deeply into the subjectivity of their characters, but that they do not necessarily invite identification. Perhaps this is because Aronofsky's characters are often damaged, emotionally isolated and psychologically disturbed, which complicates identification. Needless to say, my privileging the aesthetic system when it comes to affective experience in cinema does not entirely justify dismissing character identification as inessential. Such a dismissal would come down to what John Dewey calls the fallacy of selective emphasis (Dewey 1981: 31–32). In this case it would mean drawing the conclusion that the aesthetic system is *all* that is distinctively important in the spectator's affective engagement with cinema. This book tries to avoid the trap of this fallacy, but still shift the focus from character-affinity to aesthetic elements that are less character-bound, and hopes to complement rather than challenge earlier views of affective engagement in cinema.

It would be equally misleading to pay attention only to pure cinematic elements beyond the narrative. As stories are fundamentally organized by emotions (Hogan 2011), writing about the affective functioning of cinema without paying attention to the way in which emotions orient the narrative would be methodologically unwise. On the director's commentary track of *Requiem for a Dream*, Aronofsky explains that as a filmmaker he is 'trying to come up with a visual style that is born out of the narrative . . . trying to figure out what the movie is about and then creating a visual language out of this'. In this particular film, it is the rhythm of visual and auditory cinematic elements in particular that brings the spectator into contact with the subjective state of the characters. He or she observes them in a descending narrative trajectory, in which emotions run from hope through despair to pain and devastation.

I feel that scholarly film practice and methodology should point in the same direction. The scholar's task is less to force (theoretical) interpretations

onto films than to understand how their affective dynamics resonate directly. As a result, scholars hopefully become able to grasp the affective significance of a film as it emerges from their bodily experience of the cinematic event. Cognitive theories focus on the structure of film as a formal system of elements that activate the spectator's understanding of the cinematic event as emotionally relevant. In contrast, body-centred approaches, such as the one adopted in this book, regularly emphasize the *experience* of emotional reactions to film. The methodological premise of this book is therefore best described as film-phenomenological. Even though this approach has often been criticized as too impressionistic or overtly subjective, film-phenomenology has especially been useful providing descriptions of our affective and embodied engagement with cinema that can recognizably be shared with others. This is because film-phenomenology is not merely interested in what one sees on screen, but in how films direct one's attention towards what *cannot* be seen. As Julian Hanich explains: 'Phenomenology tries to uncover what is buried in habituation and institutionalization, what is taken for granted and accepted as given, or what we have never been fully aware of in the first place' (Hanich 2010: 15). Furthermore, in film-phenomenology the lived experience and reciprocity between the film and the spectator are an essential part of research. Film-phenomenology differs significantly from those approaches that aim at an impersonal understanding of cinema located 'out there', observed from a position somewhere 'in here'. Instead, film-phenomenology explores the dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the embodied spectator and the cinematic body.

Uncovering this dynamic interaction can only take place by means of 'careful looking' (Ihde 1979), and can only be articulated in terms of direct emotional response to cinema. Combining careful looking with detailed description of their emotional experience, scholars should be able to communicate their views of the film convincingly enough to others, who might accept these views even when they do not share the same interpretation. It must always be kept in mind, though, that any film-phenomenological account of emotional experience must start and end with engagement with a film's aesthetic organization as observed and validated by a wide range of film scholars. In other words, while experiencing aesthetic emotions, one must perceive how this experience emerges from participation in the film's aesthetic organization. A film's

aesthetic organization exists objectively and can be analysed systematically, after which meaning can be attributed to it – a process that can be shared and substantiated with others.

Furthermore, I understand the relationship between the spectator and the film as a reciprocal and co-creative process. In order to define emotional engagement with cinema, one needs to examine this reciprocal relationship between the spectator and the film. In this relationship both parties must be considered agents, brought together through the sensuous. This renders cinema a bodily event that activates the spectator's affective and cognitive sensitivities. In other words, neither the formal-stylistic system of film nor the spectator's pre-existing biographical and cultural dispositions alone can sufficiently define cinematic engagement. I understand this engagement to be very much embedded in the body. On the one hand, the affective quality of a film consists of the meaning it embodies. Not only on the level of content, but also on the level of its aesthetic form and audiovisual style, a film is embodied, affective meaning. On the other hand, this affective quality is intentionally present for the spectators in the way the film directs itself towards their own sentient bodies. By this I do not mean to anthropomorphize cinema, i.e. to interpret cinematic *dispositif* in terms of human characteristics, such as the ability to feel emotions; rather, I propose to think of cinema in terms of 'resonant aesthetics', a notion similar to what Jane Bennett (2010) calls 'vibrant matter'. Cinema is vibrant matter insofar as it has agency, efficacy and vitality. Films can do things, produce effects and affects, as well as alter experience. Cinematic matter vibrates and resonates with human matter, and the cinematic event is an energy field in which 'effect and cause alternate positions and rebound on each other' nonlinearly (Bennett 2010: 33). Thus, cinema as vibrant matter refers to the affective efficacy of cinema that enables the spectators both to feel and think about the film at the same time, as active, (co-)creative, sensuous agents.

According to Dufrenne, this is the role of our bodies in general. The body is not so much a physical 'apparatus' intended to react to the world in a causal fashion, as it is a sensuous 'instrument' of reciprocity through which the individual encounters the world. This reciprocity is an 'attunement with the world as two musical instruments are in attunement with one another' (Dufrenne 1987: 8). Similarly, Dewey (1958) speaks of art as experience that is inscribed in

the sensuous state of the body and registered in and through emotion. Emotions are continuous, intentional and sentient processes that prompt us to synthesize and reorganize our experiences actively in the world. In an aesthetic experience, the spectator's intentional attitude gets entangled with the affective attitude that is embodied in the work of art. This entanglement enables emotional response, which in turn facilitates philosophical reflection – although not necessarily in a linear fashion. This reflection is simultaneously a matter of feeling and thinking, of 'thinking-feelingly' and 'feeling-thoughtfully'. Steven Connor writes that all thinking is a form of affective feeling through the body, the affective body literally caught up in thought: 'Expressing a state of mind or a feeling means formulating an attitude, and in the process forming a relation to that attitude. All feeling involves some element of comportment towards the world and the self, which is to say some measure of taking thought' (Connor 2004: 99).

Furthermore, to think-feelingly is an *active* process of intervention, a matter of *doing* instead of merely knowing. In this context, Karen Barad argues that thinking 'must be understood as an embodied practice, rather than a spectator sport matching . . . representations to pre-existing things' (Barad 2007: 54). Similarly, aesthetic experience is the active embodied entanglement of the spectator with the work of art and vice versa, which involves processes of thinking and feeling. Perhaps it could be said that aesthetic experience is a cyclical process in which our sensuous, bodily, affective and reflective states are inextricably intertwined.⁵ Furthermore, this process occurs beyond 'pre-emptive empathy' (Armstrong 2000: 166) towards fictional characters, in the spectator's direct relationship with the work of art. Methodologically, this means that in order to study the sensuous relationship between film and spectator, one needs to ask the following questions:

1. What is the affective quality that is embodied in the aesthetic system of the film?
2. What narrative meaning is embedded in that quality?
3. How is the spectator invited to participate in the sensuous event that is cinema?⁶

The importance of these questions is evident from the quotation below, in which William James describes the centrality of the body in our lived experience

– including the cinematic experience – as opposed to the Cartesian mind/body dualism: ‘The body is the storm centre, the origin of coordinates, the constant place of stress in [our] experience-train. Everything circles around it, and is felt from its point of view. The world experienced comes at all times with our body as its centre, centre of vision, centre of action, centre of interest’ (James 1976: 86, originally published in 1912). Similarly, for phenomenological philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir, the body is one’s ‘anchorage in a world’ (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 167) or one’s ‘grasp of the world’ (de Beauvoir 2003: 36). For them, the body is central in the dynamic way in which the ‘interiority’ of the subject entangles with his or her ‘exteriority’, thus emerging as an active participant in the world’s becoming. The here and now of our bodies is the locus of our intentionality, our sentient consciousness, and our emotional and (self-)reflective orientation towards the world. This centrality of the body emphasizes the fundamental unity of body and mind as a cohesive wholeness interacting with the world. Pain is concrete proof of this, as it is a physical sensation, inextricably tied to our emotional experience of it, and as such cancelling out any dualistic assumptions about body and mind (Van Dijkhuizen and Enenkel 2009: 1). Throughout this book I shall use the term *lived-body* to indicate this ‘transactional whole of body-mind’ (Schusterman 2008: 184) engaging with the world. In film studies, Vivian Sobchack has argued that this notion of lived-body also applies to the relationship between cinema and spectator. In this concept, the film is considered an expression of experience *by* experience. For Sobchack, film is a significant and signifying intentional subject in its own right, engaging the spectators from within their own embodied presence. This means that films make themselves affectively felt and (self-)reflectively known through a reciprocal ground upon which the cinematic expression and the spectator encounter each other as lived bodies:

Reciprocating the figurally literal representations of bodies and worldly things in the cinema, the spectator’s lived body in the film experience engages in the form of sensual catachresis. That is, it fills in the gap in its sensual grasp of the figural world onscreen by turning back on itself to reciprocally (albeit not sufficiently) ‘flesh it out’ into literal physicalized sense. It is this same reciprocal relationship between the figural and literal that emerges also in our linguistic descriptions of the film experience. (Sobchack 2004: 82)

But one does not even need such ‘figurally literal representations of bodies’ on screen in order to understand how one reciprocally encounters cinema as a lived-body. Jennifer Barker has recently argued that the corporeal aesthetics of cinema itself addresses the spectator through bodily intimacy and reciprocity, ‘through movement, comportment and gesture, in the way [the spectators] carry themselves through the world’ (Barker 2009: 69). She stresses that this process is more complex than, for instance, mere bodily mimicry of the characters. The bodily responses of the spectators might be a form of mimicry or – even better – *resonance* between the expressive body of film itself and their own sensate bodies. It is through this fleshy resonance (or dissonance) between cinema and the spectator that thoughts and affects emerge. Susanna Paasonen explains the notion of resonance as follows:

[Resonance] refers to moments and expressions of being moved, touched, and affected by what is tuned to ‘the right frequency’. . . . To resonate with one another, objects and people do not need to be similar, but they need to relate and connect to one another. Resonance encompasses the emotional and cognitive as well as the sensory and affective, and it points to the considerable effort involved in separating the two. (Paasonen 2011: 16)

As already suggested, an obvious objection to this line of argument is the apparent fact that cinema is a technology that comports itself in ways fundamentally different from those of humans. But according to Barker, the similarity can be detected in the way in which

we and the film both present ourselves to the world by moving through it, carrying ourselves and arranging our bodies a certain way in relation to space and things . . . The film’s body and spectator’s body exist in a relationship of analogy and reciprocity. Though neither identical, nor completely divergent, the film’s body and the viewer’s body are irrevocably related to one another. The film’s body models itself on human styles of bodily comportment, and the viewer’s body in turn might mirror the muscular behaviour of the film’s body. (Barker 2009: 77)

I broadly agree with this view, although I think that the word ‘mirror’ is inappropriately used, for this assumes an intersubjective relationship between cinema and spectator based on distance. In contrast, the term *resonance* suggests an affective relationship between film and spectator that is based on bodily reciprocity. Furthermore, the term *mirror* connotes a transitional relation between the subject and the object in the Lacanian mirror stage, while cinematic experiences are often different from those that arise out of such psychodynamic interplay. Indeed, in the cinematic experience sensuous interplay occurs in various embodied, affective encounters. First, cinema moves us directly within a gamut of emotions, ranging from fear and disgust through adrenaline thrills to laughter and sexual excitement, in ways that are immediately felt by the body. Secondly, as Barker argues, cinema can be described in terms of skin, musculature, and viscera, as if it had a body itself. Different cinematic elements correspond with distinctive bodily characteristics, such as sound (vibration), cinematography (movement), and editing (rhythm). These elements together form an affective-aesthetic whole, which offers itself for the participation of the spectator as an intentional lived-body.⁷

According to Barad, intentionality might better be understood as ascribable to a complex entanglement of human (spectator) and nonhuman (cinematic) agents (Barad 2007: 23). In the context of cinema, this means that the relationship between cinema and spectator can no longer be understood through the model of cinematic apparatus. In this model, the film is enclosed within the frame, while the passive spectator is seated in front of it, in a state of willing suspension of disbelief. With the approach of reciprocal intentionality adopted in this book, cinema and spectator are not separated by the frame; on the contrary, cinema and spectator are both intentional agents, united in an entangled state. As intentional agents, films both embody emotions and possess an emotional attitude towards the spectator. This in turn sensitizes the spectator as an intentional agent with the dual capacity to read the emotions that films embody and react to them.

The aim of this book, then, is to understand the way in which embodied, affective intentionality in the cinema of Aronofsky engages the spectator directly by means of reciprocal attunement. What interests me in Aronofsky’s films is that they often disrupt or even shut down this process with important

affective consequences for the spectator. For me, one of the most important themes in his work is the notion of ‘bodies in pain’ as theorized by Elaine Scarry (1985). Therefore, one of the goals of this book is to investigate how such pain is directly ‘transmitted’ to the spectator, as a phenomenon that is simultaneously a sensation and an emotion (Jackson 1994: 201). For many philosophers of pain, the state of pain disrupts the intentionality of the body; even more keenly, pain disrupts the relationship between the lived-body and the world. In pain, one may experience one’s body as an ‘alien presence’ (Leder 1990: 73) because it appears as strange, or ‘other’, to one, becoming an object instead of a subject of experience. While in normal circumstances the body is the locus from which one directs one’s attention to the world, in pain the body becomes an object to which one attends. This effect of disrupted intentionality may result in the disembodied experience that ‘I have a body’, instead of an embodied experience that ‘I am my body’ (Zeiler 2010: 337). Furthermore, in the most extreme situations, such as under torture, one cannot concentrate on anything else other than pain. For Emmanuel Levinas, severe pain subjugates the self so completely that the individual is ‘held fast’ in pain (Levinas 1981: 52). And for Scarry, in extreme pain the self becomes pain itself, so that the individual experiences the contents of his or her consciousness as ‘obliterated’ and ‘absent’, while this pain ‘swells to fill the entire universe’ (Scarry 1985: 4). In such cases, the individual’s whole consciousness is nothing but pain – physical, emotional, psychosomatic – while both the self and the world ‘disappear’.

In contrast, for Sobchack pain is a way to bring people ‘back to their senses’. Pain can function as a reminder of one’s immanence, and of one’s physical necessity and inherent ‘response-ability’. Referring to Jean Baudrillard’s technoerotic reading of J.G. Ballard’s novel *Crash* (1973), Sobchack wishes that the philosopher had experienced some pain

to remind him that he doesn’t just have a body but that he is his body and it is on this material fact of existence that affect, and anything that we might call an ethical stance, is grounded. [This ethical stance] is based on the lived sense and feeling of the human body not merely as a material object one possesses . . . but as a material subject that experiences and feels its own objectivity, that has the capacity to bleed and

suffer and hurt for others because it can sense its own possibilities for suffering and pain. (Sobchack 2004: 178)⁸

Thus two potential insights follow from these differing descriptions of pain. One is the possibility that pain renders the body an object of experience. Another possibility is that pain functions to ground the body in the world as an embodied subject. This contradiction is present in Aronofsky's *The Fountain*, which is about a couple, Izzi (Rachel Weisz) and Tommy (Hugh Jackman), who try to deal with physical and emotional pain in different ways. Izzi, who suffers from a brain tumour, experiences her pain as heightened awareness of her lived-body, which is still embedded in the world, but doomed to an approaching absence from it. This enables her to accept her impending death. Tommy's pain is (pathological) grief borne out by his refusal to accept fundamental vulnerability in the face of natural forces beyond his control. His is the existential (and irrational) struggle against absolute loss, an attempt to prevent Izzi's death retroactively. Yet it is not through these characters that pain is transmitted to the spectator, for pain is inherent in the whole affective-aesthetic system of *The Fountain*. As such, the film addresses the spectator directly with its affective quality, prompting a lived, sentient awareness of material conditions of subjectivity. The film achieves this through its rich, visual (visceral?) symbolism that creates a conflict between the denial and the reality of emotional pain, which stimulates the affective sensitivities of the spectator.

I do not wish to suggest that there is some common denominator of pain that functions as a vehicle between the cinematic and the authentic lived experience. As Scarry points out: '[W]hatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability, and it ensures this unsharability through its resistance to language. . . . Physical pain [brings] about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned' (Scarry 1985: 4).⁹ But this does not necessarily mean that pain cannot be represented, or that one cannot understand its effects, if not the experience, when not physically in pain. In pain the body 'speaks' through affect, not through language. Furthermore, this does not mean that communication through affect is void of semantic meaning altogether. In this context, Janet Wolff (2008) speaks about 'aniconic' works of art, which invite

spectators to an active form of viewing, enabling them to engage with painful subject matters on their own terms. Jill Bennett writes that pain-related artworks engage the spectator directly by means of the sensation that is registered in the work itself. This transactive process touches the spectator without necessarily communicating the 'secret' of painful experience (Bennett 2005: 7). In this book I shall argue that in the cinema of Aronofsky, pain is not merely registered or expressed, but is part of the active, emotional intentionality of the films. This results in the spectator being confronted by particularly strong sensations, or, in Scarry's terms, by a 'feeling of being acted upon' (Scarry 1985: 16) by means of sheer film style. I understand pain as one affective quality of Aronofsky's cinema that entirely saturates the spectator's embodied engagement with the film. In other words, pain fulfils a central role in the experience of Aronofsky's films, which renders their affective dynamics particularly complex. Scarry writes:

Contemporary philosophers have habituated us to the recognition that our interior states of consciousness are regularly accompanied by objects in the external world, that we do not simply 'have feelings' but have feelings for somebody or something, that love is love of x, fear is fear of y, ambivalence is ambivalence about z. . . . This list and its implicit affirmation would, however, be suddenly interrupted when . . . one at last reached physical pain, for physical pain – unlike any other state of consciousness – has no referential content. It is not of or for anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it . . . resists objectification in language. (Scarry 1985: 5)

Normally the threat of imminent pain would evoke our basic defence of fight or flight, but in extreme cases this defence can be blocked, inhibited, and arrested, which increases the sensation of being entrapped in pain. In Aronofsky's *The Wrestler*, the protagonist Randy 'The Ram' Robinson is entrapped in pain both internally as experienced in his lived-body, and externally in his life's circumstances. This is enhanced by his inability to accept change or to grasp emerging opportunities. In turn, this feeling of entrapment is relayed to spectators, with the result that their engagement with the film assumes a clogged-up, paralysed form. They become immersed in negative emotion, triggered by the inability to

stop watching the bloodshed, brutality, and self-destruction of the protagonist's ever-sharper trajectory towards Sartrean 'bad faith'. The corporeal aesthetics of the film itself becomes the source of pain that 'takes no object', while the spectator's interior state of consciousness is thoroughly 'contaminated' by this spectacle of pain, even if its source is in the external world of cinema. Enlarging on the Scarry quotation above, one could say that this is brought about because even though pain may not be *of* or *for* anything, it is still 'because [of] something', as Lucy Bending suggests (Bending 2000: 86). Furthermore, the spectator's pain experience is not totally void of reflection, as it involves a constant shift in focus from 'my pain' (pre-reflective) to 'not my pain' (reflective).

Yet another element of Scarry's philosophy of pain is the 'pure experience of negation'. In the experience of pain there is often the immediate feeling that something external is directed against one, even though this something is located within oneself. It is identified as 'not oneself', as something so alien that it must immediately be disposed of. Simultaneously that same something is internalized in such a way that the person in pain may be dominated by a sense of 'internal agency'. Thus when a knife enters the body, for instance, one will feel one's own body, rather than the knife, hurting one (Scarry 1985: 52–53). In the film *Black Swan*, both 'modalities of pain' – external and internal – seem to be operating simultaneously. In this film, protagonist Nina mutilates herself in order to replace her feelings of insecurity with a sense of external control. Rather than being an uncontrollable, pure experience of negation, Nina's pain is experientially localized and specified at first. As a result, her pain 'exists here and now, not everywhere and always' (McLane 1996: 112) – that is, at least until the situation spins out of control and Nina's body takes over her agency, acting against and annihilating her both within and without. At this point, Nina's body no longer belongs to her, which paradoxically is also a precondition for fulfilling her true vocation as a dancer. The film seems to function by means of affective engulfing, inviting the spectator to give in to a sort of 'bodily disintegration'. This experience is painful and pleasurable at the same time, and the film is best characterized as uncannily sublime, as it stages a confrontation between bodily materiality and psychic breakdown by means of aesthetic excess and estrangement.

The argument made in this book operates on two planes. On the first plane, I analyse the spectator's direct emotional engagement with the

affective-aesthetic system of Aronofsky's films. This affective encounter is best described as a bodily event, in which the 'corporeal style' of the film entangles with the lived-body of the spectator. This process is central in the film-phenomenological tradition. Within this event, I consider film an intentional agent, with affective energy, valence, and rhythm that correspond to the human emotional system, although they are not identical to it. I do not wish to suggest that all spectators react or should react to Aronofsky's films in the way I describe, or that my reading of his films is the only accurate one, so a disclaimer would seem in order. The analyses developed in this book draw on the viewing positions inherently present in the film, which I have inhabited as a film scholar and a film spectator. It is these positions to which the term 'spectator' refers throughout this book. On the one hand, my understanding of Aronofsky's films is connected to my experience and my emotions, moving outward from within. On the other hand, it is connected to the cinematic specificity of these films, moving inward from without. With reference to the subjective method of analysis applied in this book, Jean-Paul Sartre writes that 'I may . . . interrogate myself and on the basis of this interrogation lead an analysis of the 'human reality' to a successful conclusion which can be used as a foundation for *an* anthropology (Sartre 1993: 13, italics added). It is impossible to conduct a phenomenological inquiry into the significance of cinematic emotions without turning one's attention to one's own emotional and embodied experience. Yet this type of inquiry is more than 'sloppy liberal humanism' (Sobchack 1992: xiv), since personal emotions and private experiences can be set in motion, put in context, and shared by others across different cultures.

On the second plane, I analyse how Aronofsky's cinema invites the spectator to engage with his films conceptually, in terms of film-philosophy. At that stage, my methodological approach could be characterized by what Robert Sinnerbrink (2011a) has termed 'romantic film-philosophy', insofar as it presupposes Aronofsky's work to be eliciting philosophical experiences and aesthetic judgments, which are sensory, emotional, and intellectual all at once. More precisely, Aronofsky's films will be considered philosophically dialogical, as they engage the spectator in the experience of (self-)reflection through their emotional dynamics. This is not a matter of matching preconceived philosophical ideas with his films, but of thinking through the emotions evoked by their cinematic aesthetics, considering both distinctive features and emerging

patterns of salience. In Aronofsky's work, such distinctive aesthetic features include noisy (*Pi*), rhythmic (*Requiem for a Dream*), repetitive (*The Fountain*), fleshy (*The Wrestler*) and haptic elements (*Black Swan*).

To summarize: this book explores both how Aronofsky's cinema functions affectively, and how philosophical significance can be attached to this. Cinematic experience is a matter of affective participation in the filmic event, based on mutual resonance felt in the body and reflected in thought. It is an experience that is simultaneously aesthetic and reflective – or better, an experience in which aesthetic and reflective practices are inextricably intertwined. As Sinnerbrink argues, cinema always provokes spectators to think in response to what film enables them to feel and experience (Sinnerbrink 2011b: 137). This involves (critical) assessment of ideas embodied in the film, in an attempt to gain insight into their ethical and/or aesthetic significance. Similarly, Crowther argues that all works of art are charged with sensuous and conceptual energy in ways that reach beyond philosophical thought. Works of art embody and transcend human experiences, but they also return to them. This is the reason they cause reflective awareness of the human condition in a unique way (Crowther 1993: 46). Similarly, cinema is an event in which the sensuous and the conceptual constantly and reciprocally modify each other by folding over in negotiation. As an aesthetic form, cinema addresses our affects and senses, while as a conceptual practice it engages our thinking and imagination. It must be strictly kept in mind, though, that the sensuous and the conceptual are not distinctive elements, but rather two sides of one phenomenological event that can be reflected upon philosophically. Thus film-philosophy is both a measure of the aesthetic potentiality of cinema, and a way of approaching film. Films embody ideas, as likewise they embody experiences and emotions, but these ideas and emotions can only emerge through interaction with the spectator who thinks and feels with the film. My goal in the following chapters is to explain how affective responses to Aronofsky's films may be a basis for conceptual insights regarding knowledge (*Pi*), addiction (*Requiem for a Dream*), loss (*The Fountain*), self-deception (*The Wrestler*) and bodily materiality (*Black Swan*).

The order of chapters follows the chronological order of Aronofsky's work. I start with *Pi* and the way in which its affective-aesthetic system enables the spectator to participate in the main character's physical pain and mental

anxiety. I shall argue that this pain is embodied in the corporeal aesthetics of the film itself and that it is experienced by the spectator as a sensed inability to gain control in the multiplicity of the world. On the conceptual level, I understand the film to epitomize what Michel Serres calls the (non)logic of clinamen, which manifests itself as noise that is void of any pre-existing orderly structure. In chapter two I move from noise to the notion of rhythm, which gives structure to the affective functioning of *Requiem for a Dream*. I shall argue that the film evokes an experience of affective dissonance by addressing and disturbing the corporeal rhythm of the spectator by means of its audiovisual style. The film lends itself exceptionally well to Henri Lefebvre's method of 'rhythmanalysis'. This allows us to understand affective transmission through a rhythmic relationship between the body of the spectator and the cinematic body 'in pain'. In *Requiem for a Dream*, this relationship is linked to loss of agency, which an individual can often experience as a result of mental and physical humiliation.

While pain is connected to humiliation in *Requiem for a Dream*, it is pathological grief and its painful features that lie at the core of *The Fountain*, the film that is discussed in chapter three. Martha Nussbaum has defined such grief as repeatedly experienced affective frustration, thoroughly intertwined with the grieving person's bodily and cognitive fabric. It is this reverberating, repetitive logic of grief that is embedded in the visual style of *The Fountain*, providing the film with an affective quality that directly affects the spectator. A similar direct cinematic address takes place in *The Wrestler*, which I shall explore in chapter four. The film takes the spectator disturbingly close to bleeding, hurting flesh, in ways that are immediately felt in the body and experienced as displeasure. The film celebrates a character whose defining trait is his masochism – his ability to endure, and even take pleasure in, absurd amounts of physical pain. But as Sartre has argued, masochism must first and foremost be understood as a form of bad faith. In my reading of the film, not only does *The Wrestler* depict masochism, but it also calls for acknowledgement of an affective discrepancy between 'spectatorial pain' and 'performative pain'. This in turn requires acknowledgement of one's own responsibility as a spectator – one's own bad faith – in the process of watching the pain of the other.

In chapter five, the focus is on coexistence of the uncanny and the sublime in *Black Swan*. The protagonist in this film displays a split personality: there

is the embodied, material self, which is threatened by the possibility of pain and death, and the disembodied, eternal self, free from any such threat. Such division of the self lies at the core of experiencing the sublime, but in *Black Swan* the sublime is inseparable from the experience of the uncanny. Here the ‘eternal self’ actually appears as the ghostly double of the protagonist. There is an obvious connection with the paradox of ballet, which is to deny the materiality of the body for the sake of the ethereal quality of the dance. Hence the film carries a meaningful commentary on the tangibility of the dancer’s body and the ethereality of the ballet’s ideal, suggesting that totally sacrificing the former for the sake of the latter is ethically unworthy. The film achieves this by addressing the spectator as a sentient, sensual, and sensible being, with awareness of bodily materiality, which potentially leads to further reflection on the profound connection among the body, mind, and soul.

In the cinematic experience in general, and with regard to Aronofsky’s films in particular, intellectual and emotional desire often seem to go hand-in-hand. As Isobel Armstrong argues, the reason for this is that the affective-aesthetic ‘energizes us by demanding not judgment, but a desire of explanation, an ever more adequate understanding of its possibilities, a repeated pursuit of the meanings surrounding it’ (Armstrong 2000: 168). It could therefore be claimed that cinema makes spectators reflect – with varying degrees of success – because its corporeal style of being corresponds with their sensual experience. This could prompt direct intellectual appraisal as well, for instance by attaining to philosophical insights through pain. These insights do not lead to explicit philosophical statements; rather, they pertain to the way in which films invite direct experience of a cinematic event, rendered vivid by the film’s affective-aesthetic system.

Notes

Many thanks to Kathleen Scott for her helpful comments on the earlier version of this introduction.

1. An editorial in the journal *Senses of Cinema* describes this trend as a ‘critical discourse that downplays dramatic naturalism and character psychology in favour of attention to body, gesture, “presence”, physical energy and intensity’ (Martin, Mousoulis and Villella 2002). However, it would be a mistake to assume that

cinema of the body is a contemporary trend only. From its very beginning, cinema has always had a profound bodily quality. Thus Tom Gunning (1990) defines the 'cinema of attractions' in terms of bodily immediacy, arguing that it evokes in the spectator an embodied response to the screen. The relationship between the cinematic body and the body of the spectator was also understood by people like Sergei Eisenstein, who aimed to sensitize spectators to new sensorial perceptions (Eisenstein 1967: 71). In his essay 'Synchronization of the Senses', Eisenstein elaborates his ideas of cinematic techniques that create a primal, visceral unity of the senses, moving the spectator to a form of bodily ecstasy comparable to religious fervour (Eisenstein 1969: 89).

2. The process is described here: *Imagineer Systems*, 2012, 'Look FX: Visual Effects on *Black Swan*'. Retrieved 12 August 2012 from <http://www.imagineersystems.com/case-studies-folder/look-fx-visual-effects-on-black-swan>.
3. YouTube poster My Fnord. 2011, excerpt from Aronofsky's *No Time* ('Come on Fish'), *YouTube*, uploaded 29 September. Retrieved 22 November 2012 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGMzvMbH8a8>; YouTube poster degitz, 2011, Excerpt from Aronofsky's *Fortune Cookie* ('Stanley B. Herman edit'), *YouTube*, uploaded 11 March. Retrieved 22 November 2012 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tk2VGzcnEg&feature=related>.
4. In fact, this expressive resonance renders the work of art what Dufrenne calls a quasi-subject, but a more appropriate term might be Michel Serres's notion of quasi-object. Dufrenne does not make clear whether he means that a work of art is an analogy to a real subject, or is literally a special sort of subject (Funt 1968: 124). In contrast, Serres explains in *The Parasite* that 'the quasi-object is not an object, but it is one nevertheless, since it is not a subject, since it is in the world; it is also a quasi-subject, since it marks or designates a subject who, without it, would not be a subject' (Serres 2007: 225). Cinema can be considered a quasi-object because it designates a resonant relation between itself and its spectator, without which the spectator would not be a spectator, and through which both parties participate in each other's life world – the presence of the sensuous.
5. In this context, a distinction can be made between the definitions of affect and emotion, although not necessarily on the experiential level. Affect can be seen as the pre-reflective bodily mechanism that underlies all emotion and that gives pre-semantic meaning to information that originates from our bodily systems, and, more particularly, from our senses. Emotion is the semantic account of the affective appraisal that can be narrated and remembered. Through this, we experience our being-in-the-world as subjectively, historically and culturally particular individuals. But I understand affects and emotions as unified states or processes, in which affect is an implicit quality of emotion and vice versa, since affects are not devoid of semantic meaning (Laine 2011).

6. In addition, one might consider how our affective-aesthetic experiences are shaped by learned predispositions, since there are different types of discursively shaped and determined bodies. Thus Nina's suffering in *Black Swan* is partly structured by her gender, as argued in chapter five, which is to a certain extent fundamentally different from the emotional and physical pain undergone by Randy in *The Wrestler*, explored in chapter four. In a similar vein, one might ask in what way the spectators' experiences of Aronofsky's films are socially, politically, or culturally determined by gender or some other ideological construct; that, however, is beyond the scope of this particular study.
7. I borrow this idea from Deniz Peters and his discussion on electronic music in Peters 2012.
8. Drew Leder suggests that the reason why pain involves such 'return' to the body is that normally the body is 'absent' in the sense that we are not positionally conscious of its functioning; our reflective attention is not directed to our bodily states: 'Insofar as the body tends to disappear when functioning unproblematically, it often seizes our attention most strongly at times of dysfunction' (Leder 1990: 4). But, echoing Scarry, he also suggests that pain can often lead to a body that turns in on itself (Leder 1990: 74).
9. Scarry's view has been challenged by, for instance, Lucy Bending, who argues that people not only have an overwhelming need to make sense of their pain, but they also have a large reservoir of cultural significations that enable processes of meaning-giving to experiences of pain (Bending 2000: 86).

INTRODUCTION

Jan-Christopher Horak and Andreas-Benjamin Seyfert

The Exile

Of all the writers, directors, producers, actors, and technical professionals that were forced to emigrate from Nazi Germany because they were considered Jewish, Wilhelm—William—Thiele was neither hugely successful nor was he an abject failure. Unlike fellow émigrés Billy Wilder, William Dieterle, Robert Siodmak, Henry Koster, Otto Preminger, Fritz Lang, Douglas Sirk, and Fred Zinnemann, he did not become a household name in US cinema, yet he sustained a filmmaking career after his exile for more than twenty-five years, with interruptions. His fall from the heights of stardom as a film director on Berlin's Kurfürstendamm did not parallel the failed career trajectories in Hollywood of Richard Oswald, Erik Charell, Hanns Schwarz, Victor Trivas, Max Ophüls, and Max Reinhardt. Rather, William Thiele seems typical for the career of many exiled German film directors who managed to work relatively steadily in film, and later television, often remaining at the level of B-film production, like John Brahm, László Benedek, E. A. Dupont, Paul Henreid, Gerd Oswald, Steve Sekely, André De Toth, Ivan Tors, and Frank Wisbar. Though largely forgotten by history, Thiele's groundbreaking international work in filmmaking has helped shape the art form as we know it today.

With the coming of sound, he captured the essence of cinema as a popular mass medium. As the director of three of the most financially successful films of the early sound period in Weimar Germany—*Liebeswalzer* (*Waltz of Love*, no. 2 in the box office in the 1929–30 season), *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* (*Three Good Friends*, no. 1 in the 1930–31 season), and *Die Privatsekretärin* (*The Private Secretary*, 1930–31, a smash hit)—as well as a string of other more modest hits that made him at least a co-inventor of the European musical comedy-operetta, Thiele belonged to the A-list of film directors in Berlin and Paris. Prior to this, Thiele had

made a name for himself as a comedy specialist in the late 1920s, producing light comedies with major stars for the Universum Film A.G. (UFA), films that, though they were mostly medium-budget films (*Mittelfilme*), established Thiele as a reliable director of commercial fare. Thiele had come from Austria to UFA as a dramaturg and scriptwriter under the patronage of Paul Davidson, the pioneering co-founder of the studio, and an independent producer following Erich Pommer's ascendancy. Under long-term contract at UFA, while also working for other producers, Thiele never had to worry about employment in Germany, at least not until Joseph Goebbels and the Nazis blacklisted him as a Jew. How different was his situation in Hollywood, where he arrived in 1934 with no contacts, contract, or a reputation? While some of his German successes had been screened and discussed in the US press, film reviews in *The New York Times* and *Variety* neglected to even mention the director.¹

His first US film turned sadly into a monumental failure. Co-written by Hanns Schwarz, Franz Schulz, and Billy Wilder, all three literally just off the boat from Berlin, as was Thiele, *Lottery Lover* was nothing if not an *Exilfilm*, an US-produced film, yet completely of European conception.² Much like Joe May's *Music in the Air* (1934) and Erik Charell's *Caravan* (1934), previously shot on the Fox lot in Los Angeles, *Lottery Lover* failed miserably at the box office because its transplanted Berlin makers had created old and new world hybrids.³ Thiele bounced back with the mega-hit *The Jungle Princess* (1936), which made Dorothy Lamour and her sarong a star, but was in a genre completely foreign to him. Thiele had learned his lesson. He became a director who worked in numerous genres from gentle comedies to film-noirs, jungle pictures to historical films, westerns to industrials. Thiele only experienced two periods of complete financial security: during the late 1930s when he was under contract to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) and in the years between 1947 and 1958 when he was under contract to Jack Chertok's Apex Film Company. After his emigration, therefore, Thiele likely saw himself less as a film artist and more of a film professional supporting his family.

The reasons for William Thiele's middling career in Hollywood are difficult to identify exactly and are therefore only subject to speculation. Thiele himself blamed some of his struggles on his lack of professional connections, usually established through socializing with the Hollywood elite and getting invited to the right parties. As an "outspoken family man," Thiele did not go to parties and did not host them either.⁴ The Thieles also seemingly kept a certain distance from the rest of

the German émigré community, a network that may have helped him procure work. He maintained few contacts with other German-Jewish refugees and is almost never mentioned in autobiographical literature. But Thiele may have also damaged his own prospects by sometimes being a bit too eager to take on any kind of work, feeling he had to earn money at all costs to support his extended family, regardless of what the implications of such a move may have been on his career. As his granddaughter-in-law Linda Thiele remembers, “I have to believe he was working so hard to take care of not only his immediate family but supporting other members of his extended family as well.”⁵

Thiele regretted making *Lottery Lover*, jumping in at the last moment after Hanns Schwarz had to drop out due to illness, because he was anxious about being unemployed for months after his arrival in Los Angeles. According to Thiele, his agent (Stanley Bergerman) also strenuously objected to him accepting the job of directing a short film, *Carnival in Paris* (1937), after the huge success of *The Jungle Princess*, because it was a hard and fast rule in Hollywood that one never made a downward career move from features to shorts. That move was ultimately justified by the fact that Thiele won a long-term contract at MGM, making B-film comedies, and it first put him in contact with Jack Chertok, who would later employ him for ten years at Apex. But even before that, it made little sense that Thiele had accepted a job as “associate director” for Joseph von Sternberg on *The King Steps Out* (1936) at Columbia, although Thiele had spent another five months “at liberty” between the two films. Thiele was likely brought in to direct Grace Moore’s musical numbers, since the Viennese operetta *Sissy*, by Hubert and Ernst Marischka with music by Fritz Kreisler was right up Thiele’s alley. Thiele may have also hoped for more assignments, since the film was a huge box office success for 1936, but von Sternberg got all the credit.

Thiele’s lack of a critical reputation in film historical sources, given his centrality to the development of the German film operetta with hits such as *Die Drei von der Tankstelle*, is even more puzzling. Certainly, the long-standing and only recently mitigated bias of German-speaking critics against any kind of popular genre films, whether comedies or musicals, played a historical role. Lotte Eisner called *Tankstelle* “extremely heavy” and the “torrent of operettas” a disaster, matched only by the even great disaster of *Musikerfilme*, film biographies of musicians and composers.⁶ And while Siegfried Kracauer admitted that *Tankstelle* “was a new type of operetta,” which “failed to convince the New York public, but was a hit in most European countries,” he also paid Thiele a back-handed compliment as a master of “attractive concoctions.”⁷ The

critical neglect suffered by Thiele at the hands of Anglo-American film academics, on the other hand, is probably due to his lack of *auteurist* credentials, his subterranean career among the B-film producers, and his seeming lack of a consistent style and thematic concern, as he bounced from one studio to the next. However, with the rise of feminist film criticism in the last decades, some of Thiele's work has been recognized.⁸

As this anthology demonstrates, Thiele's romantic comedy-musicals addressed and spoke to a female audience, whether in Germany or in the United States, both in terms of their sentimentality and their family values. Furthermore, far from being a macho filmmaker privileging strong-willed masculine protagonists, Thiele's films more often present weak feminized males, captured by activist and independent female protagonists. This long line of young women who take control of the narrative begins with Lillian Harvey in *Adieu Mascotte* (*The Model from Montparnasse*, 1928) and subsequent films, to Renate Müller in *Die Privatsekretärin* (1931) and *Mädchen zum Heiraten* (*Girls to Marry*, 1932) to Dorothy Lamour in *The Jungle Princess* (1936), Virginia Weidler in *Bad Little Angel* (1939), Sally Brophy and Mary Anderson in episodes of *Cavalcade of America*, to Christine Kaufmann and Sabine Sinjen in *Der letzte Fußgänger* (*The Last Pedestrian*, 1960) and *Sabine und die hundert Männer* (*Sabina*, 1960), respectively. Even if marriage is the goal, these women set agendas, follow through on their ambitions, cajole and provoke the male objects of their desire into action.

However, Thiele's invisibility may also be connected to the fact that his particular style of light entertainment, music, and sentimentality had fallen out of fashion, with critics looking for fissures in a reigning Hollywood aesthetic. Never one for either low or risqué comedy, nor having a jaundiced and cynical point of view, like Billy Wilder, Thiele favored "musicals with charm and feeling," and sentimental comedies that were populated almost exclusively with nice people. Thiele's charming comedies at MGM were consistently, if modestly successful as little B-films, yet why was Thiele's contract not renewed after seven years? The answer may lie in the fact that World War II had broken out in Europe, leading to a loss of European markets, and that such sentimentality was beginning to fall out of fashion, as were the kind of operettas that Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy had specialized in. Film-noirs and Broadway-style musicals ruled the day, while romantic sentimentality seemed out of place in the midst of war.

However, there is also a larger issue at work, at least in the critical literature. As a cultural phenomenon, sentiment is often assumed to be a feminine trait—not that men cannot be sentimental in their own

way—and remained largely ignored in film scholarship until film criticism began to valorize it.⁹ Feminine subject matter, or so-called women's pictures, whether melodramas or romantic comedies, were not considered to be serious subject matter. Interestingly, Thiele's men are almost always "feminized." Whether the slightly androgynous Willy Fritsch or Lew Ayres, whether the asexual Frank Morgan or Heinz Erhardt, Thiele's leading men are almost never macho men or even activist male characters, typical of Hollywood classical narrative. His male characters in both his German and US films are invariably push-overs, Casper-milquetoasts, passive in the face of women actively pursuing them, oftentimes infantile, traveling in groups where they do not have to confront mature sexualized women, while it is the women who move narratives forward, even if they are only ten-year-old girls or budding young women. Thiele's films are also often improbable Hollywood fairytales, which again usually engendered derision rather than praise from male critics. However, Charles Affron has suggested an alternative point of view when dealing with Thiele's kind of Hollywood sentiment:

Many sentimental narratives tend to generate improbabilities in proportion to the strength of the feelings they express. In such narratives the very activity of fiction filmmaking becomes so expressive that it reflects a measure of incompatibility between feeling and necessity, between emotion and logic . . . But we succumb to these idealizations, the glamorous close-ups, the molding of faces and bodies in images whose artifices are compounded by plot, light, and the "magic" of cinema . . . Feeling is located in this ambiguous field of probable improbability where real yet absent performers play out situations that both happen and do not happen.¹⁰

"Enchanted with cinema," Thiele feared neither sentimentality nor musical comedies that reveled in their own artifice, allowing audiences to partake in the fantasy of an untroubled world, while never letting them forget that this was a film, experienced in a darkened theater, before returning to the daylight of everyday life outside the cinema.

Finally, Thiele's often demonstrated ability to discover young talent and help make them stars, as well his extreme skill at directing actors, even in low-budget films, should be acknowledged. He helped make Lilian Harvey and Renate Müller stars, discovered Danielle Darrieux and Dorothy Lamour, successfully coached Virginia Weidler in her first starring role, and directed Francis Lederer in one of his best screen performances. No matter how low-budget the production of his film or later television and industrial film work, Thiele invariably coaxed cred-

ible screen performances from his actors, even in the smallest roles, for example, in *The Du Pont Story* (1950), where no less than twenty-six professional actors have walk-on scenes. Thiele believed that his own experience as an actor had helped him be sympathetic to actors, but his success as a director of actors went beyond his coaching work. Even on television productions that could not afford more than minimal sets, Thiele always found the right place to put the camera to highlight the performances, when dialogue rather than action prevailed. However, with some exceptions, Thiele's expertise at *mise-en-scène* has also been underappreciated.

Biography

Born on 10 May 1890 in Vienna's rapidly urbanizing Twelfth District as Wilhelm Iersohn, the son of Johanna and Samuel Iersohn, in an Austrian-Jewish middle-class family. His father was a minor government official, and possibly owned a brick factory, and his parents wanted him to study chemistry, but he instead enrolled in the Vienna Academy of Music and Performing Arts, then completed an internship at the Burgtheater in 1908, having apparently moved out of the parental home to Vienna's Second District; he maintained a residency there throughout his years of *Wanderschaft* and war.¹¹ In 1909, an agent offered him a choice of two openings at two provincial theaters: playing minor roles at the Hoftheater in Karlsruhe or major roles at a theater in Karlsbad. He opted for Karlsbad (Czech Republic), before moving on to Ústínad Labem (Czech Republic), Hermannstadt (Romania) and Stuttgart. He had a repertoire of several classical roles and, almost from the beginning of his professional career as an actor, then still in his twenties, he specialized in character parts: *Faust*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, Shylock, and others. He was drafted into the Austrian Army's Vienna Deutschmeisters Regiment No. 4 at the beginning of World War I, where he helped organize variety shows for the troops. Demobilized after the Armistice in 1918, Thiele traveled first to Šluknov (now Czech Republic) and then to Munich's Volkstheater, now officially calling himself a *Spielleiter* and *Schauspieler* (director and actor).

The move to Šluknov may have been motivated by his marriage in 1918 to a Czech woman, Vladimira Ruzička (aka Valeria Dohlen, aka Vally Glauko), certainly a Catholic, with whom he had two sons, Friedrich Wilhelm (Frederick William), born in 1918, and Johann (John) Christian, born in 1923. Documents list both Thiele and his wife as non-

religious. At the same time, he changed his name to Thiele. In 1928, Vally died of cancer. About two years later, Thiele married Barbara Ann Arlt (born 1907, died 1994) who was a German Lutheran. They had a daughter, Doris (born 1930). The whole extended family celebrated Christmas with a tree, dinner, and gifts. After Thiele's exile, the extended family included Thiele's widowed mother, Johanna Iersohn; his sister Ida (1892–1966) and brother-in-law Leopold Grunfeld; and his brother Berthold Iersohn. All of them had come to America while he continued to support his brother, Eugen Thiele (1897–1938), in a Swiss sanatorium—until he died of pulmonary hemorrhage due to a ruptured artery six months after the so-called Anschluss in Baden near Vienna.¹²

In Munich in 1920, Thiele directed his first two films for local producers, including *Lya's beste Rolle* (*Lya's Best Performance*, 1921), which included Oscar Karlweis, later to star in *Die Drei von der Tankstelle*, in the cast. He is seen as an actor in two other Munich film productions, and writes his first script for a third, while continuing to act at the Volkstheater under the directorship of Ernst Bach. Thiele returns to Vienna in 1922, where he films two musical biographies with live musical stage shows, celebrating the Viennese composer/singer, Carl Michael Ziehrer. *Carl Michael Ziehrer, der letzte Walzerkönig* (*The Last Waltz King*) actually starred Ziehrer with Thiele in a supporting role and premiered his last song, "Mein Herz lass' ich in Wien zurück," but the composer died a month after the opening.

Thiele moved to Berlin in 1924, where three months of interviews and meetings yielded no assignment. Then, Paul Davidson, an independent producer at UFA, agreed to see him and, impressed with his fifteen years of theater experience, gave him an assignment. At UFA, Germany's largest film studio, which would remain his home base for more than nine years, he starts in the screenplay department, working as a dramaturg, authoring a number of scripts for Davidson, directed by Paul Ludwig Stein, Hanns Schwarz, and others. In 1926, he co-directs his first UFA film with Adolf Edgar Licho, *Seine selige Exzellenz* (*His Late Excellency*, 1927), featuring Willy Fritsch and Olga Chekhova, which also begins a long collaboration with composer Werner R. Heymann in the sound era. There follow *Orientexpress* (*Orient Express*, 1927) with Lil Dagover and Heinrich George, *Die Dame mit der Maske* (1928), and *Adieu Mascotte* (1929), starring Lilian Harvey and Willy Fritsch, among others. *Adieu Mascotte*, his last silent film, began a string of fruitful collaborations with the British-German star Lilian Harvey.

With the advent of sound, Thiele joins the production team of UFA production head Erich Pommer who assigns him to direct a lavish

sound film operetta, *Liebeswalzer*, to be shot simultaneously in German and in English with certain non-bilingual cast members replaced depending on the version. He reunited Germany's favorite star pairing from *Liebeswalzer*, Lilian Harvey and Willy Fritsch, in *Die Drei von der Tankstelle*, which was hailed by critics as a new kind of musical. With his notoriety spreading across country borders, in 1931, William went to France to direct films in German and French versions, making *Le bal* (*The Ball*, 1931) with a teenage Danielle Darrieux in her first part and *L'amoureuse aventure* (*Madame hat Ausgang*,¹³ 1932). He returned to Germany for two films featuring the stars of his previous successes, *Zwei Herzen und ein Schlag* (*Two Hearts Beat as One*, 1932) with Lilian Harvey and *Mädchen zum Heiraten* with Renate Müller. An invitation to remake the latter in English brought William to London, staying to direct *Waltz Time* (1933), based on the famous Johann Strauss operetta *Die Fledermaus*. The films invariably center on active young women, doggedly pursuing their love interests. And while these films were frothy entertainments, Thiele also addressed specific social issues, for example, unemployment in *Tankstelle* and the position of white-collar women workers in *Die Privatsekretärin*.



Figure 0.3. Thiele (middle) with the cast and crew of *Le chemin du paradis* (1930). Courtesy of the Thiele Family Private Collection.

Thiele was blacklisted by Joseph Goebbels and the Nazi Propaganda Ministry because he was identified as Jewish. In documents for his first marriage, Thiele had given his religion as *konfessionslos* (without religion) for both himself and his wife. As confirmed by the *Israelitische Kulturgemeinde* (IKG) in Vienna, Thiele left the Jewish community around 1919, though it is unclear why.¹⁴ As David Thiele notes in an email: “However, in middle age in California (my aunt Doris told me), he attended a synagogue and took her with him. A photo in the dining room of my grandparents’ house shows a Menorah. . . He was given a Jewish religious funeral with a rabbi officiating.”¹⁵

After the Nazis seized power in Germany, Thiele returned to Austria, collaborating with Franz Lehár on *Großfürstin Alexandra* (*Grand Duchess Alexandra*, 1933), starring the noted opera singer Maria Jeritza in her first and only role on the big screen. Shortly after the new year in 1934, Thiele traveled to the United States with Gabriel Pascal, later himself an émigré in Hollywood, telling Thiele he had the rights to a George Nathan novel, which turned out to be false; Pascal was, in fact, broke and borrowed money from Thiele.¹⁶ Off the boat in New York, and stranded, Thiele was signed by agent Harry Weber, along with Maria Jeritza, Jack Benny, Pola Negri, and Fred MacMurray.¹⁷ He apparently then ran into Maria Jeritza, who was preparing to star in the Rudolf Friml light opera *Annina* and convinced the Schuberts to let Thiele direct. The operetta opened on 5 March 1934 at the Schubert Theater in Boston; it was set in contemporary Venice with some fantastical as well as realist elements.¹⁸ The road show traveled on to Philadelphia, Washington, DC, Pittsburgh, and Chicago over the next five weeks. *Variety* praised Thiele as “an imaginative craftsman” who brought this “frothy but entertainingly presented [story to life], with the right Cinderella touches (a Thiele specialty).”¹⁹ Despite the good review, Thiele and Jeritza were separated from the production before it opened under a different title on Broadway in December 1934.

Thiele traveled to Hollywood, where he sat around for at least six months waiting for work before he received an assignment to direct *Lottery Lover* (1935) at Fox, studio publicity announcing him as a French director.²⁰ It was the first of many periods of unemployment. Thiele’s first Hollywood film was supposed to reunite him with his longtime collaborator, scriptwriter Franz Schulz, paired this time with Billy Wilder to produce a screenplay for a musical set in Paris.²¹ Originally meant to star Lilian Harvey and Lew Ayres, who had appeared together in *My Weakness* (1933), the critically most successful of Harvey’s films at Fox, but Harvey returned to Germany before *Lottery Lover* went into produc-

tion. The film may have failed, not only because of its gaggle of sailors in a European homage to the Keystone Kops, but also because Lew Ayres's weak male hero was not assertive enough for US audiences.

Thiele next signed a contract with Carl Laemmle's Universal, where he was supposed to direct his own script, "Tomorrow Is a Better Day," with Paul Kohner producing but was taken off the project, as was Kohner, "due to reentrenchment" at the company.²² Instead, Thiele went to Columbia, as Joseph von Sternberg's associate producer on his "Sissy" project with opera star Grace Moore, the film released as *The King Steps Out* (1936).

With his next film, *Jungle Princess*, shot for Paramount Pictures, Thiele launched the career of another major star, Dorothy Lamour, performing in her trademark sarong next to Ray Milland,²³ who as the supposedly intelligent leading man, is turned into an infantile mass of oral infatuation with naked and native female flesh, if only in blackface, while betraying his highly intelligent fiancé, a professional and far from unattractive woman. One wonders whether Thiele understood that he had captured the infantilism of the American male perfectly, just as Frank Tashlin's psychoanalytic inflected comedies were to do two decades later. Hanns Leo Reich, who visited Thiele on set, reported metaphorically in *Mein Film*: "William Thiele, the Viennese director is genuinely pleased to meet a compatriot in the jungles of Hollywood. He tells me how good it is to work with the local natives . . . And then we talked about Vienna and mutual acquaintances. I promised to visit Bill's mother when I returned."²⁴ The film was shot in the summer months of 1936 at a place called Crater's Camp, near Thousand Oaks, in the area that is now Westlake. It was then considered a "distant" location and a tent city was set up to house the cast and crew Monday through Saturday. Since school was out, William's son John recalls spending the summer out there with his father soaking up movie-making magic. How different from Berlin where *Die Dschungel-Prinzessin's* premiered, omitting Thiele's name, replacing it with the producer's since works made by Jews were effectively banned after April 1933.

Thiele must have been desperate for work because he accepted a job directing a musical short against the advice of his agent, because it was a step down from features. Thiele nevertheless went to MGM for *Carnival in Paris*, after which Thiele landed a studio contract. It was also the first time he worked for then head of the MGM Shorts Department Jack Chertok, a connection that would save his life a decade later. The fast-paced and thoroughly charming musical, situated in an archaeology

museum, was the only film he would direct in the United States in his preferred genre of musical operetta. Thiele's first feature at MGM was *London by Night* (1937), a crime comedy with expressionist elements, while *Beg, Borrow, or Steal* (1937), produced by fellow German-speaker Frederick Stephani, with Frank Morgan was a sentimental B-film comedy with a virtually incomprehensible plot. Between the two assignments, Thiele shot second unit at Cal Tech in Pasadena for another MGM film.²⁵

Thiele spent all of 1938 without a project or in doomed projects. He was taken off MGM's *Listen, Darling* (1938) after five days working with star Judy Garland and replaced with Edwin L. Marin. Producer Jack Cummings put him on "His Excellency's Tobacco Shop," which Thiele adapted from a Bus-Fekete story, but remained unproduced, possibly because the studio had completed *The Baroness and the Butler* (1938), based on Bus-Fekete's play, *Jean*. He did not begin production on *Bridal Suite* (1939) for producer Edgar Selwyn until February 1939, the film reuniting him with Felix Bressart, while *Bad Little Angel* (1940) with Virginia Weidler sought to invade the cute and smart little girl market, dominated by Judy Garland, Deanna Durbin, and Shirley Temple. All were cheaply made with studio contract players in the Hollywood fashion. His final film for MGM, *The Ghost Comes Home* (1940), was a remake of a Thiele late silent, *Hurra, ich lebe!* (1928), again starring Frank Morgan. His last two films were produced by Albert E. Levoy.

Next, Thiele was slated to direct an adaptation of Sinclair Lewis's *The Willow Walk* with Joseph L. Mankiewicz producing, but the project never came to fruition.²⁶ Thiele remained under contract through the end of the 1940–41 season but then was let go, before his contract ended. Why? Thiele had five different producers for the six films he directed at MGM. It is possible that Thiele just could not find a producer who would take him under his wing.

Thiele had adapted quickly to Hollywood's expectations and his films, while not all stand-out masterpieces of craftsmanship, like his earlier German work, or as lastingly popular as *Jungle Princess*, proved to be routinely successful with US audiences. Now, he was back to writing scripts to peddle on the open market, writing an unproduced script for Sol C. Siegel at Paramount.²⁷ It was more than a year before Thiele directed his next film, *Tarzan Triumphs* (1943), producer Sol Lesser's first *Tarzan* film with Johnny Weissmuller. The film had an overt anti-Nazi film plot but was also the first *Tarzan* to dispense with visualizing any native black Africans. Released in December 1943, Thiele's second

Tarzan film for Sol Lesser, *Tarzan's Desert Mystery* (1943), likewise, involved Arabs rather than Africans. True to Thiele's admiration of the chimpanzee's intelligence, Cheetah got the most screen time, while the bad guys were killed by a lion and spider, respectively. *The New York Times* reviewer noted that the scenes with the monster spider munching on baddie Hendrix "should have the children screaming in their sleep for months . . . or are the little wretches really so bloodthirsty?"²⁸ But Lesser was unhappy with the film and hired Kurt Neumann to shoot a whole new ending, adding stock footage from Hal Roach's *One Million B.C.* (1940), maybe to make the kiddies scream. Both Tarzan films were rereleased in 1949 with Thiele's name removed from the advertising.

Shot between September and October 1945, *The Madonna's Secret* was based on a script by Thiele and Bradbury Foote and was Thiele's last directed feature film in Hollywood. Despite receiving a long-term contract at Republic and very good reviews, the film remained a one-off. *Madonna's* oedipally motivated final plot twist and one of Francis Lederer's finest performances certainly offered audiences much more than they would have normally expected from a B-film.

Thiele had managed to sell a few scripts between the *Tarzan* films and *Madonna*, but it was not until producer Jack Chertok, who had produced short films for years at MGM, hired him in 1946 to produce shorts, industrials, and advertising films that Thiele worked again steadily. He remained with the company for at least ten years as an employee. During this time, Thiele did direct a feature film, *The Du Pont Story*, a color docudrama on the history of the DuPont Company, financed by the company for its 85,000 employees. But most of his films were shorts for commercial clients, like National Association of Manufacturers, E.I. Du Pont de Nemours Company, Southern California Dental Association, National Tuberculosis Association, American Bar Association, and the American Legion. Thiele also transitioned to television sometime after Chertok's Apex Film Company entered the television production market in 1949 with *The Lone Ranger*, followed by *Sky King*, *Cavalcade of America*, and *Private Secretary*. *The Lone Ranger* was sponsored by General Mills and *Cavalcade of America* by E. I. Du Pont de la Nemours, both of whom were also clients for industrials.

For *Cavalcade of America* (1952–57), based on the radio show of the same name, Thiele directed no less than thirty-five half-hour episodes, including shows about John Peter Zenger, William Penn, Benedict Arnold, Ben Franklin, John Marshall, Wyatt Earp, Horace Greely, and many lesser or unknown figures, including women Dr. Alice Walker

and Elisabeth Blackwell. For *The Lone Ranger*, Thiele, began work in its fourth season in September 1954, completing twenty-five episodes until September 1955 when the season ended.

Except for a couple of isolated television show episodes, a documentary on the American Legion, *We Who Serve* (1958), and a fiction short, *The Engagement Party*, Thiele remained unemployed for much of 1956–58. Thiele did form a partnership with former Warner Brothers TV producer, Carroll Case—hot off the hit western series *Sugarfoot*—to form an independent production unit, but the deal apparently never got off the ground.²⁹ Thiele thus accepted a return to Germany after almost thirty years in exile for a three-picture contract with Deutsche Film Hansa but eventually only completed two films, both comedies. In *Der letzte Fußgänger* (1960), Heinz Erhardt, an extremely popular comedian in 1950s Germany, played a timid archivist wandering through the Black Forest, while *Sabine und die hundert Männer* (1960) featured Yehudi Menuhin and Sabine Sinjen in a remake of Henry Koster's 1938 film *100 Men and a Girl*. Although Thiele had signed a contract for a third film, which he was to direct in March 1961 for the UFA-Hansa, the film never came to pass because the UFA-Film-Hansa was financially in difficulties. Returning to Los Angeles in 1961, Thiele retired at age seventy. In 1974, the German government honored him with a "Film Band in Gold" for his contributions to German cinema. He died on 7 September 1975 in Woodland Hills, CA. Stacy Keach gave the eulogy at Thiele's funeral, noting: "Bill Thiele was a creative human being who loved intensely, his family, his friends and his work. This was a man with great warmth and charm, of nobility and absolute dedication to his art."³⁰

William Thiele's lasting legacy will remain his contribution to the invention of the European film operetta, while his US career may remain a footnote in the history of German-Jewish émigrés in Hollywood, forced out of Germany as a result of the antisemitic policies of the Nazi Party. At the same time, a closer look at Thiele's total oeuvre, reveals a tendency to privilege strong female characters who actively help create their own fate and often weak or ineffective male characters, thus countering traditional gender markings in both German and US cinema. As Thiele noted in an interview, he had no regrets about coming to the United States and remained grateful that the country had saved his life and family, giving them a new home, even if he repeatedly had to suffer longer periods of unemployment. His one regret, as he stated in an interview with Cornelius Schnauber was: "I invented music as an

integral part of a film's plot and directed the precursors to the movie musical, nevertheless, I never had the chance to direct a real film musical in Hollywood."³¹

Enchanted by Cinema

A strong storyteller with a knack for directing actors, Thiele was a star maker and pioneer. Forced to emigrate from Germany to the United States during the Nazi era, he worked in many genres from gentle comedies to film-noirs, jungle pictures to historical films, westerns to industrials. A driving force for the thriving cinematic culture in the Weimar Republic, perfectly adapting to the brief cross-cultural European film exchange of the early sound interwar period, and establishing himself in Hollywood as a reliable contract director, he achieved aesthetics that aimed to resonate with the general motion picture audience. His aesthetic film style was marked by a strong sense of music and an awareness of human emotion, a careful selection of camera angles and his instinct of rhythmic editing. Wherever his artistic career took him, Thiele contributed significantly to the development of the craft, the effects of which are still felt in cinema today.

Despite his important role in introducing and developing the European sound film operetta, William Thiele has been neglected in German and US film history sources. Several edited volumes have examined the significance of New Objectivity and Expressionism in the development of a German national cinema between the two world wars, but few have examined this period specifically for lighter genres that were most popular with audiences in their time. By bringing together scholars from a variety of backgrounds, the present volume fills a gap in scholarship and sheds light on Thiele's position within current European and American film studies discussions. Despite not being exhaustive, the thirteen chapters that make up this book offer diverse perspectives on an extensive filmography spanning over forty years.

The first chapter of the book emphasizes the significance of William Thiele's early work as a precursor to his most famous films at Germany's largest studio, UFA. Philipp Stiasny argues in his essay "Towards Thiele" that Wilhelm Thiele's early sound hits can be traced back to his work as a screenwriter for UFA and in the emerging film industry in Vienna and Austria. Specifically, he examines *Die Kleine vom Varieté* (*The Little Variety Star*, 1926), a comedy characterized by situational humor and an innovative, freely constructed narrative. Stiasny also examines Thiele's directorial debut, *Die selige Exzellenz*. He outlines its satirical

plot mocking outdated and pompous officials and analyzes a variety of visual features that illustrate Thiele's creativity as a filmmaker.

Next, a direct comparison to his later film oeuvre. One of his early successes, *Hurra, ich lebe!* (1928), was converted into a talkie for MGM, entitled *The Ghost Comes Home* (1940). While both adaptations were based on the same play by Georg Kaiser and involve characters crossing borders and hiding out, a comparative analysis reveals differing ideologies underlying the portrayal of those characters classified as either "foreign" or "domestic." Andréas-Benjamin Seyfert's chapter, "Across Studio Borders," discusses the extent to which film adaptations can be considered cultural translations, arguing that the studio system, the filmmaker's perspective, and the geopolitical location informed each film's specificities, imprinting a distinctive perspective and political resonance onto the adapted material.

In the final chapter addressing Thiele's silent career, Heike Klapdor discusses Wilhelm Thiele's *Adieu Mascotte* (1929), in which Lilian Harvey portrays a self-assured female character. Adopting a feminist perspective, Klapdor asks, does Wilhelm Thiele's silent comedy *Adieu Mascotte* (1929) represent prototypical and conformist entertainment or an ironic parody of urban working women? Her chapter "Modeling Female Agency" argues that the central theme of Wilhelm Thiele's film *Adieu Mascotte* is the act of creative transformation. While the protagonist conquers both urban spaces and her sexual liberation, the cloning of Mascotte from classical antiquity's aesthetics of victimhood gives the protagonist an ambivalent and complex dimension. This film was also the first in a series of motion pictures where Thiele directed Lilian Harvey, probably one of the stars most remembered in connection with his work. Klapdor's chapter also focuses our attention on the strong females that became a hallmark of Thiele's film work.

Michael Wedel analyzes Thiele's transition to sound. In 1930 at UFA, under producer Erich Pommer, with composer Werner R. Heymann, he mastered his first two sound films and introduced a new genre aesthetic: the sound film operetta. Both starring Lilian Harvey and Willy Fritsch, *Liebeswalzer* and *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* were immediately recognized for their novelty and emphatically welcomed by the public. Both films presented modern technology, a sophisticated lifestyle, and love affairs against a backdrop of economic crises. Wedel argues that, while *Liebeswalzer* leans noticeably on a three-act operetta structure with carefully timed singing numbers programmed into the narrative, *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* is based on a double storyline with musical motifs assigned to individual plot strands. Thiele himself described his

central task in *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* as a balancing act between the musical plot and the visual events. The film integrates singing scenes into the narrative process but also blurs the lines of linear causality and undermines the coherence of diegetic fiction. Both films, Wedel argues, provide the blueprint for the European film operetta, and became firmly engrained as a genre in German national cinema, surviving even Thiele's own involvement in the industry.

Thiele's first post-UFA film, *Die Privatsekretärin* (1931), featured Renate Müller in her first leading role, and was popular enough to be remade twice within months of its release, in the UK and in Italy. *Die Privatsekretärin* uses music to great effect, starting with an attention-grabbing gong, moving into an upbeat orchestral version of the film's main hit song, and ending with a triumphant chordal cadence. The musical comedies of the early sound period sought creative ways to deal with the suspension of disbelief involved when characters break into song and dance, but Thiele's early sound film comedies took a different approach, making no effort to motivate the shift to singing. Renate Müller and Hermann Thimig play a bank director and a secretary, respectively, in the film. Analyzing Thiele's French language-version of the film entitled *Dactylo* (1931), Christian Rogowski argues that the chemistry between the leading couples is very different, and the musical dramaturgy is reduced by the transfer of the storyline from a German to a French setting. He concludes that Wilhelm Thiele's 1931 film *Die Privatsekretärin* presents a fantasy of female self-fulfillment, accomplished with the help of a selfless male helper. However, it can also be read as a celebration of female solidarity.

The English-language version of *Die Privatsekretärin*, though not directed by Thiele, was such a success that it led to stardom for its leading actress Renate Müller in the UK. When Thiele directed Renate Müller in a second operetta vehicle, *Mädchen zum Heiraten* (1932), he was invited to London to make a slightly more elaborate English version of it and direct a film adaptation of Johann Strauss's famous operetta *Die Fledermaus* as *Waltz Time* (1933). Delving into Thiele's time in England, Geoff Brown notes that both films received mixed reviews and had low box-office receipts, thwarting Thiele's plans for continuing his work in London. Brown argues that, despite mixed fortunes in Britain, Gaumont-British and Gainsborough always remained the likeliest London studios where Thiele could have flourished. More musical projects were planned. *Marry Me*, with British actors crowded around its Teutonic star, had a continental flavor, but the artificial atmosphere of most multilingual ventures, drifting between their constituent countries and

nationalities. Brown also analyzes incomplete surviving reels of *Waltz Time*, concluding that it must have been the better film, yet it failed to resonate with British audiences.

With Hitler's ascension to power in Germany, Thiele made one last German-language film before embarking for the United States. He returned to his native Austria to direct Maria Jeritza, a Czech-born opera diva, in her film debut. The prestige film *Großfürstin Alexandra* had a big budget and a well-known cast to surround its star. Franz Lehár even composed original music for the film. *Großfürstin Alexandra* had a successful press preview and was immediately popular with the public. Critics praised the movie for its artistry and patriotism, but condemned it for its sympathy for the deposed Russian aristocracy. In 1933, Thiele framed his return to Austria as a happy accident, noting that he had made movies in Berlin, Paris, London, but was now back in Vienna filming Jeritza. In her chapter, concluding Thiele's prewar European career, Anjeana K. Hans notes that *Großfürstin Alexandra* may have started out as a way to push the genre of the musical film to new heights, but its aim may have become more complicated, especially given its subject matter. Hans analyzes this film about forced emigration, the dynamics of its love story, and its strangely unsatisfying happy ending.

Valerie Weinstein tackles Thiele's very first Hollywood success, the adventure romance *Jungle Princess* (1936), with Ray Milland and Dorothy Lamour. According to Weinstein, the film's portrayal of in-between characters resonates with Thiele's experience as an émigré Jewish director in Hollywood. In spite of the fact that Ulah is not a civilized woman, the film discourages viewers from identifying her as a primitive. Rather, Ulah's "natural charm" attracts both her male romantic interest in the film and the millions of moviegoers who discover her in theaters. Some non-white characters in the film are portrayed as neither civilized nor primitive, and the film suggests that civilization will be able to absorb them as they can contribute to society in gendered ways. If we are to understand Hollywood's German-speaking émigré Jews and their claims to whiteness, Weinstein concludes, it is helpful to consider Los Angeles a diaspora space in the 1930s. In Hollywood, Thiele, like other exiles forced out of Nazi Germany, had to contend with a complex racialized discourse that classified Jews as either white or off-white.

Imme Klages unpacks Thiele's tenure as a contract director at MGM, arguing that, while the films he directed at the studio left him little room to maneuver with crew members expertly trained by their respective department to achieve technical perfection, he aptly managed to meet viewer's wishes in ways that still resonate today. From his musi-

cal short *Carnival in Paris* (1937) to *Bad Little Angel* (1939), a family film with a lot of heart, Klages delves into Thiele's career within the US studio system at its height, exploring his position within it.

Marianna Torgovnick takes a look at Thiele's two Tarzan films for RKO studios, both starring the best-known actor in the part, Johnny Weissmuller. Torgovnick argues that the films reveal Thiele's artistic sensibility and his skills in directing actors. She contextualizes her analysis of *Tarzan Triumphs* (1943) and *Tarzan's Desert Mystery* (1943) with the book series by Edgar Rice Burroughs that inspired them. In so doing, she reveals both racist undertones and Thiele's personal imprint on the series, particularly with *Tarzan Triumphs*. Torgovnick clearly identifies *Desert Mystery* as a more routine and overall inferior film without neglecting the ways it engages in camp.

Christian Cargnelli looks at two of Thiele's crime pictures, *London by Night* (1937) and particularly *The Madonna's Secret* (1945), a film-noir he directed for the poverty row studio Republic starring Francis Lederer. Cargnelli notes how the film introduces cinematographer John Alton's famous noir period, including a haunting nightmare sequence featuring mirror images, chiaroscuro lighting and superimpositions. A similar sequence of shadowy collages of terror could already be seen in *London by Night*, linking the two films to an expressionist tradition that Thiele had never really been a part of in Germany. Cargnelli notes that *The Madonna's Secret* was met with favorable reviews in the contemporary press, viewed as innovative at the time.

In the following chapter, Jan-Christopher Horak unravels Thiele's career reinvention after his career seemed to have come to a definite halt. Working more or less steadily for Jack Chertok and his company Apex Film Corporation, Thiele directed documentaries and educational films, as well as episodes of popular television series. Horak close-reads *The Price of Freedom* (1949), *The Du Pont Story* (1950), several episodes of *Cavalcade of America* (1952–57), and *We Who Serve* (1958) for their political resonance. Thiele's work during this period dives into American self-conception as a nation. As an exiled director in the United States, Thiele was in an interesting position looking at his adopted homeland.

During this period, Thiele also took a stab at directing one of the most successful and decade-defining TV shows of the time, *The Lone Ranger*. He directed the show during its popular peak, during its fourth season, which aired from 1954 to 1955. A. Dana Weber unpacks how the series featuring a cowboy and his indigenous sidekick Tonto took US culture by storm, first through radio then through television. We-

ber analyzes what Thiele joining the program meant, both in terms of the United States' past and the director's European background. She identifies a fundamental paradox at the core of *The Lone Ranger* with its conceptions of the rebel and the conformist, the savage and the civilized, an outlaw exterior and a substance as a law bringer. She also contrasts this US vision of a particular hero with that of Karl May's fantasies, which may have inspired *The Lone Ranger*, given the series' striking resemblance to the popular Winnetou books, something that Thiele surely would have noticed.

In the final act of his career, as if to close the circle, Thiele returned to the country of his greatest successes, Germany. He returned after twenty-eight years to direct two films combining light entertainment with music, *Der letzte Fußgänger* (1960) and *Sabine und die 100 Männer* (1960). The first film has achieved lasting success with German audiences and still counts among the director's most popular films featuring Heinz Erhardt as a nature-loving archivist taking a walk through the Black Forest. The second is a tongue-in-cheek remake of a Henry Koster musical comedy set around the exuberant youth of its female lead Sabine Sinjen and the calmness and musical genius of Thiele's friend, violinist Yehudi Menuhin. In the final chapter of this book, Jan-Christopher Horak analyzes how these films are distinctly hybrid works, which combine a Hollywood style with a thoroughly German sensibility, mixing comedy, Heimat, and Schlager genres with a touch of irony.

The coda section features an interview conducted by Jan-Christopher Horak with Thiele and his wife Barbara in the mid-1970s, a detailed filmography by Hans-Michael Bock, as well as an essay by Armin Loacker illuminating the life and career of William's brother Eugen.

Jan-Christopher Horak is former Director of UCLA Film & Television Archive. He received his PhD from the University of Münster, Germany. Previously he was Director of the Munich Filmmuseum and Curator at the George Eastman Museum. He held professorships in Rochester, Munich, Salzburg, UCLA, Miami, and now teaches at Chapman and UCLA. An Academy Scholar in 2006, he received the Katherine Singer Kovacs Essay Award (2007), the Reinhold Schünzel Prize (2018), and the Honorary Prize of the German Cinematheque Association (2021). Book publications include: *Film and Photo in the 1920s* (1979), *Helmar Lerski* (1983), *Anti-Nazi-Films by Jewish Refugees in Hollywood* (1985), *The*

Dream Merchants (1989), *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde* (1995), *Saul Bass: Anatomy of Film Design* (2014), *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema* (2015), and *Hollywood Goes Latin: Spanish-Language Filmmaking in Los Angeles* (2017). He has published more than three hundred articles and reviews in English, German, French, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Hungarian, Czech, Polish, Swedish, Japanese, and Hebrew publications.

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Notes

1. See Harry T. Smith, "Liebeswalzer," *New York Times*, 4 May 1931; Harry T. Smith, "Die Privatsekretärin," *New York Times*, 12 June 1931, *Variety*, 23 June 1931.
2. See Horak, "German Exile Cinema, 1933–1950."
3. Horak, "Die Ufa Entlassungen vom 29. März 1933."
4. "Interview with W. and B. Thiele," see this volume.
5. Linda Thiele email to Ben Seyfert and David Thiele, 15 August 2022; David Thiele email to Ben Seyfert, 27 October 2021.
6. Eisner, *The Haunted Screen*, 326.
7. Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 207, 213. Kracauer painting *Tankstelle's* reception in New York as unsuccessful is not actually based in fact. Rather, it was a way to compliment Americans on a more discerning taste, while criticizing the film for feeding into a capitalist fairy tale narrative at odds with Kracauer's ideological convictions.
8. Führich, "Woman and the Typewriter."
9. Discussing the intersection between musicals and feminist issues is Fischer, "Shall We Dance?"
10. Affron, *Cinema and Sentiment*, 24; Fischer, "Shall We Dance?"
11. *Meldezettel* (Registration), Vienna Second District, 15 August 1908. It documents his move from the Twelfth District. See also *Meldezettel*, Vienna Second District, 14 May 1912, 4 August 1922, 8 August 1919 (Fifteenth District).
12. David Thiele email to Ben Seyfert, 27 October 2021.
13. See von Keitz, "Ein Stündchen Selikgkeitunter den Dächern von Paris."

14. David Thiele email to Benjamin Seyfert, 27 October 2021.
15. Ibid. Thiele also noted: William would later attend synagogue again in the United States, then married to his second German Lutheran wife Barbara after Vally's death. A photo in the dining room of William and Barbara's Hilgard Ave house shows a menorah. However, the whole extended family celebrated Christmas with a Christmas tree, a festive meal, and gifts. They lived in this house from sometime around 1940 to the mid-1950s. Later in life, his synagogue attendance ended. However, the things he said, and particularly his initiation of a prayer before a meal while visiting family in the early 1970s, showed his continued belief in the God of Abraham. He gave to Jewish charities. He was also given a Jewish religious funeral with a rabbi officiating. He also gladly donated his labor to a project that promoted the peaceful cooperation of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism.
16. John Thiele, William J. Thiele, typed biographical manuscript, Linda Thiele Collection.
17. See Anonymous, "Weber Brings Back the Bacon from Broadway."
18. "First Operetta a Role for Jeritza in U.S.," *New York Times*, 12 March 1934. The notice does not mention that from Boston the operetta proceeded to the Forest in Philadelphia (19 March 1934), the National in Washington, DC (26 March 1934), the Nixon in Pittsburgh (2 April 1934), and the Grand Opera House in Chicago (9 April 1934). After the road show closed, Schubert's reopened in December 1934 on Broadway, however with a new title, *Music Hath Charms*, and without Jeritza or Thiele attached. See "Conventional Operetta 'Music Hath Charms' with Score by Rudolf Friml," *New York Times*, 31 December 1931. See also Matthew X. Kiernan, "Annina." *Flickr*, uploaded 19 April 2015. Retrieved 28 August 2022 from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mateox/17017474600/in/photostream/>.
19. Libbey, "Annina."
20. In a deal brokered by John Zanft, a Fox Theater chain executive and budding producer, Thiele signed his contract with Fox on 30 August 1934 and went to work on the lot a day later and was to begin the "much-delayed production within two weeks." See *The Hollywood Reporter* 22, no. 47 (31 August 1934): 7.
21. No less than thirteen scriptwriters had their hand in *Lottery Lover*, including Thiele and Hans Kräly, which may have also contributed to its failure.
22. See *Daily Variety* 8, no. 73 (30 August 1935): 3; *Daily Variety* 9, no. 34 (15 October 1935): 1. William Nigh directed the film that was retitled *Don't Get Personal* (1936).
23. Dorothy Lamour and her sarong are discussed in de Seife, "What's Sarong with this Picture?"
24. Reich, "Im wilden Westen im dichtesten Dschungel." Interestingly enough, the reporter already names Thiele by his adopted American name William, rather than by the first name Wilhelm he is known by in German-speaking countries.
25. *Daily Variety* 16, no. 35 (17 July 1937): 4. The working title was "Black Lighting."
26. See Anonymous, "Directs 'Willow Walk,'" *Hollywood Boxoffice*, 8 July 1939.
27. *Daily Variety*, 27 October 1941, 6.
28. "Tarzan's Desert Mystery," *New York Times*, 27 December 1943, 23.
29. *Daily Variety* 100, no. 11 (20 June 1958): 6. One the slate were three projects: "Yesterday was Nothing but a Dream," Joseph Anthony's "Fear," and Hanna F. Kirschner's "Day of Violence."
30. Stacy Keach, Sr., "Eulogy," typed manuscript, Linda Thiele Collection.
31. Schnauber, "Willhelm Thiele, störrisch und zufrieden."

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Introduction

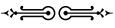
Prolegomena to Theo Angelopoulos' Life and Filmmaking



Exploring the Oeuvre

This monograph aims to present the Greek filmmaker Theo Angelopoulos as a global auteur by contextualising his life and work, delineating central elements of his cinematic language and analysing crucial motifs of the political, aesthetic and mythopoetic visual imagery embodied in his movies. It attempts a synoptic but thorough interpretation of his films and their poetics, pointing out continuities and discontinuities between them while interrogating the wider questions embedded in their narrative and visual structure. Overall, the book is about Angelopoulos the *metteur en scène*, the screenwriter and the image-maker, rather than the political thinker, left-wing ideologue or ambassador for a national culture.

Despite the usual framing of his work as representing the epitome of political modernism in the European periphery, and of Angelopoulos as the symbol of a 'national or local cinema', I argue for the global and transnational significance of his oeuvre by unframing it from its 'marginal' or 'peripheral' character. My intention is to explore the cinematographic poetics of Angelopoulos' visual idiom, his *cinécriture*, in the sense that Robert Bresson understood the term, as 'writing with images in movement and with sounds' (Bresson 1986 [1975]: 7). I will also discuss the various problematics Angelopoulos incorporated in his images, or indeed brought out with his images, with the intention of providing an alternative to the hegemonic regimes of occlusion that popular culture, and its cultural



privileging by postmodernism, imposed on cinematic production after the mid-eighties.

The book engages with Angelopoulos' works in three main chapters, each one with a different perspective and methodology. Each chapter presupposes and leads to the other, aiming to investigate the full scope of Angelopoulos' creative output and critically address his overall achievement. Each chapter aspires to foreground what is determined by immediate historical context and what transcends it while discussing Angelopoulos' conscious attempt to articulate a global language for cinematic representation by synthesising various genres, filmic discourses and heterogeneous styles. Ultimately, of course, we are trying to better understand the work and the life of Theo Angelopoulos, since, as Jean Cocteau would have stated, 'a film, whatever it might be, is always its director's portrait' (Cocteau 1972: 77). Indeed, within the political and aesthetic form of his movies, a complex, contradictory and somehow tormented portrait of an ambitious artist emerges, one that asks for cautious and systematic analysis.

Chapter 1 gives a summary of Angelopoulos' life, situating him within the historical and social realities that formed his world from his early years until his sudden death in 2012. However, I am not presenting his films and life as commentaries on the upheavals of his native country. On the contrary, I examine them as the symbolic extensions in time of their social contexts and their implied subtexts. Nevertheless, I will draw on various contributing factors, including the biographical, that led to the formation of Angelopoulos' cinematic language starting with his decision to become a filmmaker. To that end, I have consulted a variety of sources about his life, including interviews in Greek journals and newspapers and, especially after 1990, on television.

I have also sifted through various and, occasionally, contradictory statements, which were often coloured by personal feuds, bitter frustrations and professional bias. Yet I have avoided any Freudian interpretation, since psychoanalytic biographism does not fully account for the many invisible texts we find emerging from Angelopoulos' films and that cannot be explained by reductionist references to personal or contextual particulars.

Within this loose biographical sketch, I have attempted to incorporate details about the production and reception of Angelopoulos' films in a coherent narrative that could function as the hermeneutical background for certain aspects of his work in general. (A comprehensive account can be found in my previous book, *A History of Greek Cinema* (2012), and a more detailed analysis of his visual problematics in *Realism in Post-War Greek Cinema* (2016) with specific reference to his 'ocular poetics'.) Perhaps, in another study, a more biographical and probably Freudian or even Laca-

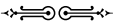


nian analysis of Angelopoulos' films is needed in order to explore the psychological 'mirrorings' encoded in the structure of his cinematic language; the recurring themes of returning fathers, incestuous psychodynamics and maternal absence. Some of these aspects will be raised briefly while discussing Angelopoulos' filmic texts during critical moments in his professional life and the external circumstances governing the reorientation of the film industry in Greece, such as, for example, the Restoration of the Republic, after July 1974.

Chapter 2, which is the longest, provides a systematic and chronological presentation of Angelopoulos' works on their own terms and independently from the wider over-texts of their time. There are many detailed presentations of his films and their storylines: in Andrew Horton's brilliant monograph (which unfortunately ends at 1998) or Acquarello's¹ lengthy article, for example, both of which I recommend. Furthermore, Artificial Eye has released a three-volume collector's edition of Angelopoulos' films without, however, any commentary or an accompanying booklet but that nevertheless gives the opportunity to study his films in their entirety. Since this monograph is written for an international audience, I have avoided including unnecessary references, reviews or articles in Greek. I make an exception for the essays by Vassilis Rafailidis (1934–2000), who followed the development of Angelopoulos' work from the beginning as a friend, co-worker and intellectual comrade in arms until his death.

Chapter 3 focuses on how Angelopoulos constructed his cinematic language by combining, inventing, or reinventing different components from various genres in classical and experimental filmmaking. The central theme of this chapter is the constant transmutation of Angelopoulos' visual vocabulary; a radical transmutation that reflected wider cultural revisions in the social dimensions of film production as well as in his personal ideological perspective and philosophical hermeneutics of cinematic representation. It also briefly addresses the various elements his filmic visuality is comprised of, like acting, sexuality, religion and ideology. Finally, it argues that in his perplexing evolution as a filmmaker, he aspired to explore and elaborate a new dimension in the field of cinematic visuality, which I would term as the cinematic sublime.

Consciously or unconsciously, Angelopoulos was working towards the construction of the sublime as an aesthetic dimension within the moving images of cinema, and this is what his best films are about. My belief is that he *did* succeed in creating the sublime in his best films, although we find fragments and isolated elements of its presence in most of them. His cinematic sublime was the outcome of his constant struggle to expand the expressive potential of cinema so that as a filmmaker he could give the 'audience the credit of being intelligent, to help them understand their



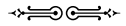
own existence, to give them hope in a better future, to teach them how to dream again' (Fainaru 2001: 149).

Following Angelopoulos' Journeys

Angelopoulos made thirteen films and a small number of shorts and documentaries. He started with a materialistic, Marxist understanding about the function of cinema in contemporary societies, which was dominant in the sixties through the work of the French structuralist Marxists Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas. Coming out of the militant Marxist period of the Cahiers du Cinema between 1966 and 1969, he firmly believed in the revolutionary or liberational potential of cinema – through the principles of historical and dialectical materialism – as the only true *public* art in modern capitalist societies, characterised by the exploitation of the working class, the alienation of their social existence and the reification of their individual consciousnesses. This approach runs deep throughout Angelopoulos' whole career. Even when he grew disappointed with the Left, as late as 2010 he still believed: 'I remain left-wing emotionally, although I don't know what to be Left-wing means anymore.'²

Furthermore, Angelopoulos' early work was in a constant, implicitly agonistic, dialogue with Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre, particularly in its anti-Aristotelian de-dramatisation, its relative independence from all conventions of realism, its unemotional picturing of the world, and in being able to shift the position of the spectator from empathy to detachment outside action, amongst other things (Brecht 1964: 35). However, his Brechtian period ended rather abruptly with his fourth film, never to be revisited except as self-quotation and self-parody. In the end, Aristotle returned triumphant, and his understanding of tragedy as 'catharsis' (Aristotle 1995: 46) through pity and fear (*di' eleou kai fovou*) can be found at the heart of Angelopoulos' most distinct contributions to filmmaking, avoiding all forms of referential or indeed mimetic fallacy that has framed the hermeneutics of Aristotle's *Poetics* for centuries. Aristotle's influence dialectically surpasses, in the Hegelian sense of *aufheben*, all Brechtian elements in Angelopoulos' work after 1977 and often even seems to resynthesise Brechtian performative stylisation through classical mythopoetic narratives.

The changes in Angelopoulos' cinematic language manifested a growing pessimism about the Left, pessimism, or melancholia, he gradually transferred, politically and psychologically, to the anti-realism of grand utopian quests while at the same time struggling to 'visualise' their specific formal poetics. Despite such disenchantment, Angelopoulos main-

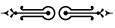


tained his fascination with the enduring political impact of cinema in the age of neoliberal, post-ideological and post-metaphysical consumer capitalism, when images became disposable commodities and the working class, which in the past he thought of as the central social force for revolutionary action, appeared to have all but lost its 'revolutionary' potential for political liberation and social emancipation. His disillusion with the organised parties of the Left, and his repudiation of them as bureaucratic managerialism, led Angelopoulos to explore but never quite endorse a certain aesthetic autonomy of art bespeaking the diachronic, if not perennial, 'essence' of cultural imaginary.

The last chapter functions as a counterpoint to those that have preceded it. It aspires to unframe Angelopoulos from the heavy politicisation of his films and the constant attempts by critics to see them as visual notes, or indeed footnotes, on the political tragedies of contemporary Greece. For this purpose, it explores his films as a sustained autobiographical visual narrative, or a cinematic roman-fleuve in the form of mythobiography,³ by foregrounding the personal and sometimes personalist themes present in the works that are based on Angelopoulos' own experiences, relationships and encounters (pragmatic details of which are given in the first chapter).

On the other hand, Angelopoulos himself stated: 'All my films are autobiographical. There is an internal and an external autobiography. Even in the *Reconstruction* one could find autobiographical elements.'⁴ Despite the dominant tropes in the interpretation of Angelopoulos' work as a political director who was afflicted by mal-du-siècle melancholia after the collapse of socialism in 1989–91, this study also explores certain existentialist themes embedded in his images, which address questions of freedom, personal identity, ethical choice, memory and subjectivity, together with a peculiar nostalgia for a lost absolute, sometimes full of religiosity but totally devoid of religion. Ultimately, a pattern of evolution emerges that brings Angelopoulos' intellectual and spiritual quest close to a reverse form, as it were, of Soren Kierkegaard's stages of development; especially in the last two decades of his life, when the temptation of an aestheticised history became dominant in his thinking, confronting the nihilistic implosion of meaning pervading Europe after 1989.

A prevailing misconception about Angelopoulos' work is that viewers need to know about Greek political history in order to understand it. Talking about *The Travelling Players*, David Thomson noted that 'we know after half an hour, that, as non-native watchers, we are always to be cut off from the roots of this extraordinary ritual [which became] a film' (Thomson 2008: 910). This is not the case; no sensitive or responsive viewer can feel cut off from Angelopoulos' films because of their historical subject matter. Each film not only reconstructs history but also constructs its own



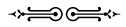
history and both forms the expectations of its audience and is informed by them. Therefore, there is no need to read books on Greek politics before watching Angelopoulos. The film is itself the historical event, a spatio-temporal osmosis of collective and individual experiences through its images, a synergy between the formal intentions of the its director and the projections of its spectators, transforming it into a social encounter.

With the belief that cinematic images provide both the text and context for their experience, this monograph minimises superfluous information about local politics regarding production, conflicts with other directors over funding, or personal squabbles with journalists and reviewers. The otherwise respected Greek film critic Dimitris Danikas, for example, loved poking malicious fun at all Angelopoulos' films and has stirred considerable controversy about their reception. Such debates went on for long and were acrimonious, without ever elucidating or accounting for the visual dynamics of Angelopoulos' overall achievement.

The central point of my analysis is that there is no single 'Angelopoulos' cinematic language but rather four stages constituting the visual articulation of his work. The first is the period of political films, structured around Brechtian theatricality and a persistent tendency to demystify political power. The second is the period of delving into existentialist dilemmas through the discovery of introspective conscience in the individual psyche (a new parameter in his poetic vocabulary). In the third, Angelopoulos either assumes the mask of the cultural icon exploring collective myths across borderless regions or identifies with the archetypal poet of nationhood in times of crisis.

Finally, in the fourth Angelopoulos oscillates between scepticism and nihilism; from the ideological enthusiasm that promised a new social and political life to the pulverisation of existence in modern cities inhabited by virtual realities, spectral presences and groundless ontologies. However, the ultimate question about visual temporality remains unanswered, as his last film, *The Other Sea*, in which he would have formulated a coherent presentation of the predicament of displaced refugees, as embodying the ontology of homelessness and deterritorialization, was left unrealised because of his violent death.

Overall, Angelopoulos' cinema is characterised by complex fluidity, an urgent quest for innovation, and the persistent search for what we might call visual historicity. The filmmaker was for him both historian and history, sometimes with the initial letter capitalised (which indeed might be problematic for his early historical materialism). His cinematic images were both *res gestae* and *historia rerum gestarum*, being themselves historical events that challenged and provoked viewers and invited them to think critically about the past and act radically in their present.



They were also images encapsulating a philosophy, a way of thinking, a specific form of life; this philosophy of image-breaking and image-making is at the heart of Angelopoulos' visual project throughout his work. Images as collective histories are central to his iconographic legacy, constructing representations that do not simply epitomise the historical experience of the Greeks but also elucidate many frustrated or aborted projects of European modernity.

My ultimate suggestion is that all these elements frame and point to a cinematic visualisation of the sublime, to the degree that cinema has been able to encapsulate and construct a specific, non-literary perception of sublimity as primarily a mental event, as a noumenon in the Kantian sense of the word. As Immanuel Kant would have stated: 'a noumenon is not for our understanding a special [kind of] object, namely, an intelligible object; . . . For we cannot in the least represent to ourselves the possibility of an understanding which should know its object, not discursively through categories, but intuitively in a non-sensible intuition' (Kant 1999: 273). Such intuited objects, which Kant aptly called 'intellectual intuition' ('*nicht sinnliche Anschauung*') (Kant 1999: 267), are expressed through concrete visual forms without being completely determined by them, presenting metonymically the emerging non-correspondence between the specific form and its meaning: the viewer intuits the surplus meaning that comes out of each image without being able to define its specific location.

Aimilia Karali relates a story about Angelopoulos looking for locations for his film *Alexander the Great/O Megalexandros* (1980):

he wanted to find a mountainous village with its buildings arranged in semi-circular order and a central square in the middle. They were looking for quite some time for such a village, but they couldn't find it. But Angelopoulos insisted: 'since I thought of it, it exists,' he said to his associates. At a certain moment, one of them saw a documentary on television about the village Deskati, in Grevena. That was the village that Angelopoulos had thought.

The sublime in Angelopoulos is a mental event, a visionary transfiguration of the real, which he, simultaneously as the *metteur en scène* and the *auteur*, felt compelled to extract from his visual unconscious and bring out into the light of material existence. Angelopoulos' sublime can be drawn out of what Hegel called 'the flight beyond *the determinateness of appearance* that constitutes the general character of the sublime' (Hegel 1975: 303), which accounts for the asymmetries between images and significations that proliferate in his most mature and accomplished films.

The visual form of the sublime and its mental intuitive content are, despite their connection, at the same time in an entropic relationship: they materialise each other, but what is left out collides with its own realisation.



As Andre Bazin, a theorist whom Angelopoulos did not really appreciate much, suggested: 'What is imaginary on the screen must have the spatial density of something real' (Bazin 2005: 48). Such existence of the real, but not of the realistic, in his *poetic* imaginary, as expressed through his emblematic long take, provoked ambiguous emotions in his viewers and critics.

Indeed, in *Landscape in the Mist* (1988), the broken finger of the colossal hand seen pointing at the viewer and yet lost on the closed horizon of modern architectural brutalism is probably one of the most sublime images conceived to illustrate the lost unity of a reality that may never have existed in post-war Europe, unless, perhaps, as a dream or an alibi. But it is precisely the thinkability of being in the realm of the beyond while experiencing reality through the confines of material necessity that makes Angelopoulos' cinematic sublime so significant and so elusive.

Furthermore, it is the imminent presence of the numinous within the material object that renders this specific image sublime in the Kantian sense. Such asymmetry between the real and the ideal expresses precisely the tragic character of sublimity that led Angelopoulos, unexpectedly and from the back door, to the empathic mimesis and catharsis of his renewed Aristotelianism.

In stark contrast to the gigantic statue of Jesus Christ in Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960) or Lenin's statue in Wolfgang Becker's *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003), Angelopoulos' broken hand is both numinous and ominous, framing the sublime through its absence but also foregrounding it by the enormity of the emptiness around its vestiges. Overall, Angelopoulos' cinematic language was a systematic and persistent attempt to achieve the cinematic sublime: the sublime as immersion and emergence, the catalysts for ecstatic and oneiric experiences through filmic images.

Preliminary Notes on the Auteur and His World

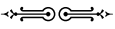
I must point out that Angelopoulos is a *difficult* director to watch; I could claim that he is consciously and deliberately a director's director, an auteur's auteur, and not a filmmaker courting large audiences. As with many post-war directors, like Robert Bresson, Satyajit Ray, Yussef Chahine, Miklós Jancsó and Glauber Rocha, and more recently Abbas Kiarostami, Milcho Manchevski, Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Nuri Bilge Ceylan, he never made films intended for amusement, escapism or entertainment. With a consciously contrarian attitude, he made films to cinematically explore the formless or more appropriately the 'unfilmed' – sometimes even the unfilmable – existential dynamics that he observed or intuited in the historical experience and the individual mind of his viewers.



As I argue here, Angelopoulos was both filmmaker and mythmaker, producing collective and personal 'biomythographies', emulating to a surprising degree, given the small market of Greek filmmaking, some of the greatest names in world cinema. Through his scripts, he was a veritable auteur, synthesising *mise en scène*, screenwriting and visual settings in a uniquely personal (and impersonal) style. Furthermore, he placed his individual stamp on all the elements of his movies: music, colour patterns, acting style, location choice, camera movement and editing. So, the purpose of this study is to facilitate a sensitive yet critical and judicious understanding of the scope of Angelopoulos' achievement with his films' distinct styles, diverse perspectives and multiple imaginings.

Being 'difficult' to watch, Angelopoulos' films have been scorned and rejected by many prominent film critics for their 'pretentious', 'funereal' or 'self-indulgent' style. Such facile reactions say more about the spectators (and the critics) than about the films. The reception of movies depends on many external factors that are not always about the unmediated or implicit relationship between audience, movie-production and filmmaker. It also changes according to new contextual realities, cultural reorientations and aesthetic revisions (or advertising promotions) from decade to decade, even from year to year. Indeed, forgotten, neglected or lost films are rediscovered, reinterpreted and gradually restored to the canon, where they sometimes achieve commercial prominence; like the neglected films of the late Orson Welles, for example, or the underrated melodramas of Douglas Sirk. The truth, however, is that Angelopoulos as a name or a brand never became part of the 'film industry', and his films could never have become sellable products for exports (as is the recent case with Yorgos Lanthimos). They existed within the 'film culture' as expressions of experimental marginality and creative inventiveness but were only peripheral in the realm of film as industry and production, although their contribution to establishing international co-production strategies should not be underestimated.

The commercial success of a film might be purely circumstantial and not connected to any intrinsic qualities, especially in the current era of dizzying eclecticism and 'imaginal politics', in which, as observed by Chiara Bottici: 'images are no longer what mediate our doing politics but that which risks doing politics in our stead' (Bottici 2014: 178). Today, cinema is mostly dominated by digital effects and computer-generated imagery, which totally erase narrative, plot, characterisation and, most importantly, any sense of a creative mythopoeic imaginary. In a sense, cinema has been transformed into post-cinema or non-cinema, which indicates a profound and radical problematisation of its nature and function as new media of virtual representation become more widespread.



How can an average viewer whose visual experience is saturated by digital effects, celebrity icons and escapist extravaganzas watch an Angelopoulos film today? Perhaps the post-cinematic condition is a victory of technology over representation, in which, as Marshall McLuhan aptly summarised, 'the medium is the message'. And if the current state of affairs has proven anything, it is that there is nothing else beyond the medium. We pay more attention to the ingenuity of the special effects than the imagination of the director as the *creator* of films, the acting styles of their performers, or even the story of the collaborative synergies between the two.

In a way, here we return to Francois Truffaut's statement: 'There are no good or bad films; only good or bad directors.' In this study, I strongly defend the idea of the auteur director, the person whose singular vision of reality indicates a critical interpretation of the act and the art of filming, and in a telling gesture towards a particular way of reinterpreting the auteur approach, I draw on Andrew Sarris' suggestion that we must put '... a greater emphasis on the tantalising mystery of style than on the romantic agony of the artists' (Sarris 1996 [1968]: 272). The dynamic equivalence between the vision of filmmakers and the power of their style is essential for the understanding of the complexity or even the very structure of their films. This has nothing to do with directors as celebrities but instead with directors as culture-makers who construct mythopoetic narratives through which collectivities can *recognise* themselves or find traces of their own realities in the field of visibility – something that may contribute to their commercial success but of course does not depend on it.

Their mythopoeia is essential for understanding the structural form of their films and the patterns of cinematic 'visual thinking', since, as Rudolf Arnheim argued, eventually in an era dominated by images '... visual perception [becomes] a cognitive activity' (Arnheim 1969: v). Ultimately, in the hypermodern temporality of today, commodified images define what is visible and what remains unvisualised. Yet instead of seeing images only as funereal monuments, or as monumentalising 'gods that failed', Angelopoulos also saw them as spaces of emancipation and topoi of existential rupture, leading to 'an upsurge of individual autonomy and a lessening of people's subjection to collective frameworks' (Lipovetsky 2005: 76).

However, even perceptive film critics are often mistaken when it comes to Angelopoulos, such as when Geoff Dyer accused *Ulysses' Gaze* (1995) of being 'another nail in the coffin of European art cinema' (Dyer 2010: 12). Indeed, the link between directors and their audience (or film critics) has been totally severed by today's blockbusters, screened in shopping malls and cinema multiplexes. Implicitly, the association between commercial



success and the quality of films remains strong even when the opposite is most obviously the case. The experience of going to the cinema and watching films of the recent past has been profoundly and perhaps permanently changed by the internet, new technologies and the privatised world of hypermodernity. In this study, we will address some of the radical ways of *looking* that Angelopoulos elaborated in his films in order to counteract the abnormal stimulation of the senses that commercial cinema employs to manipulate spectators and commodify the psychological impact of the cinematic experience. While, as Angelopoulos stated, 'cinema is a disease' (Fainaru 2001: 35), it can also be its own cure, and he addressed both diagnoses in his films, elaborating a unique philosophy of visuality that has been thus far underestimated.

Angelopoulos was one of the first directors to oppose the new visual regimes of hyper-stimulation that characterise movies made since the late seventies. Undoubtedly, he is a transitional figure in a period marked by experimentation (the sixties and seventies) and then by the retreat from radicalism through the gradual re-emergence of the studio system and the commercial competition between cinema and television. The retreat from radical experimentalism coincided with the avoidance of what was called 'slow or dead time' or 'long take' and the replacement of its condensed temporality with fast jump-cuts, continuous action and digitised montage. Film culture, which co-evolved with the film industry, suddenly found itself trapped in the new managerialism of the studios, with films made by committees and targeting specific focus groups, and effectively dispensing with the critical function of cinema and the personal vision of its auteurs.

Many commercially successful movies, like *Jaws*, *Star Wars*, the Indiana Jones sagas or the Alien series, were being made at the same time Angelopoulos was producing his films. What made these films successful was the fact that they resembled extended fast-moving videos or television programmes through their condensation of visual time into ninety minutes of relentless action, sharp dialogue and constant camera movement. Angelopoulos, like many filmmakers from Europe, South America and Asia, responded with the discovery of energetic slowness as visual experience, which is one of his most important contributions to contemporary filmmaking. Not, of course, that we did not have 'slow' filmmakers before him: Michelangelo Antonioni, Glauber Rocha, Andrei Tarkovsky and even Stanley Kubrick are the direct antecedents of Angelopoulos' style.

Following on from the early Antonioni, for Angelopoulos slowness was a restorative method for visually embodying the complexities of the human psyche in an era of existential and political implosion. These complexities were unspoken and indeed unfilmed, but their visual vestiges in



his images allowed viewers to enter the dark territory of their own unconscious and unvisualised personal shadows. He called that 'dark territory' melancholia, which, in the late eighties, became the dominant mood of Angelopoulos' films, expressing his ambivalence towards the cunning of history and its broken promises of emancipation, especially after the collapse of the so-called socialist countries. Yet still upholding Hegel's suggestion that 'ultimately History fulfils its ulterior rational designs in an indirect and sly manner' (Tucker 1956: 269), Angelopoulos nurtured the hope that the cinematic screen could still liberate a modern audience from its oppression, reaffirming rationality and ecstasy as existential realities at the same time. Such fusion of Enlightenment's emancipation project and romanticism's integrative perspective was for him the final frontier in order to combat 'the powerful dynamic of individualization and pluralization within our societies' (Lipovetsky 2005: 29).

Cinematically, the slow movement indicated that the camera did not simply record or reflect; it mainly revealed and foregrounded unvisualised realities. Thus, Angelopoulos' visual rhythm was in fact a method of uncovering 'formal invariants' under conflicting and antinomic layers of human interactions. In a personal note sent to Yvette Biro, Angelopoulos stated:

A film's rhythm is an inner rhythm, therefore a personal sense of time. In my films the rhythm resembles time dilation but in actual fact it is not. The ratio of filmic time to real time is 1:1, the fact that it appears like a time dilation of the sort that in music terms, we would call *ritenuto* or *lento* allows the viewers, if they let themselves, to savour or breathe time. (Biro 2008: 166)

Angelopoulos used the term time dilation to describe his attempt to translate the inner temporality of his viewers into a structural element of cinematic visuality. As on many other occasions, he used the metaphor of different movements in music: *lento* is mostly the tempo of his images, which might either expand into monumental cosmic symphonies or be transformed into intimate chamber music, or indeed into solo sonatas for piano or wind instruments.

He persistently focused his efforts on making slowness, which was for him 'the real sense of time', an organic element of cinematic experience. This meant that slowness was not simply an artificial delaying of action but the actual visualisation of a world's inner temporality, one which is felt by viewers when they reflect on their own act of seeing and the sense of being. In a distinctly personal way, Angelopoulos equated unvisualised time with the oneiric structure of the unconscious. Susanne K. Langer observed that 'cinema is "like dream"' in the mode of its presentation: it creates a virtual present, 'an order of direct apparition. This is the mode of



dream' (Langer 1953: 412). Angelopoulos wanted his spectators to enter a dream-like or even daydreaming mode by depicting the equivalence between the sense of slowness in their mind and its active presence in their social world.

The energetic slowness of Angelopoulos' films aspired to transform all cinematic experience into an oneiric state of being, as in the works of Fellini, Tarkovsky, Chahine and Terrence Davies. Robert Eberwein suggests that the narrowing of the gap between viewer and director in cinema happens because films 'replicate activities associated with oneiric experience' (Eberwein 1984: 82). In that respect, Angelopoulos builds on and carries further the oneiric slowness of Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972) and *Stalker* (1979), Federico Fellini's *Amarcord* (1973), Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1957) and Antonioni's *L' Eclisse* (1962) and *The Passenger* (1975). He also builds on the chaotic temporal simultaneity of the unconscious mind in films by experimental directors like Stan Brakhage, Maya Deren and, especially, the early Alain Resnais. Oneiric yet energetic slowness is indeed the most significant formal invariant of Angelopoulos' films, encapsulating his own philosophical and anthropological understanding of cinema.

On the other hand, from his first film Angelopoulos understood that *his* cinema had to be different from everyone else's in his country. In an early discussion with the film critic Vasilis Rafailidis, to whom we will return frequently in this book, Angelopoulos stressed that he followed the 'Brazilians of the cinema novo, [who made films] as if they had forgotten European cinema, looking for an expression almost national'. So, in other words, he was also looking 'thematically, to make films that constituted testimonies about space' (Rafailidis 2003 [1969]: 153). In order to achieve this, Angelopoulos wanted to totally discard any form of 'picturesque' image: that is, clichéd images and any other derivative representations. In his conversation with Rafailidis about his first film, Angelopoulos stated: 'I have bypassed the danger of picturesqueness. The whole story is seen with so much *abstraction*, which makes it impossible to fall into picturesqueness' (Rafailidis 2003 [1969]: 143).

To the fast-moving, narratively exciting and thematically melodramatic films of the dominant cinematic genres, Angelopoulos developed an antithetical, almost oppositional style that was to completely re-envision and reorganise the cinematic language of his native tradition, and at the same time offer a differential alternative to the hegemonic visual idioms of world cinema. Michel Ciment, who explicitly includes Angelopoulos in his list, contextualised such an approach in his well-known address about 'slow cinema', claiming that: 'Facing this lack of patience and themselves made impatient by the bombardment of sound and image to which they



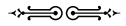
are submitted as TV or cinema spectators, a number of directors have reacted by a cinema of slowness, of contemplation, as if they wanted to live again the sensuous experience of a moment revealed in its authenticity.¹⁵

The discovery of duration as the visual rhythm of cinema is probably one of Angelopoulos' most interesting contributions to the temporal foregrounding of filmic images in the human mind. Visual duration was for Angelopoulos the translation into cinematic images 'of pure temporality, of the *lived consciousness*, which is continuous and indivisible and can be only known through intuition' (Bergson 2001: 75). His cinematic language aspired to visually 'think in duration' and create a cathetic sympathy between the viewer and the screen, thus intensifying their emotional responsiveness.

In that respect, it is through cinema that Greece became his 'imaginary homeland', a place of the imagination and in the imagination. His material was primarily 'Greek', but its framing, visualisation and conceptualisation was transnational and universal, therefore purely cinematic. At the same time, we can infer from his work that Angelopoulos never felt he belonged to any periphery, or that he needed in any way to address himself to a hegemonic centre, whether in Europe or Hollywood. His cinematic ontology was founded on a universalising vision of polycentric visualities. In a strange way, Angelopoulos never reflected on his position agonistically or, even more, antagonistically to the presumed centres of cinematic culture.

Even in his use of international film celebrities, like Marcelo Mastroianni, Jeanne Moreau, Harvey Keitel, Bruno Ganz, Willem Dafoe, Michel Piccoli, Irène Jacob and others, he seems to deliberately demythologise their cinematic personas by debunking their glamour and mystique yet elaborating forms of their cinematic anti-types. Angelopoulos tried in his movies to synthesise modes of representation and forms of presentation in which various problematics and experiences converged and diverged. He never had any dilemmas about belonging, or about the Greek position between East and West, the Balkans and the Mediterranean, or generally at the centre or the periphery of Europe.

His main concern was with being as visually expressed, in an attempt to make cinematic images 'the house of Being' – a role that originally Martin Heidegger had attributed to language (Heidegger 1998: 239). His camera was part of the continuum of life and history, not an external or detached observer and recorder. Being in Time and Being with Others as events born out of and through cinema were at the heart of Angelopoulos' project. Furthermore, his cinematic eye was the catalyst for more interpersonal ways of seeing and being in society. In a way, his camera is at its best when it resides in the eye of the beholder, when it absorbs spectators in ways that do not annul their freedom but instead intensify their respon-



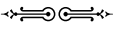
siveness to the exigencies of history, the impasses of their existence and the dilemmas of their creative imaginary – *these* were the focal points of his comprehensive visual project.

Summing Up

The present monograph reconceptualises the study of Angelopoulos' films through the perspective of transnational cine-aesthetics, investigating the complex ways his films are linked with major post-war and post-communist European cinematic exchanges, ethical anxieties and political projects. It argues that his early films deal not simply with Greek history but more significantly with political power as existential reality, with its mechanisms of oppression and domination and the various ways it was exercised by post-Enlightenment, pseudo-modernist elites in the European periphery. The films of his second period deal mainly with loss, absence and trauma through the representation of displaced individuals and their existential homelessness and broken interiority, indicating the crisis of authority and legitimacy that Angelopoulos observed taking place in European cultures.

During his third period, which followed the collapse of 'existing socialism' and the end of the last utopian project of revolutionary enlightenment, Angelopoulos transgressed state borders and explored the proximity of otherness; although, strangely enough, in order to do so he had to invest himself with the mantle of the prophet, or the representative 'poet', of the nation and its language. In his final period, which coincides with the new millennium, his camera explored the rise of European nihilism together with the hegemony of a capitalist globalisation that homogenised cultural expressions and imposed strategies of surveillance and control, stripping the individual naked from their mystery and enigma, and, indeed, stripping them of their very freedom. His last film is a long, rather pessimistic elegy on the death of a whole world image, as the quest for 'lost movies' in which the gaze was innocent and young is replaced by death, suicide and the 'dust of time'.

If studied carefully and sensitively, Angelopoulos' films have the potential to change cinematic thinking. Indeed, some of them were catalysts for wider and permanent reconsiderations of dominant practices. The fact that his films radically challenged visual thinking indicates that they also constitute historical events, ruptures in the horizon of conformist politics in a period of mediocracy, can still potentially challenge the dominant contemporary regimes of cinematic visibility. How Angelopoulos employed cinema and imagined the cinematic is essentially the ultimate



question that emerges from his films. Despite the fact that he never elaborated a detailed or systematic theory about cinema, we can extract from his work itself a firm belief of the purposeful intentionality of visual images; through this, we can also examine his ideas not only on how to make cinematic images but about their telos within the historical world of their viewers. In a way, this study explores what Robert Sinnerbrink called Angelopoulos' 'cinematic ethics', since, as he states when concluding his study: 'Angelopoulos' films, both early and late, serve as ethically and politically significant memorials to the (often tragic) intersection of cinema and history over the previous century' (Sinnerbrink 2015: 96).

Ultimately, this study situates Angelopoulos within the macro-narratives that have dominated European cinematic production since the seventies. It argues that, whilst belonging to Greek society and expressing the specific elements of the Greek historical experience, Angelopoulos gradually transcended the barriers of his native culture and produced an oeuvre that was truly transnational, multidimensional and cosmopolitan. Dina Iordanova placed Angelopoulos' films in their appropriate context and directorial perspective when she wrote:

Angelopoulos' Balkan films are also historical collages, raising issues of displacement and lost homelands, and trying to go beyond the geopolitical intricacies that dominate the approaches of other film-makers. His trademark atmosphere of lonely wandering through the mist prevails in all his films which deal with issues of universally distorted harmony, irrecoverable identities and fin-de-siecle sadness. He is the only one daring enough to claim that problems of universal identity lurk from within the peculiar Balkan universe. (Iordanova 2001: 107)

Angelopoulos' cinema is Greek, Balkan, Mediterranean, European and global; it belongs to what Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli called 'Mythopoetic Cinema' (Ravetto-Biagioli 2017: 64–123), although not solely focused on the ruins of European identity (in itself a Eurocentric perception) but on something wider and much more foundational: the uneasiness that permeates culture, as Sigmund Freud would have called it. His films are precisely about how such uneasiness impacts individuals and societies and seriously impairs their need to dream and the desire to be otherwise. Because of its profound anthropological concerns, Angelopoulos' mythopoetic cinema belongs to, or indeed comes out of, the wider project of establishing a global culture of cinephilia, tentatively articulated by Thomas Elsaesser as that which 'reverberates with nostalgia and dedication, with longings and discrimination and evokes, . . . more than a passion for going to the movies, and only a little less, than an entire attitude towards life' (Elsaesser 2005: 27). Cinephilia is a movement in which every local visual tradition contributes forms, patterns and iconologies, constituting the grand mosaic



of world cinema that we see being formed today: diverse, contradictory and palimpsestic.

Angelopoulos' contribution to the emerging global cinephilia constitutes an important chapter in its historical process, and the present study wants to elucidate certain aspects of his achievement. Furthermore, drawing again from Thomas Elsaesser, we can understand the complex intersection between local power structures and international institutional alliances that made Angelopoulos a global auteur, as he achieved '... a paradoxical kind of autonomy and agency that that has the potential to reinvent the cinema, not as an art form, nor as a life form, but as a form of philosophy . . .' (Elsaesser 2017: 39).

Indeed, Angelopoulos is a global auteur because he created and imagined an intricate, complex and challenging philosophy of visuality, one that needs more attention and further exploration.

Notes

1. For more on Acquarello, see <http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/great-directors/angelopoulos/> (Retrieved 1 December 2020).
2. See a selection of Angelopoulos' commentary on his films: <http://www.cinephilia.gr/index.php/prosopa/hellas/606-agelopoulos-6> (Retrieved 1 December 2020).
3. I borrow the term from Audre Lorde's book, *Zami: A New Spelling of my Name* (1982), which is a blend of memoir, history and myth.
4. On *Eternity and a Day* (1998): <http://www.cinephilia.gr/index.php/prosopa/hellas/606-agelopoulos-6> (Retrieved 1 December 2020).
5. Michel Ciment, 'The State of Cinema', delivered at the 46th San Francisco International Film Festival (2003). See *Unspoken Cinema: Contemporary Contemplative Cinema*, 10 March 2006, <https://unspokencinema.blogspot.com/2006/10/state-of-cinema-m-ciment.html> (Retrieved 1 December 2020).

Introduction



This book is about the philosophy of the organic and how it interacts with the aesthetics of cinema. Organic is anything relating to a living entity. Organic matter can evolve, but it can also decay. In philosophy, the living aspect of the organic structure has prompted several generations of thinkers to develop approaches able to see various cultural and natural phenomena as dynamic: the organic has often been described as the interplay of evolution and decomposition.

The main purpose here is to develop the idea of “organic cinema.” The essence of the organic will derive from not only cinema theory but also the theory of architecture, where the organic has reached a high level of sophistication. Many organic philosophies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries explored in this book have had an immediate impact on architectural theory. Surprisingly, film theorists have generally been unaware of this body of thought revolving around organic architectural theory or have only tentatively shown interest in it, usually by approaching segments of this tradition via the work of Henri Bergson. Both organic cinema and organic architecture base their activities on the idea that the image character of their medium needs to be overcome and that creativity in their respective arts should be seen as a sculpting of space or time. As a result, techniques, as well as theoretical aspirations, move to the background, while practical aspects of the arts are emphasized.

Slow Cinema, Contemplative Cinema

Organic cinema is related to “slow cinema” and “contemplative cinema.” However, while the latter two remain, in my opinion, relatively vague terms,¹ organic cinema is supposed to be more precise as a theoretical notion. Unlike slow and contemplative, “organic” is not merely atmospheric. One reason the terms “slow cinema” and “contemplative cinema” have remained relatively vague until recently is because they tend

to be used as “foggy, dark, monotonous, and nostalgic” in order to cover the styles of many film directors. I extract the definition of organic cinema from an analysis of three Béla Tarr films, more precisely, his trilogy of *Damnation* (1988), *Satantango* (1994), and *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000). However, Tarr is not the only organic film director. Andrei Tarkovsky, Aki Kaurismäki, Theo Angelopoulos, and Reha Erdem, to name but a few, are similarly organic because they attempt to capture life in a wandering fashion by following its haphazard rhythm and paying as much attention to details as to “cosmic” questions.²

However, for some reason, Tarr must receive privileged treatment. First, in terms of slowness, Tarr is arguably more emphatic than anybody else. Second, Tarr says the “rhythm [of his films] is provided not by the story but by the actors, by the play of the actors” (Breteau-Skira 2010: 18). He also says his films “are not action/cut, action/cut” but that he is trying to “understand the temporality without forgetting that this is a life and that it is happening” (22). I find that these claims correspond best to a cinema based on the principles of organic development. The fluid, long takes follow a rhythm inspired by the inherent qualities of the shot footage, not of the editing. This rhythm is precisely how one of the pioneers of organic architecture, the German organicist architect Hugo Häring, defined his architectural method: “Search for shapes rather than impose them, discover forms rather than construct them” (1925: 4).³ As will be shown, contemplative cinema can learn a lot from the theory and practice of organic architecture, particularly from Gestalt theory, which sees single architectural components as parts of a system of dynamic relationships. The Gestalt evolves as a hybrid of form and being and has self-organizing tendencies.

Hungary

Generally speaking, our present age is not organic but rather marked by the brutal competition of different universalisms—clashes that seem to be programmed in the near future. According to Islamic extremists, a universal moral order should be obtained by imposing the rules established by God on an Islamic state. This God-based universalism clashes with another universalism: the rationality with which “Western” thought is often identified, whose most famous derivatives are democracy and egalitarianism. Quasi-religious environmentalism represents another universalism. In this world of competing universalisms, organic thought formulates an alternative.

Ambitions to develop an organic vision of the world have become a serious undertaking in a place perhaps few people would expect to find it: Hungary. Film director Béla Tarr, architect Imre Makovecz, and writer László Krasznahorkai have been obsessed with organic forms of expression for decades. Their organic ambitions become manifest in various ways and cover a spectrum reaching from the politically conservative to the progressive and from the religious to the atheist. But all three share a rootedness in Central and Eastern European culture.⁴ Equally important is a strong connection with rural culture and tradition, as well as questions about their possible decline/resurrection in a modern and globalized world. Hungary thus becomes a showcase for a certain form of organicism able to define the universal beyond individual/universal paradigms. In organic philosophies, the universal is not spelled out in the form of abstract rules, nor does one cling to individual, communal, national, or private expressions. The search present in the work of these three Hungarians goes for the universal in the sense of “cosmic.”

Béla Tarr

The three films chosen for demonstrating organic cinema are distinct from Tarr’s earlier ones—with the exception of *Almanac of Fall* (1985)—because they show the director’s pronounced interest in formal experiment. All three films also present elaborately designed, bleak, run-down, and desolate settings that many foreign spectators might spontaneously associate with rural parts of Central and Eastern Europe. Similar Hungarian films existed before, for example, Zoltán Fabri’s *Hungarians* (1978) or *Bálint Fábrián Meets God* (1980), in which an emphasis on poverty, drunkenness, and ignorance portray rural life.

Krasznahorkai’s novel *Satantango* was published in 1985, and Tarr’s eponymous film is from 1994. Thus, the film has roots in the communist world but also stretches into the capitalist era. *Satantango* tells the story of a ruined collective farm whose inhabitants are having affairs with each other, conspiring against each other, and constantly being observed by a drunken doctor (Peter Berling). The charismatic trickster Irimiás (Mihály Vig) manages to cheat most of the villagers out of the little savings they have, though he himself is manipulated by the local government. In the film, he and his companion, Petrina (Putyi Horváth), represent both the former totalitarian state and the new economy.

The elliptical narrative of *Werckmeister Harmonies*⁵ revolves around a traveling exhibition featuring a dead whale accompanied by a mys-

terious, crippled guru called “the Prince,” who is trying to bring social unrest and violence to the village. The Prince’s political strategies are absurd and megalomaniac, and they culminate in random ransacking. The reclusive, elderly musicologist György Eszter (Peter Fitz) and the young mail carrier Janos Valuska (Lars Rudolph) oppose the Prince’s undoing. Eszter’s estranged wife *Tünde* (*Hanna Schygulla*), who is allied with the local police chief, also opposes the Prince, though her purpose is to take command of the village. At the end of the film, troops are stationed on the streets, and the mysterious whale is destroyed. Valuska falls into a vegetative state and is interned in a mental asylum.

In *Damnation*, a provincial cabaret singer (Vali Kerekes), her husband Sebestyén (György Cserhalmi), her former lover Karrer (Miklós B. Székely), and the bartender Willarsky (Gyula Pauer) betray each other in all possible ways. The plot ends with the former lover’s denunciation of the other three characters. The film was released in 1988—one year before the downfall of the Iron Curtain—but it already plays, like *Satan-tango*, on the dual ground of communism and capitalism, one being as decadent as the other. Sebestyén has debts and, according to Karrer, he faces “irrevocable disintegration.” Similar to what Irimiás does in *Satan-tango*, Karrer cunningly suggests “there might be a way to stop the ruin.”

Organic Cinema?

Roughly speaking, organic architecture has existed since Frank Lloyd Wright, but the concept of the organic can be traced to philosophical sources from romantic thinkers like Samuel Taylor Coleridge, August Wilhelm Schlegel, and Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Despite its historical and contemporary importance in the humanities, the idea of the organic in film theory remains highly underdeveloped. Tarkovsky provided potentially one of the first metaphors destined to define cinema as an organism when writing, “the time that pulsates through the blood vessels of the film, making it alive” (1986: 114). He expresses a similar pattern through his organic intention to create “an entire world reflected as in a drop of water” (110). More recently, Daniel Frampton’s ambition to grasp a cinematic thinking process he calls “film-mind” (filmind), which he believes to be capable of conceptualizing “all film as an organic intelligence” (2006: 7), accounts for another attempt of employing the organic in the service of cinematic aesthetics. Among the more concrete associations of the organic with cinematic structures is James Goodwin’s proposal (made in his book on Sergei Eisenstein) to contrast

an organic cinema with an intellectual cinema: “Where form in intellectual cinema establishes ideological perspective and critical distance, in organic cinema form fuses author, content, and individual spectator” (1993: 176).

A few other attempts at seeing film as an organic phenomenon without naming it as such do exist. In the 1960s, film critic and director Paul Mayersberg claimed: “[Michelangelo] Antonioni and [Jean-Luc] Godard conceive their films in shots. They don’t write a scenario and then think how to do it. A distinction between the event and the treatment is meaningless for *The Eclipse* because the shots are events in themselves” (Perkins et al. 1963: 32). Steven Marchand has picked up Mayersberg’s thread of thoughts in order to sketch the rules of an “event-based” cinema in which “nothing happens apart from the shot itself” (2009: 139). From Antonioni’s “pure events,” which are produced by autonomous camera movements and describe “nothing,” Marchand draws a line to Tarr’s “emphasis on the concrete physicality of the event” (143). Tarr systematically develops the “event cinema,” especially in *Werckmeister Harmonies*, by favoring the sequence shot. Marchand concludes that this way of filming is organic because “what is captured whole is the event in the fullness of its occurrence” and the shot as a whole “is undivided from what happens in it” (147). These ideas overlap more or less with how organic architecture approaches the “materiality” of its elements.

Gilles Deleuze frequently mentions the word organic—it appears 114 times in *Cinema 1* (1986) and 34 times in *Cinema 2* (1989)—without exploring its intrinsic character determined by a specific philosophical tradition. This lack of investigation is surprising given that Deleuze’s own distinction between the movement-image characterized by action, the time-image emerging with neorealism, and the French New Wave characterized by stillness prefigures some points that appear in contemporary discussions of slow cinema. Nevertheless, the organic for Deleuze is simply a sort of unity he deals with in a chapter on montage (1986, chap. 3). The organic input will be relevant mainly for matters of image composition. In “The Laws of Organic Composition,” a section in chapter 9 (“The Action-Image”), Deleuze introduces the action-image as an “organic representation in its entirety” (1986: 151). The meaning of the word organic here is likened to that of “concrete,” especially since Deleuze decides to contrast the organic image with the “crystal-image,” which is more abstract, virtual, and self-contained. However, Deleuze never uses the organic as a critical tool to evaluate the potential formalism of action-images. For him, the organic action-image is simply

“structural because the places and the moments are well defined in their oppositions and their complementarities” (1986: 151). In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze calls montage the “organic composition of movement-images” (1989: 28), which is the source of classical narration. In this sense, Eisenstein is “organic” for Deleuze because his representation “includes spatial and temporal caesuras” (1986: 152).

Organic Cinema and Organic Architecture

Space and Time

This book’s parallel treatment of film and architecture is justified for several reasons. In general, themes concerning the production and perception of space, surfaces, and light are essential to understanding both film and architecture. Films offer spatial experiences just like buildings do. Furthermore, buildings can be cinematic because people interact in dramatic or nondramatic ways in built spaces. Theoretical terms like aura, representation, narrativity, montage, place, rhythm, and typology concern both film and architecture. Architect Jean Nouvel has said: “architecture exists, like cinema, in the dimension of time and movement. One conceives and reads a building in terms of sequences. To erect a building is to predict and seek effects of contrast and linkage through which one passes” (Rattenbury 1994: 35). Some contemporary architects have even decided to replace the word “site” with “plot” in order to do justice to the particularity of local sites, which is fading more and more. According to the British architects collective Urbanomic, the change from site to plot was necessary because sites “become increasingly assimilated into the capitalist logic of regeneration and value creation” (from the blurb of *When Site Lost the Plot*, Mackay 2015). For the Urbanomic team, a “plot” in the sense of a story line is supposed to make the place more authentic.

Another way of making architecture organic is to integrate time into the design. Again, by doing so, architecture comes closer to film. The organic Japanese architect Tadao Ando once forced himself to see a building as a garden and to observe “subtle changes taking place from moment to moment, from season to season, and from year to year.... There is life in the parts, and these parts together breathe new life in the whole. When I look at a garden that, like an organism, is never complete but, instead, exists in time, I wonder if I cannot create buildings that live, that is, buildings that are adrift in time” (1991b: 19). Here, architecture becomes a “cinematic” event determined by time and organic development.

Materiality

Another key topic of organic cinema and architecture is “materiality.” Both organic cinema and organic architecture value a contemplative exploration of spatial and temporal experience through a rediscovery of the material. Once again, Tarkovsky is the forerunner, as his long and fluid takes are based, according to Vlada Petric, “on the director’s belief that the camera is capable of unearthing the hidden significance of the material world” (1989: 29).

Organic versus Constructivist in Architecture and Film

The “nonorganic” approach has often been called the “constructing” approach and remains a pertinent expression in not only architecture but also cinema. Dudley Andrew uses an architectural metaphor, suggesting that, in what I call nonorganic cinema, the shots are simply bricks: “In its realist genres, Hollywood cinema molds and bevels every shot into a brick that can be smoothly attached to neighboring bricks in forming the bridge of the story” (2005: xiv). Organic cinema does not construct with bricks but tries to formulate different relationships between particular expressions, as well as the time/space they are in.

Social Critique

Organic cinema and architecture have yet another point in common. Both run counter to the perspective of mainstream cinema and architecture, which either seek comfort in familiarity and predictability or work with spectacular image-driven effects aimed at impressing the masses. This means organic architects and film directors are distinguished by an anti-capitalist critical potential willing to critique consumerist “fast architecture” and action cinema. In Hungary, the organic has traditionally been used in this political sense, because, according to Judit Frigyesi, the “emphasis on organicism was itself a political statement. It was the declaration of the liberation of art from political propaganda and a clear stance against both artistic conservatism and the emptiness of mass culture” (2000: 92).

Contemplative cinema and slow cinema have been related to “poetic cinema,” with which Tarkovsky is often associated. This is an interesting fact in its own right that deserves further exploration in a separate study. Obviously, thoughts and feelings are more efficiently transmitted in poetry when the performance is slow, allowing contemplation. Po-

etic elements often enter Tarkovsky's films via the metonymy, a figure of speech in which one term is substituted for another. The metonymy does not necessarily help engender an understanding of the item but refers us to something else. Tarkovsky's use of metonymies makes his cinema slow because metonymies make the viewer stand and contemplate. They are not like metaphors, which can be understood and integrated in the overall flow of the narrative. Metonymies interrupt the time flow or make it tenacious and sticky, creating a certain mood or atmosphere. In poetics, metonymies are said to provide profundity.

In contemplative cinema, slowness becomes a virtue, just like the waste of time and space can become virtues in architectural designs that do not follow the rationality or functionality of the grid. Song Hwee Lim points to the explicit link between slow cinema and the Slow Food movement, which attempts to rediscover the flavors and savors of regional cooking: "The Slow movement advocates downsizing to the level of the local and places emphases on organic origins, artisanal processes, and ethical products. These values are anathema to speed" (2014: 3). Both slow cinema and organic architecture represent lifestyle revolutions and are likely to have a liberating function. Forty years ago, Paul Virilio (1977), architect by profession, singled out speed as the primary force shaping civilization. Finally, speed will lead us to "war at the speed of light" (Virilio 2002). If this is true, then slow cinema and organic architecture formulate alternative directions of the development of human civilization.

The idea of "resistance" is very important in many of the works discussed here. The title of Krasznahorkai's book *The Melancholy of Resistance* (1998)—which Tarr adapted into *Werckmeister Harmonies*—suggests a curious fusional concept composed of melancholy and resistance. I will show that the film can also be seen as the key notion for any "revolution through slowness." The theme is indeed proper to Krasznahorkai. In many of his works from the 1980s and 1990s, Krasznahorkai depicts vanity, perfidy, treason, and paranoia by showing how characters act slowly within an absurd universe. Those people are not passively and naïvely submitted to the absurd world they live in but are constantly trying to move forward. Of course, in the end, they do not get anywhere, which makes them melancholic. However, the melancholy has been part and parcel of the special form of resistance from the beginning. A resistance working through melancholy (by thus being a "resistance of melancholy," for that matter) tends to employ slowness in order to create a complex critique of social conditions. For Kraszna-

horkai, this seems to be a matter of lifestyle, as he affirms to having staggered all his life “between the deadly sweetness of sadness and the irresistible desire to revolt” (2001: 86). His characters seem to do the same.

Silence and Melancholy

A supplementary dimension concerning the intrinsic link between slowness and the organic is produced by the particular status of sound. Again, this concerns both cinema and architecture. Lim suggests that slow films privilege “silence and abstinence of sonic elements usually heard on film” (2014: 10). Ira Jaffe also refers to silence as an essential component of slow cinema, especially for Antonioni (2014: 69). In film, silence can represent a form of essential purity, which is why film directors often use it to produce dreamlike impressions (cf. Botz-Bornstein 2007a: 40–43). The same is true for architecture, as Ando highlights: “I prefer for the space to speak and for the walls to produce no sense of their own identities” (1991: 1). For Ando, the silence is inspired by the Buddhist concept of emptiness (see Botz-Bornstein 2015, chap. 6). According to the Hungarian architect Botond Bogner, organic architecture considers that “silent spaces cannot be seen with the eyes; they are felt with the heart” (1982: 19). The silent spaces are here “felt” in a way similar to how time is felt in slow cinema.

A clear link appears between silence and melancholy: silence has something melancholic about it. Silence is not the mere absence of sound, but it can be experienced as a “soundless bass,” to borrow the beautiful words of the Hungarian philosopher Béla Hamvas, whose thoughts on melancholy will be of interest later. Hamvas believed he heard in the melancholic works of older artists the “low, monotonous and almost soundless bass [which is] the only place of Being that is not more intensive than the paradise of logos” (2008: 17). At the beginning of his book on the Taiwanese director Tsai Ming-Liang, Lim reproduces a sentence from Mary Ann Doane about the emergence of time feeling in modernity: “Time was indeed felt—as a weight, as a source of anxiety, and as an acutely pressing problem of representation” (Doane 2002: 4; Lim 2014: 11). Doane still perceives the reverberations of this break today in the instantaneity of modern electronic media. Lim, on the other hand, draws from here a link toward slow cinema because he believes “time itself” is represented in these films, which can best be felt within the periods of slow cinema silence.

When Bogner says “silent spaces are felt with the heart” (1982: 19), he means there is no speech in those spaces except the speech uttered by the empty space or by the walls. Through silence, organic architecture—and organic film—can produce a certain style or atmosphere that will not be expressed by means of rules and principles. The “style” of this architecture simply appears—silently. Ando holds that in his buildings, it is the space that speaks, not the (noisy) concrete elements surrounding or occurring in the space. In other words, the silence creates this architectural form or style. Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose philosophy relates to the mathematical and scientific problems central to *Werckmeister Harmonies* and whose ideas will be discussed accordingly (chapter 7), would say such a style is a quality that “shows itself” in the form of a silent expression. This silence of the space expresses everything that one cannot speak about: “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent” is the last line of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* ([1921] 1990: 111). In the present discussion on aesthetics, silence turns those architectural and cinematic expressions into self-sufficient entities. Some might find this input “transcendental,” and much of this book discusses whether this word can grasp the essence of both organic cinema and organic architecture.

The Silence of Evolution

This study on the organic is very much concerned with philosophical questions of nature and evolution. Here, “silence” remains a relevant theme. In the context of organic philosophy of nature, silence represents a moment of standstill in which evolution stops and invites us to a brief instance of contemplation. There are several such moments in Krasznahorkai’s writings:

There was a moment when the world stood still, and during this moment the leaves stopped vibrating, the elastic swinging of the branches stopped, but also the flow inside the veins of the trees and stems and roots, an ant population that had so far been carrying its possessions diagonally across a path, stumbled, a pebble that had just started rolling did not roll further, and the wood worms in the pillars and consoles stopped ... in a word, everything, animal and plant and stone and all secret interior processes, everything was, for one moment, canceled in its existence—for the only purpose that the next moment could come and everything would continue where it had stopped. (2005: 13)

Contemplation and the Art of Being Disinterested

The main topic of *Werckmeister Harmonies* is the confrontation of science with art or of mathematics/analysis with contemplation. The opposition of analysis and contemplation represents a classic philosophical theme prominent in the history of science since antiquity. One point at issue is that the “perfect” image of a mathematized reality does not necessarily correspond to the reality “out there.” Rather, this reality can be grasped through a contemplative approach. For “the preeminent ancient theorists of the cosmos, Plato and Aristotle, physics was not fully mathematizable because only whatever was perfect could be perfectly mathematical” (Wallace 1987: xxix). These philosophical ideas are at the root of musicologist Eszter’s obsession with music as a phenomenon “being close to an approximation to perfection” (Krasznahorkai 1998: 112–13).

Based on these observations, one can conclude that contemplation and analysis are two different attitudes: psychologically, culturally, and scientifically. It is necessary to examine contemplation as a philosophical concept more closely. Contemplating is different from looking and seeing, as well as from scientific observation. Contemplation provides a cognitive surplus because the contemplation of the present often goes together with reflections about not only what is seen in the present but also what has been in the past and what will be the future. Thus, contemplation often has a stumbling and hesitating quality. While we contemplate, we constantly guess proximate meanings we derive from neighboring sources. This is also why “slowness” becomes such an important feature in contemplation. Obviously, the contemplative approach is different from analysis because the latter should be effectuated in an increasingly “time-efficient” fashion in the modern world.

However, the meaning of the word “contemplation” must be further fine-tuned if it is to function within the present theoretical discussion of the organic. Attention has been drawn to the critical potential that both slow cinema and organic architecture can hold their own against consumerist “fast architecture” and action cinema. In philosophical terms, the word “contemplative” can appear slightly misleading because it does not necessarily make this critical potential obvious. “Contemplative” could mistakenly be related to the idealist tradition attempting to see the world in purely theoretical terms. However, in the type of cinema in question here, contemplation has more concrete and more existential connotations, because by contemplating the world, the con-

templator also contemplates the meaning and—possibly—the organic finiteness of her own existence. In this sense, and despite its faltering and meditating qualities, contemplation is not merely idealist and otherworldly but also (self-)critical. Moreover, the contemplating mind can declare solid and everlasting structures supported by official regimes to be fragile and “merely” organic.

In any case, contemplation is only possible when the contemplated element appears in a detached form, independent of all contingencies and random circumstances to which it was submitted within its original environment. Only then can the contemplated object be understood “as something,” that is, its essence can appear. Hermeneutic philosophy holds that contemplation can provide new insights into an already-known element. I derive those thoughts from the theory of understanding involving anamnesis (recollection) as developed by Plato in the dialogues *Meno* and *Phaedo*.⁶ Most important for the present discussion is that contemplation is submitted to a paradox: its critical input is due to not only a potential engagement but also its intrinsic disinterestedness. Paradoxically, just because contemplation is to a considerable extent disinterested, it has often been frowned upon in revolutionary places such as Stalinist Russia. In ethico-aesthetic terms, contemplation describes the approach of the autonomous artist and consumer eager to observe and record reality independently. And they do so by maintaining a critical distance from the world they contemplate. Today, “contemplation” is frowned upon in certain Islamic countries where existentialism or other philosophical exercises advertising themselves more or less explicitly as contemplative are often undesired. To my knowledge, a film program on “Existential Cinema” at the American University of Sharjah was canceled in 2014 because the administration found that such efforts “to contemplate one’s existential conditions” contradict religious belief. The ambition to maintain a critical distance from reality in order to obtain a fresh relationship through contemplation can appear subversive in any system eager to establish the existence of “reality” in an authoritarian fashion (this process probably became clearest in socialist realism), no matter if the regime is communist, capitalist, or religiously oriented.

All of this means that melancholic contemplation leads to resistance, and the “melancholy of resistance” must be understood in this sense. The fusional concept of melancholy and resistance is provocative because it implies a resistance of melancholy implemented by a contemplative approach toward reality. As will be shown, this melancholy is not so much “disinterested” in the sense of a negation of real-

ity. The latter would indeed be pathological along the lines laid down by Sigmund Freud in his *Mourning and Melancholia*. For Freud, melancholy is characterized by the “cessation [*Aufhebung*] of any interest in the outside world” and the “inhibition of all activity” ([1917] 1957: 244). However, the disinterested contemplation sparked by melancholy and its silence—topics of Tarr’s and Krasznahorkai’s works—is not pathologically passive but active: it can lead to resistance.

Contemplating the Stars

The astronomical theme so heavily exploited in *Werckmeister Harmonies* also bears a close relationship with the idea of contemplation. Tarkovsky once said one should watch his films “as one watches the stars” (1986: 9), and the observation of the nightly sky is perhaps the most original contemplative activity humanity has ever engaged in. Hans Blumenberg writes in *The Genesis of the Copernican World* that the cosmos was seen in antiquity as something whose “contemplation” could be man’s highest fulfillment (1987, sections 5 and 6), and Thomas S. Kuhn begins *The Copernican Revolution* by explaining the contemplation of the sky as, in the first place, a poetic activity:

Seen on a clear night, the sky speaks first to the poetic, not to the scientific, imagination. No one who views the night sky can challenge Shakespeare’s vision of the stars as “night candles” or Milton’s image of the Milky Way as a “broad and ample road, whose dust is gold, and pavement stars.” (1957: 7)

I will show (most lengthily in chapter 7) that *Werckmeister Harmonies* is linked to the discipline of “musical theology” practiced in the seventeenth century, at which the theoretician Andreas Werckmeister was adept. The harmony of the stars was supposed to reflect the harmony of music because God created both the stars and music. In European culture, the idea of the perfect overlap of nature, math, and God has always had a strong tie to astronomy. The search for harmony, especially in the Werckmeisterian musical context, has always had cosmological aspirations.

Contemplating Reality

How should we see reality? Is the world measurable and fully mathematizable, or does contemplation provide a surplus of information about reality in the same way anamnesis, according to Plato, provides new

insights about elements that are already known? The contemplative approach bears a strong link with philosophical questions concerning the reality character of its medium. What is “reality” for (or in) organic cinema? Once again, the answer can derive from comparisons with organic architecture, which does not imitate nature but rather is meant to *be* nature; similarly, organic cinema does not imitate reality but is an existential reality that organically develops out of certain elements. Accordingly, Marchand describes the “event-based” cinema of Tarr in such existential terms: “Eszter’s house is indivisible from the event it depicts. It is that event” (2009: 147).

Tarr’s and Krasznahorkai’s treatments of the “Werckmeister harmonies” musicological problem reflect the principles of the organic particularly well. In this book, I demonstrate that “natural harmony” in musical theory is called the “organically created space” in architectural theory. Drawing lines in architecture or editing a film in the Eisensteinian manner, on the other hand, represent a sort of Werckmeisterian tuning. Overall, this study shows that contemplation, as opposed to mathematical analysis, locates an organic web in the form of an immanent, self-sufficient, hermeneutically determined, “natural logic” present in the form of neither empirical facts nor of abstract rules. The Hungarian philosopher Georg Lukács once brought this constellation to a point when writing in *The Theory of Literature*: “When life quae life finds an immanent meaning in itself, the categories of the organic determine everything: an individual structure and physiognomy is simply the product of a balance between the part and the whole, mutually determining one another” ([1920] 1971: 65). This idea is important in musical theory and architectural theory and should also be discussed in the context of film theory.

Organic Practice

The imaginary musicologist György Eszter’s obsession with “natural harmony” directly follows from the above considerations of organic philosophy. Moreover, theories of organic architecture offer close examinations of the “natural” and the “calculated,” as well as of potential conflicts arising between them. However, the discrepancy between the natural and the calculated are also manifest in how organic architecture and cinema proceed in practical terms. Organic architecture often works without a preconceived plan because its forms are supposed to develop on the site. Makovecz, for example, did not “trust architects who

claim the program must be learned as a function,” but instead the design “reveals itself during the planning process” (Gerle 2010: 33). Newly created spaces must be contemplated first; only then can the next step be undertaken (to describe the process as the concept of “contemplative architecture” here would be not at all misleading). Sometimes the drawings are made only to obtain building regulations permissions—and only after the building is accomplished. Likewise, Tarr (2001) affirms to “never use the script. We just write it for the foundations and the producers and we use it when looking for the money. ... We have a story but I think the story is only a little part of the whole movie.” Through this in situ process of detail development, the aesthetics of the organic aims to fully exploit the location.

Construction, Deconstruction, and the Organic

The junction where the organic model of evolution-decomposition meets postmodern philosophies of “deconstruction” will receive special attention in this book. In Tarr’s films, forms are not merely deconstructed; rather, a sense of (an often uncanny) totality subsists. The Hungarian-American film scholar Yvette Bíró sees in Tarr’s long takes the “imperative to follow through” (2008: 169) because the long takes often convey a feeling of inevitability or even of the power of destiny. The length of the shots is not due to the director’s aesthetic decision in the first place, but instead the shots are experienced as self-determined or perhaps even determined “from above.” This artistic ability to install a totality clearly opposes postmodern ideologies of deconstructive fragmentation. Instead, this artistic ability denotes a modern approach that must be called organic. In this sense, the organic offers an interesting alternative to both modern constructivism and postmodern deconstructionism.

In architecture, the term “organic” in connection with a particular way of using form, space, and material has prospered for more than a century. Organic architecture goes back to Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan but is also linked to other famous architects such as Hugo Häring, Bruce Goff, Antoni Gaudí, and Ödön Lechner (nicknamed “the Hungarian Gaudí”). In this book, I concentrate on Imre Makovecz, the initiator of Hungarian organic architecture (*organikus építészet* or *szerves építészet*) or living architecture (*élőépítészet*). The book might sometimes read like a sociocultural history of Hungary and Central and Eastern Europe, which is not entirely unintended.

László Krasznahorkai

László Krasznahorkai, whose demanding novels *Satantango* (1985) and (the central part of) *The Melancholy of Resistance* (1989) served as the blueprint for Tarr's films *Satantango* and *Werckmeister Harmonies*,⁷ manifests a similar obsession with the organic. The analysis of Krasznahorkai's writings will provide valuable input for "organic philosophy" from the field of literature. First, Krasznahorkai's novels are very much about decay, which provides a clearly organic aspect. In *Kegyelmi viszonyok* (Under the conditions of grace) (1986), Krasznahorkai explores death, or, more precisely, absurd and arbitrary death. At the same time, he presents decay as something aesthetically and even spiritually elevating. In the story "Milyen gyönyörű" (How beautiful), Krasznahorkai explains, "We can perceive in a landscape in the profoundest beauty and in the profoundest decay something—something that refers to us" (contained in 2015b: 25). Throughout his work, Krasznahorkai describes in vivid and lengthily detailed language how organic matter is given to decomposition. The "Werckmeister Harmonies" part of *The Melancholy of Resistance* ends with a two-page description of a decaying corpse, rendering technical details from chemistry and concluding that "from the moment of birth every living organism carries within it the seeds of its own destruction" (Krasznahorkai 1998: 314). Similar—often-excessive—descriptions of organic processes appear in the novel *Seiobo There Below* (2013c) (see chapter 2). Krasznahorkai's world is organic up to the point that even nonorganic matter is bound to decay and rot, as described in *Satantango*: "So that, in the unremittingly brief time allowed for the purpose, the walls might crack, the windows shift and the doors be forced from their frames; so that the chimney might lean and collapse, the nails might fall from the crumbling walls, and the mirrors hanging from them might darken" (2012a: 115). This is more or less what really happens in Tarr's last film, *The Turin Horse* (2011).

Passages containing an "organic message" are even more frequent in Krasznahorkai's novel *Északról hegy, Délről tó, Nyugatról utak, Keletről folyó* (From the north by hill, from the south by lake, from the west by roads, from the east by river), where a cypress is presented as an envoy transmitting "a message about its history and its existence that nobody will ever understand because this understanding is not the matter of humans" (2005: 88). The natural tree is meant to contain bits of philosophical information, which is a pantheistic idea sometimes used in organic philosophy. Furthermore, the jet stream—with its billions of particles, including viruses, bacteria, vegetal parts, pollen, and algae colo-

nies—circulating around the earth is described in great scientific detail. The division of cells is described in a similar fashion, which the author believes to be an “unbelievably long and strange story.” An insistence on the literary depiction of cyclical structures also “bring us back to the point where the whole cycle had started, that is, the genesis of spore capsules” (90).

Of course, the description of the world as an organic phenomenon also has metaphorical dimensions, as people and the existing society have been slowly but notably disappearing from rural communities during the slow breakdown of the communist system. The breakdown itself had been a long process of decomposition announced by Emmanuel Todd as early as 1976. In *The Final Fall: Essay on the Decomposition of the Soviet Sphere*, he examines suicide rates, infant mortality, and alcoholism but also absurdities like the delivery of truckloads of shoes for only the right foot. In agreement with the principle of “melancholic resistance,” Krasznahorkai’s agenda is one of decomposition and resisted decomposition. Accordingly, the protagonist of the story “Rozi a trükkös” (Rozi the tricky one), in *Kegyelmi viszonyok*, writes that he attempts “to master the process of deterioration and decomposition in order to obtain a state of total solitude and independence” (2015c: 87).

The Whole and the Part: Hermeneutics

The organic in Krasznahorkai’s work (as well as in Tarr’s) is also presented as an aesthetic device closely related to hermeneutic discourses on the relationship between the part and the whole. Krasznahorkai in particular is very much aware of this philosophical theme’s importance. He notes, for example, about the photos of cameraman and photographer Gábor Medvigy, that “the whole we are seeking is not simply an accumulation of individual elements” and that “those to whom it is obvious that it is impossible to make a whole out of all these billions of available images ... instinctively look away from the billions of fragments” (2013a: 12).

In *Seiobo* and *Északról hegy*, such organic statements often relate to explorations into Eastern philosophy, affirming that “everything is though nothing is” (Krasznahorkai 2005: 21) and that an ancient thought beyond definition becomes alive when we gain the sudden insight that “there is only the whole and no parts” (22). In *Északról hegy*, the hermeneutic whole/part relation is even expressed through detained descriptions of organic architecture. The protagonist first finds the extraordinary complexity of the monastery “inaccessibly monumental” because the “ar-

rangement of the main buildings, the condo and the lecture hall, the dorms, the office, the cells, the dining hall, the reception rooms and the abbot's residence as well as the sophisticated placement of the kitchen, of the guest rooms, the bath and the laundry" (27–28) follow a system normal eyes cannot grasp. Only much later the protagonist realizes that this complexity enables the relationship between the whole and the parts. Still, the feeling he will never be able to produce a mental image of the entire map persists. The spatial organic metaphor in this passage is valid for human life in general. The particularly human individual and the godly universal can never match, though all human culture and civilization strives toward the unification of both dimensions. Accordingly, Krasznahorkai writes in *A Théseus-általános* (The universal theseus) that the human spirit is detached from this world "in order to turn toward a mysterious, splendor, toward an inscrutable undecipherable greatness that he names universe or god of the universe. Of course he cannot succeed (which is sad but I have to say it) because the object of his quest does not exceed his own small person" (2001: 61).

The Cultural Context

A large part of this study compares the aesthetic principles of Imre Makovecz (the most famous Hungarian organic architect) and the films of Béla Tarr. Naturally, a question that must be seriously addressed is whether Tarr and Makovecz can be compared at all, particularly in a Hungarian context. My Hungarian friends were often bewildered when hearing of my project. They hastened to explain to me that Tarr and Makovecz represent "two different worlds" and that the conservative and the progressive, the religious and the atheist, the symbolic and the unsymbolic can simply not be dealt with in the same study. How can a highly ideological and deeply mythological architectural style be compared to a fundamentally nonmythological, unsymbolic cinematic form with entirely different ideological convictions behind it? There are three answers to this question. First, Makovecz is not conservative and religious in the same sense understood in postcommunist Central and Eastern Europe today, a region that has most recently witnessed the surge of right-wing nationalist politics and religious revival. Makovecz's religiosity is not sectarian but rather spiritual and generally pantheist and therefore opposed to all dogmatism. Nor is his interest in local culture determined by traditional humanism or by nationalism. Makovecz is similar to Béla Bartók, who incorporated folk music into his compo-

sitions but whose compositional achievement, according to Theodor Adorno, depended “on its power to suppress his nationalist instinct” ([1925] 1981: 128). Second, and more importantly, Makovecz’s and Tarr’s styles have a common source: the modern cult of natural organicity. It is often forgotten that a part of modernism is deeply rooted in the idea of essential naturalness, which founded the ornamental branch of modern styles. This development can encompass very different aesthetic approaches, as the comparison of Makovecz and Tarr demonstrates. Third, the common “modernism” theme is, in both cases, based on a rejection of postmodernism. True, the cult of naturalness, most manifest in Art Nouveau, did also engender a postmodern, eclectic, ornamental branch, but Makovecz, Tarr, and Krasznahorkai do not follow this path. Instead, all three twist modernity in a very personal way by staying away from (at least most of the time) postmodern approaches that favor the ironical play with extant forms of historical or commercial culture or their mere quotation. It is on this deeper level (not on the level of politics) that I see similarities between Makovecz, Tarr, and Krasznahorkai.

A problem is, of course, that all the above patterns cannot be revealed by means of purely empirical studies, that is, by merely looking at shapes and images or at political convictions. The challenge of this study is therefore to reveal parallels through an ethico-aesthetic “conceptual” analysis to show that Makovecz and Tarr/Krasznahorkai do not opposed each other along the lines of a traditionalist versus modern dichotomy. Organic architecture (including Makovecz) is modern and even has futurist tendencies. References to the past and to tradition are no indicators of premodern, antimodern, or postmodern approaches: what matters is *how* images and symbols of the past are used.

The worst option would be to describe the differences between Tarr and Makovecz along historically established political lines, perhaps even by attributing the positions to Budapest’s divided geography. In that case, Makovecz would be located in Buda and Tarr in Pest, separated by the Danube.⁸ The division corresponds to old geographical and cultural distinctions. Traditionally, “populist” politics celebrating folk virtues and *Kultur* were settled in the hills of Buda, while cosmopolitan urbanist (often Jewish) intellectuals looking for *Zivilisation* lived in Pest. Timothy Garton Ash has described these conflicting worldviews that have continued to make sense for centuries: the Pest people “have looked outward to Vienna and the West rather than inward to the Transylvanian strongholds of agrarian Hungarianness. They have been drawn to sociology rather than to ethnography, and to socialism rather than to nationalism” (1985: 6). Even postcommunist politics maintained those fault lines

(though not necessarily geographically) in the form of the opposition of the center right-wing Fidesz—Hungarian Civic Alliance and the Socialist Party. If we follow this pattern, Makovecz's fascination with myths can indeed make him look more "right wing," the more so because, as Boris Groys argues, "myth is the opposite of revolution" (1992: 116). Groys understands revolution as an activity able to "make the world," while myths are seen as static and authoritarian patterns coming from the past and contradicting dynamism. To support his claim, Groys (1992: 166) quotes Roland Barthes (1987: 147) from his *Mythologies*: "Wherever man speaks in order to transform reality and no longer to preserve it as an image ... myth is impossible." However, Makovecz's peculiar approach shows that myth is possible, even in situations where we aim at a transformation of reality. The conclusion: myth is not necessarily conservative. The present comparison of Tarr/Krasznahorkai and Makovecz aims to overcome Barthes's conceptual distinctions by describing the organism—as well as the myth—as not a static but rather a dynamic phenomenon. Two centuries of organic philosophy support this view. Thus, instead of contrasting rightist and leftist intellectual attitudes by referring to right-wing populism and socialism, respectively, I prefer to trace the differences between Tarr/Krasznahorkai and Makovecz to another opposition that has left its mark in Central and Eastern European intellectual history: the confrontation of Russian left-wing intellectuals with the more right-wing Eurasianist philosophies of the 1920s, the former supporting the revolution and the latter working on "Turanic" elements evaluating the importance of a spontaneous folk principle and the Orthodox Church. Here, both the left and the right were modern (as opposed to antimodern), and neither side was ready to foster traditional humanism. The suggested change of perspective will eventually lead to a reevaluation of the entire body of "leftist" poststructuralist thought and of the allegedly more "rightist" organic thought in an international context. In the end, the organic model of evolution-decomposition does not necessarily overlap with postmodern philosophies of deconstruction.

Another echo from the past is audible in the opposition of the revolutionary/leftist/deconstructionist versus the conservative/organic/religious. I am referring to the case of nobody other than André Bazin, whose work is very important here. Bazin developed his highly personal philosophy in a Catholic intellectual environment. He would quickly be denounced by his "progressive" contemporaries as a bourgeois idealist steeped in Christian theology and possibly an opiate addict (see Gray 2005: 10). The revolutionary spirit eager to deconstruct existing structures and Bazin's more conservative organic spirit searching for dy-

namic, holistic perspectives were bound to clash. Hugh Gray's defense of Bazin in his introduction to *What Is Cinema?* is highly relevant in this context because it points to the origins of the most organic thought Western philosophy has to offer. And those are also, at least indirectly, the sources this book draws on:

Have they never heard of the philosopher Xenophanes who, gazing up at the heavens, proclaimed "the all is one"? Or of Parmenides who saw this whole as a continuum? Indeed if there had been cinema in those days one could imagine a similar argument to the present one going on between the schools of Parmenides and Heraclitus. It was these philosophers who first saw the cosmos or "reality" as a whole. (2005: 12)

Hungary has produced a cosmic director, a cosmic writer, and a cosmic architect. The precise meaning of "cosmic" will be explained by drawing on several philosophical sources, but a preliminary understanding can be provided by looking at its contrary: the "acosmy" (*acosmie*), a neologism invented by the French geographer Augustin Berque (2015). Acosmy designates a worldview engendered by the nonorganic abstraction of the modern cogito: when the vision and experience of the world is based on an "I think" instead of an "I dwell within a cosmos," either individual or universal perspectives are the only options. However, both the individual and the universal are abstractions. Therefore, in the history of philosophy, a whole string of organic thinkers has elaborated on the meaning of the more concrete, cosmic perspective.

Notes

1. Two recent books, Song Hwee Lim's *Tsai Ming-Liang and a Cinema of Slowness* (2014) and Ira Jaffe's *Slow Movies: Countering a Cinema of Action* (2014), have helped clarify the subject. However, given the large number of "slow films" that have recently appeared, as well as the large interest this phenomenon has received online, it is surprising that more books have not been published on this topic. While Lim's book has very much contributed to a general clarification of slow cinema, Jaffe's *Slow Movies* does not entirely eliminate the vagueness of the terms. I deal with both books here and in the first chapter. On contemplative cinema, see also a forthcoming book on Plotinus and film studies (Botz-Bornstein and Stamatellos 2017).
2. Lim has made a list of twenty directors he considers representative of slow cinema, but only contemporary directors are included (Tarkovsky and Yasujirō Ozu thus do not appear). The top five are Tsai Ming-liang, Béla Tarr, Alexander Sokurov, Lisandro Alonso, and Theo Angelopoulos (Lim 2014: 14).

3. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
4. The legitimacy of the terms “Eastern Europe” or “Central Europe” is a controversial subject. Geographically, Hungary fits into both areas. For many people, “Eastern Europe” has negative connotations of backwardness. For some, it simply “stretches too far to the East” because it can also include Ukraine and Georgia, whereas “Central Europe” can also include major European cultures/countries such as Austria and Germany. In order to avoid all controversies, I use here most of the time the term “Central and Eastern Europe,” which designates the region between the German-speaking countries and Russia.
5. The film *Werckmeister Harmonies* is based on the 220-page central section of Krasznahorkai’s novel *The Melancholy of Resistance* entitled “The Werckmeister Harmonies: Negotiations.”
6. See Gadamer 1989 (esp. p. 11) for more details.
7. Krasznahorkai also cowrote the script for *Damnation* with Tarr, though *Damnation* is not his novel.
8. “Budapest” is the combination of the city names Buda and Pest, which were united into a single city in 1873.

Foreword

Maaret Koskinen

John Orr was ‘old-fashioned’ in the best sense of the word. That is, he was the kind of scholar you seldom meet anymore, simply because of the mere breadth of his interests – sociology, politics, literature, film, indeed culture at large. Yet it is precisely this kind of ‘old-fashioned’ scholarship that is needed for the future, not least because of its inbuilt desire to bridge both geographical and disciplinary boundaries.

As such John Orr’s work is well known and needs no extensive reiteration here. But, given the subject of the present book, let us remind ourselves of Orr’s previous publications on film at least from the last decade, before his untimely death in 2010. Here we find topics ranging from modernity and Dogme 95 to stardom in French cinema, and essays on directors such as Peter Greenaway, Derek Jarman, Terrence Malick, and Carl Theodor Dreyer. Here we also find a number of edited collections, most notably *Post-war Cinema and Modernity* (2000), *The Cinema of Andrzej Wajda* (2003) and *The Cinema of Roman Polanski* (2006). But first and foremost we find John Orr’s own labours of love: *The Art and Politics of Film* (2000), *Hitchcock and Twentieth Century Cinema* (2005) and *Romantics and Modernists in British Cinema* (2010). The last book in this list should logically have been John Orr’s final publication, had it not been for another labour of love – Ingmar Bergman, the Swedish director (1918–2007). It was this book about his films that Orr was in the midst of writing in the autumn of 2010, and which now, as fortune has it, can be published posthumously.

Since it was our mutual interest in Ingmar Bergman’s work that brought us together, let me continue on a more personal note. John Orr and I met only once. It was on the occasion of the Ingmar Bergman Foundation’s first international conference – in Stockholm in 2005, which I, as representative of Stockholm University, had organized together with the other member institutions of the Foundation.¹ And to my delight John Orr agreed to write one of the extra chapters that we decided to commission for publication together with the conference proceedings, in a collection eventually entitled *Ingmar Bergman Revisited* (Orr 2008). The name of Orr’s contribution was grand indeed, ‘Bergman, Nietzsche

and Hollywood’, but certainly no disappointment. It was here that he began writing those parts in the present book that delve into Bergman films of the 1950s – Bergman’s ‘flair for translating the contemporary fable of classical Hollywood into European terms’, as Orr put it in an early outline.

The next time we were in contact was by mail, when John Orr inquired about some detail regarding Bergman’s film *The Silence* from 1963, about which I was in the midst of writing a book-length study at the time (Koskinen 2010). Not long thereafter Orr’s fine essay appeared, called ‘Camus and Carné Transformed: Bergman’s *The Silence* versus Antonioni’s *The Passenger*’ (Orr 2007). Again, in this piece it is possible to detect the outline of those parts in this book that deal with the intricate and fascinating relations between Ingmar Bergman and his contemporary Michelangelo Antonioni – that ‘intense preoccupation with the malaise of modern intimacy’, which, according to Orr, these two filmmakers shared.

In short, what we find in *The Demons of Modernity: Ingmar Bergman and European Cinema* is precisely what the title promises, for this is the first book-length study of Bergman’s films in a specifically European context – politically, philosophically and aesthetically. John Orr’s contention is a seemingly simple one, namely, that Bergman, even in his heyday as art film auteur, was and still is regarded as a peripheral figure, culturally isolated from the rest of Europe. Thus the aim of his book is to dispel this as a myth in order to catch sight of Bergman again and reinstate him within a wider spectrum, indeed at the very centre of European film history.

Orr’s book sets out to contextualize Bergman’s work in a comparative fashion. It does so firstly by looking at Bergman’s relationship to some individual European directors, from early Dreyer to contemporaries such as Michelangelo Antonioni and Andrei Tarkovsky (and, as Anne Orr notes in the afterword, the plan was to continue with more recent works by Michael Haneke and Lars von Trier). But the book also looks at Bergman’s critical relationship to some key movements in film history. One is the French New Wave and the ‘cinema of intimacy’ – François Truffaut, Eric Rohmer and Jean-Luc Godard. In this context, Orr hones in on the reiterated notion that Bergman’s modernism ‘followed’ Godard. But the truth is the opposite, Orr contends, and proceeds to illustrate to what extent Bergman’s work in the early 1950s in fact served as a springboard for the modernism of the French New Wave. In this manner Orr unravels the intricate connections, not one-sidedly as film histories and historiographies generally would have it, but

favouring instead the interplay and intertextuality of films that in his view made a vital contribution to European modernism in the 1960s.

John Orr had planned to look at Bergman and New German Cinema in the same vein, in a chapter entitled 'Bergman and the German Connection', from early Fritz Lang up to Margarethe von Trotta. In an outline of this unfinished chapter, Orr even calls Bergman's German-produced film *From the Life of the Marionettes* from 1979, 'a major (and unacknowledged) contribution to New German Cinema by a foreign director of a previous generation' – a surprising observation, yet perfectly head on.

John Orr manages, however, to step outside any narrow interpretation of the comparative framework, and does so through the notion of modernity, in all its complex and multifaceted aspects. Certainly, an important facet in the prism of modernity is the existential and philosophical oft-cited loss of faith – in religion, politics, and art; and that Bergman too gradually abandoned metaphysics in favour of the secular has certainly not gone unnoticed by previous scholars. But, as Orr wisely notes, in Bergman faith and its 'residues never quite evaporate: they linger in unsuspecting ways'. Very true; that lingering in fact can be said to encapsulate Bergman's entire *oeuvre*. Thus, in light of this lingering or residual effect, Orr contextualizes Bergman's development differently, detecting in his films strands of what he calls *demonic materialism* – a kind of residual demon embedded in modernity. This concept carries with it a number of advantages. Firstly it manages to nuance the (often) dualistic stances taken by previous scholars between the secular on one hand, and the metaphysical on the other. In Bergman, Orr contends, it is never a question of either/or, of unproblematic faith or purely materialistic secularity, but rather an ambivalent in-between-ness. His cinema, 'does not oppose the premise of demonic (as opposed to divine) intervention in human affairs', yet at the same time it is marked by that which Orr calls 'tragicomic yarns of human resistance to modernity'. This is an ambivalence, he contends, that separates Bergman from the metaphysical cinema of Dreyer and Tarkovsky as well as from the secular work of Godard and Antonioni, for all their similarities.

Secondly the concept of demonic materialism is informed in a fruitful way by recent film theory regarding the body, the embodied or haptic vision and role of the senses, in art as well as life.² Let me cite only one of many favourite passages from this book: 'Bergman's is a tactile cinema, a cinema of the flesh that rejects pure spirituality and brings the spectator up close and personal to the textures of

the skin, of water, of sweat and tears ... Bergman's cinema is a celebration of the density of being, of the joys (and heartbreaks) of a material world.'

This 'carnal connection' in Orr's writing not only 'modernizes' Bergman for the purposes of academic study, clarifying to what extent his work is (still) a relevant object of research. More importantly it also opens up Bergman's films for more hard-core issues of the modern world, pointing towards a little researched area in the scholarship on Bergman, namely the sociopolitics of modernity. This line of inquiry is particularly relevant given the (in)famous Swedish model of modernity – the 'enlightened bourgeois domination and an effective welfare state', to cite Orr. In fact, it is all the more relevant now that this very same model has resurfaced more recently in Stieg Larsson's globally bestselling *Millennium* books, whose 'demonic' features have been splashed over screens transnationally (not least through David Fincher's remake of *The Girl with a Dragon Tattoo* in 2011) as certainly as Bergman's were fifty years ago.

Here John Orr hones in on certain aspects of the welfare state, all those medical doctors and psychiatrists (for instance in Bergman's *Face to Face* from 1976), and the idea of the caring professionals having been reduced to 'institutionalized compassion'. It is through such details and figures, according to Orr, that Bergman obliquely offers, 'a trenchant critique of a Swedish Welfare State based on precepts of rational social engineering', in which, 'the Enlightenment project as Swedish Social democracy seems a world away', concluding that Bergman 'sees its rational malaise as deeply rooted in the curse of modernity' (Hedling 2008).

In this way Orr's close readings open up far larger political issues at the core of modernity. It is particularly in the first chapter of this book that he hits a raw nerve – Bergman's adulatory brush with National Socialism during a visit to Germany as a teenager. Interestingly though, Bergman himself, with his characteristic showmanship, made sure to take charge of the issue, not least in his self-bashing autobiography, perhaps as a way to diffuse the issue. But to Orr this brush remains *the* demon that haunts Bergman's work – a prism through which it is possible to regard 'his strange, oblique relationship to living history'. It is this experience that made his cinema one of crisis, in which Bergman constantly 'wants to pinpoint the moment at which the 'rational' bourgeois subject ... defaults'.

In this respect Orr's analysis fruitfully dovetails with a book (which has been published in Swedish only) by David Aquilon. It too is one of those rare works that attempts to contextualize Bergman's films in a historical and political discourse, in

this case by focusing on the recurring figures of text and body as cultural constants in Bergman's films, which in turn are incorporated in a discussion of the body politic at large. And although Aquilon's analysis revolves around Bergman's German productions, most notably *The Serpent's Egg* from 1977 (set in the Weimar Republic), his methodology is similar to Orr's. That is, while not shying away from the biographical and psychologically tinted readings of Bergman, both contribute to recontextualizing his films in the history of ideas and modern culture, setting up a dialogue with not only previous scholarship on Bergman but contemporary cultural and sociopolitical discourse as well (Aquilon et al. 2005).³

In focusing on modernity, Orr's book in effect also contributes to various transnational issues that have resurfaced on the agenda in film studies during the last decade (Durovicová and Newman 2010). If nothing else the concept of modernity (intrinsically transnational) helps clarify the inordinate degree to which Bergman has been regarded as a proponent and pillar of a (Swedish) national cinema, thus also becoming a playground for what Benedict Anderson famously called an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991). In other words, Orr's approach helps to disperse geographical as well as imagined boundaries, including those residual and sometimes quite antiquated images of what is supposedly (nationally) Swedish, through certain intrinsically transnational phenomena such as genre and, indeed, modernity.

In a similar vein, Orr's approach also contributes in contextualizing and problematizing the notion of the auteur as a sort of free agent, as a curiously separate entity locked up in his own sphere of genius, seemingly freed from normal worldly constraints and various cultural discourses. Yet it is all wonderfully paradoxical. For there is no doubt that Orr is a staunch auteurist, one who revels in close reading, all the while creating trajectories across a filmmaker's works and several others as well. It goes without saying that this is risky business, since there is always a chance that such trajectories over temporal and geographical borders will result in comparisons that remain abstract and ungrounded. But although Orr performs his intertextual readings with decidedly auteurist underpinnings, the result is never abstract or set loose from larger contexts. He somehow manages to forge the details with the larger issues at hand, grounding his discussion of individual films in the ideologies, politics and dynamics of the floundering value system of a particular time.

Finally, let it be said that John Orr is simply a fine writer whose language is characterized by elegance and clarity. Indeed, at times his insights are chiselled

out as veritable bon mots of Flaubertian flair. As just one example, let me cite his idea of anointing Bergman's major figures, 'psychic gladiators, only half-protected by the emblazoned shields of faith or reason'. Very nice; and why not – instead of that hackneyed, albeit iconic figure of the Knight battling with Death, as in Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (1957)?

Ultimately, what stands forth in John Orr's last book is the legacy of an avid cineaste – all those experiences, thoughts and observations made during a lifetime of watching, teaching and writing on film that have sifted through layers of time and therefore have remained. As John Orr himself puts it, referring to how Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1957) combines a double 'movement forward in space with the oneiric movement backward in time'.

At the same time there remain in this book oblique passages where you sense that the writer is on the verge of something more, and would have returned to it – but was cut short in his stride. These remain as kinds of symptomatic nodes in the text, all the more intriguing, and as if waiting to be unravelled. So be it: the ball has been set in motion so that anyone interested may pursue it further.

Notes

1. For more information on the beginnings of the Ingmar Bergman Foundation, see Koskinen (2010:16–18)
2. See for example, Marks (2000), Sobchack (2004) and Elsaesser and Hagener (2010).
3. This doctoral thesis was tragically cut short by the author's untimely death, and was therefore compiled by Aquilon's supervisors.

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INTRODUCTION

The cinema seat is of greater assistance than the analyst's couch. Sitting in a cinema seat we are left to our own devices and this is perhaps the only place where we are so bound and yet so distant from each other: that is the miracle of cinema.

In cinema's next century, respect of the audience as an intelligent and constructive element is inevitable. To attain this, one must perhaps move away from the concept of the audience as the absolute master. ...

For one hundred years, cinema has belonged to the filmmaker. Let us hope now the time has come for us to implicate the audience in its second century.

Abbas Kiarostami

This book began life as a result of the peculiar response that I became aware of having when watching the films of Austrian film-maker Michael Haneke. I first saw one of Haneke's films in 1999, and the experience of watching *Funny Games* was a distinctly unpleasant one for me: over the course of the viewing I was overwhelmed by a feeling of unease, of discomfort. I wanted to leave the cinema, but I couldn't bring myself to do so – such was my fascination with the film. Subsequent viewings of Haneke's other works were characterised by a similar ambivalence on my part. Some were more distressing than *Funny Games*, others less so, but all affected me profoundly in a way that I struggled to account for.

Surveying some of the critical reception of the film, it became clear to me that I was not alone in responding to Haneke's films in this way. The works clearly present a problem for spectators in terms of how to respond to them: 'gruelling', 'punitive', 'aggressive' – these are terms frequently used to describe the films. In my attempts to understand what it is about them that is so discomfiting, I turned to spectatorship theory. But while I found there a litany of writing on why it is we enjoy certain films, I was surprised to discover almost nothing had been said about why we *do not* enjoy others. My task was therefore clear: to examine Michael Haneke's films with a view to understanding something more about the unpleasurable cinematic experience and, ultimately, to discovering why Haneke's films reverberate so strongly with so many viewers. Working in parallel on a sustained textual analysis of Michael Haneke's films and a critical reflection on the history of spectatorship, the problem crystallised for me as a one of *ethical reflexivity*.

This book is therefore concerned to a large extent with ethics. This is perhaps not unusual: as Simon Blackburn comments in his *Introduction to Ethics* all aspects of our daily life are coloured by ethical questions.¹ Almost every choice we make, every act we undertake, as human beings in a social world has moral implications. What we might term the moral or ethical environment – the climate of ideas about how to live, which contains both the norms of our actions and the implicit criteria by which we live – surrounds us as we go about our daily lives. It constitutes what we find acceptable or unacceptable, admirable or contemptible. It constitutes our conception of when things are going well and when they are going badly; our conception of what is due to us, and what is due from us, as we relate to others. It comprises our emotional responses: what is a cause of anger or gratitude, or pride or shame, or what can be forgiven and what cannot. It makes up, and is made up of, our standards – our standards of behaviour and of belief. In the eyes of some thinkers, most famously perhaps G.W.F. Hegel, it shapes our very identities: even our consciousness of ourselves is largely, or perhaps essentially, a consciousness of how we stand for other people.²

And reflection upon this ethical environment is by no means the private preserve of philosophers. Drama, literature, poetry and film all work out ideas of standards of behaviour and their consequences. After all, the satirist and cartoonist, as well as the artist and the novelist, comment on and criticise the prevailing climate just as effectively as 'philosophers'. Blackburn puts it thus: 'The impact of a campaigning novelist, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Dickens, Zola or Solzhenitsyn, may be much greater than that of the academic theorist. A single photograph may have done more to halt the Vietnam War than all the writings of moral philosophers of the time put together'.³

When Peter Watkins, in *The War Game* (1965), asked the spectator to consider the consequences of nuclear war he did it by enacting an ethical situation for us. When Steven Spielberg gave us *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), he likewise used film as an illustration of the ethics of war. Less polemically, but no less engagingly, Alfred Hitchcock depicts, in each of his films, a moral problem. Is it worse to honour a promise to murder, or to go back on one's word and risk endangering one's loved ones? Is it acceptable to seek revenge on someone who has manipulated you, harmed you or your family? Is murder ever justifiable? Should we lie, or prostitute ourselves, for the good of our country? Our friends? Our family? In fact, a vast majority of films – like literature – take an ethical dilemma as their central narrative pivot. Suspense, melodrama, action, even romance – all centre, to a greater or lesser degree, upon moral choices with which we are more or less familiar.

It is clear that philosophy is not alone in its engagement with questions of ethics, and that film regularly concerns itself with the

ethical climate in which live. But what attempts have been made to understand film's relationship with ethics? Generally speaking, we can divide those critics and theorists who have brought questions of ethics to bear on film studies into two camps. The first, which we can refer to as the 'American moralist critics',⁴ is comprised of academics and critics working within a tradition which stems from literary criticism and which generally privileges content over form. These critics give readings of specific films, oeuvres and genres focusing on the questions of morality played out within a narrative context. Typical of the approaches they take is Raymond Carney's analysis of Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life* (1946).⁵ Carney's discussion of this film is particularly interested in plot, character and action, and it focuses almost exclusively on the moral trajectory of the film's protagonist, George Bailey (played by James Stewart). Regarding the spectator's relationship to the film, Carney makes the assumption that by watching George's progression through the film, the viewer can 'learn' something about their own sense of moral responsibility as they empathise with the character's suffering and redemption.⁶

If the American moralists are concerned with the ethics of a film's content, other thinkers are concerned with the ethics of film form. The second category of theorists who marry ethics and film analysis are those, from Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz to Peter Wollen and Laura Mulvey, whose film theory is interested in what the ethics of film as a medium are.⁷ The relationship of film to ethical thinking is not merely one of narrative illustration: film does not only reflect on the ethical environment, but it is also of course part of it. And if the workings of the ethical environment in which we live can be strangely invisible, so too can the workings of cinema. Apparatus theorists such as Baudry and Metz claim that the very mechanics of the cinematic institution are ethically coercive, while participants in what D.N. Rodowick terms 'the discourse of political modernism',⁸ including Wollen and Mulvey, argue that the cinematic apparatus manipulates the spectator watching a film like Capra's into unthinkingly accepting the system of values that the film promotes. These theorists believe that Hollywood film is morally suspect because it is politically coercive: that by offering a narrative based on principles of unity, continuity and closure, such films efface the constructedness of the filmic medium and promote an identification with, and unquestioning acceptance of, the fictional world offered by the film, which frequently promotes specific political values. Its system of representation often involves, they argue, the objectification of women, the vilification of homosexuals and the idealisation of capitalist society, all of which the spectator is persuaded to accept as 'normal' or 'natural'.

For these theorists, then, the filmic institution may have its own implicit ethics. They may not explicitly state their moral take on film

and its workings, but it is there, if we are willing to look closely enough, in a set of underlying ethical assumptions within the politicised discussion of film form about what is 'right' and what is 'wrong'. However, in subordinating moral problems to political problems, theorists like Mulvey and Wollen do not address the moral questions, as such. The ethics of film that emerges out of the discourse of political modernism is, *de facto*, embedded in a political argument. Ethical concerns are unresolved here because they are inessential. The position is perhaps best summarised by a line from Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera*, 'Food first, then morals'.⁹

For some critics of Austrian director Michael Haneke's work, politics remains a primary concern. In this book, however, we shall allow ourselves what Brecht might see as the 'luxury' of leaving politics to one side. In part, this is a strategic move, for within philosophy an ethical problem, while it may have social implications, is not normally couched in terms of political ideology or power but in terms that are specifically moral, concerning for instance sentiment, responsibility, shame or guilt – terms conspicuously absent from the discourse of political modernism. But it is also a necessary move. For the language of philosophical ethics is the language in which Haneke himself discusses his work. And more significantly, I believe, it is also the language in which these films think about *themselves*.

Ethical concerns sculpt the themes and forms of Haneke's work. Each of his feature films presents an ethical problem within its narrative – suicide, murder, conspiracy and rape are recurring themes, for example – and they also demonstrate an underlying concern with questions of guilt and responsibility. But this concern does not only take place on a narrative level, as characters struggle with and against their responsibility for past and present actions: it is also demonstrated on an extra-diegetic level. The content of each of these films presents us with a series of ethical problems which echo or mirror a set of ethical problems that Haneke sees as inherent to the viewing situation. These problems revolve around the spectator's complicity with the cinematic apparatus and their tacit acceptance or denial of this complicity, and the key focus of Haneke's films is on the spectator's responsibility for their own involvement in the spectator–screen relationship. While the questions of complicity, responsibility and guilt raised within the narratives of Haneke's films then provide in themselves ample material for consideration, they also represent by analogy Haneke's concerns with the acts of film-going and film-viewing.

Philosophical reflections on ethics contain a distinctive ambition. The ambition is to understand the springs of motivation, reason and feeling that move us. It is to understand the networks of rules or 'norms' that sustain our lives. The ambition is often one of finding a system in the

apparent jumble of principles and goals that we respect, or say we do: it is an enterprise of self-knowledge. By analogy, Haneke's work stands in a tradition of films that reflect upon their own construction, attempting to understand the rules or norms that govern and sustain them. These films are formally reflexive – they reflect on their own construction. They are the films produced by Samuel Peckinpah, Oliver Stone, Jean-Luc Godard, Chantal Akerman – just a few of the directors who have tried to investigate the workings of film *through* film (albeit more often than not with political concerns as their focus).

Haneke draws on many of the formal techniques present within the work of such directors, techniques analysed within the discourse of political modernism and mobilised for the purposes of political polemic. But he also develops them and refocuses them. Within the following six chapters, I shall demonstrate that in Haneke's works aesthetic reflexivity is conducive to the spectator's moral reflexivity. By placing reflexive techniques within new frameworks, I argue, Haneke is able to co-opt the spectator into a uniquely moral relationship to the film. Reflexivity within his films is used not, as in the works of these earlier directors, to create a form of cinema which is a vehicle for a political and moral agenda, but to encourage a more open-ended reflection on the spectator's part about moral questions. On an implicit level, the films prompt their spectators to ask: How are we complicit with the apparatus? What are the moral consequences of this? Why, upon watching Haneke's films, do we so often feel irritated, cross, even guilty?

These are the questions that make Haneke's work so problematic and so provocative. We will seek the answers to them – or at least some potential responses – over the course of the book. But in order to do so, we need a new way of thinking about the film viewing experience: an ethical theory of spectatorship. My analysis of what I shall call Michael Haneke's 'critical aesthetic' will attempt to account for what precisely the relationship between formal reflexivity and moral reflexivity is; how exactly Haneke radicalises the spectator's relationship to the screen, and what the implications of this radicalisation are for film theory at large. In doing so, I hope here to make some initial steps towards an examination of film's relationship to ethics, both in Haneke's films and in a larger sense.

At the time of writing, Haneke has made eight feature films, (nine if we include his adaptation of Kafka's *Das Schloß*, originally filmed for television but subsequently given a cinematic release; ten if we include the remake of his own *Funny Games*, released in 2008 under the title *Funny Games U.S.*). This corpus of eight films – starting with *Der Siebente Kontinent/The Seventh Continent* (1989) and including *Caché/Hidden* (2006) – will constitute the empirical object of this book. Surprisingly, given Haneke's critical and commercial success, they have received

little academic attention to date.¹⁰ To this author's knowledge, only two academic books exist devoted entirely to the director's work, both anthologies edited by celebrated Austrian film scholar Alexander Horwath: *Der Siebente Kontinent, Michael Haneke und Seine Filme*, published in 1991, and *Michael Haneke* (co-edited with Giovanni Spagnoletti), published in 1998.¹¹ What is remarkable about these books is that both were published prior to Haneke's move to France, which marked his transition onto the international film stage. Likewise, Willy Riemer devotes an entire section of his book *After Postmodernism: Austrian Film and Literature in Transition* (2000) to Haneke, but his approach centres on Haneke as a national film-maker, the flag bearer for an industry that otherwise sees little international recognition.¹² Only Fatima Naqvi, in her 2007 study of the pervasive rhetoric of victimhood since 1968, *The Literary and Cultural Rhetoric of Victimhood*, attempts a comprehensive analysis of Haneke's films in their entirety, in a chapter devoted to his articulation of questions of sacrifice and oppression within his body of work.¹³

It seems that the early academic interest that Haneke's films inspired has not quite developed in keeping with his work. Outside these four (or two and two halves of) books, the literature on Haneke is limited to articles in scholarly journals and – more frequently, it must be noted – the popular press. The principal points of interest that these articles raise are usually linked to questions of violence within Haneke's cinema or to the socio-political content of Haneke's films, with a few critics such as Robin Wood and Christopher Sharrett reading Haneke's films as 'contemporary morality tales'.¹⁴ In their treatment of ethics, such approaches are typical of the 'American moralist' school of criticism involving, for the main part, a predominantly narrative focus. In other words, they focus on the morality *within* the hermetically sealed filmic world, rather than between the film and the viewer. In thus doing they overlook, to my mind, a crucial aspect of the experience of watching a Haneke film: the spectator's experience of the film as it is pertinent to *themselves*.

It is with a sample of spectatorial responses to Haneke's films that I shall begin the book, examining the critical reception of his films and the perceived problems that arise from Haneke's work in Chapter One, paying particular attention to the authorial figure of Michael Haneke. I discuss how this authorial figure arises through the films, and argue that, as such, we cannot take the director's intentions alone as our starting point for an analysis of the ethics of spectatorship: although we may, and indeed will, refer to the director as the intentional origin of the films in order to understand them, we should also take into account the director as the product of the films. For what we are concerned with here is not decoding the 'objective' meaning of Haneke's oeuvre, so

much as understanding the subjective experience of it. To better understand the stylistic rendering of questions of morality and film-viewing arising from Haneke's films, I propose a theory of ethical spectatorship, one that is rooted in the history of the spectatorship theory, going from Sergei Eisenstein via André Bazin to Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz, but which also moves beyond it.

As we have already noted, the various positions which more recent theories of spectatorship see as both existing and potential are dominated by concerns with the problem of ideology. By reframing these arguments in terms of ethics, we can discern an implicit ethical problem within ideology critique, which centres upon a set of tensions between activity and passivity, emotion and reason. A similar set of tensions has been articulated conceptually in the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant, who discusses the ethical conflict between the human, or as he terms it, 'man's' 'instinct' or 'inclination', and one's 'considered' or 'intellectual' awareness of his situation in the world. I therefore introduce Kantian ethics as a model for analysing Haneke's critical aesthetic, in order to discuss how Haneke's films make the underlying ethics of ideology critique explicit and primary. I argue that, above all, they bring into play the Kantian conception of the ethical agent as caught between two impulses: the impulse towards rationality and responsibility on the one hand, and the impulse towards pleasurable experience and away from unpleasure on the other. The experience of these conflicting impulses is characteristic, I shall argue, of responses to Haneke's films.

The individual films which illustrate how this is the case are treated in the following four chapters. Chapter Two explores Haneke's early Austrian films – *Der Siebente Kontinent*, *Benny's Video* (1992) and *71 Fragmente einer Chronologie des Zufalls/71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* (1994) – in relation to existing cinematic models. The three films experiment with modernist technique, both in the sense of a pure, aesthetic modernism as in the films of Chantal Akerman, and of a more politicised, aggressive modernism, as in the later films of Jean-Luc Godard. Consequently, here I introduce the terms 'first generation modernism' (or benign modernism) and 'second-generation modernism' (or aggressive modernism) in order to distinguish between these models. The distinction between the two forms will become significant in later analyses of Haneke's film-making. However, although Haneke makes some attempts in the early films to rework modernist techniques – employing them for moral rather than political effect – they nonetheless remain highly derivative, never really stepping out of the shadow of counter-cinema. The films thereby reiterate the position of ethical spectatorship that counter-cinema offers the spectator, or rather fails to offer. The chapter thus examines how the film-historical frameworks that the early films

draw upon preclude them from producing a radically different position for the spectator.

Following this examination of the trilogy's operating aesthetic, Chapter Three looks at Haneke's subsequent development of benign and aggressive modernist techniques, and his superimposition of an additional cinematic framework onto them. In *Funny Games* (1997) the director brings generic convention to bear on the spectator's relationship to the screen. Providing an extended analysis of the relationship between first- and second-generation reflexivity in creating 'unpleasure', and the implications of the unpleasurable effect upon the audience in Haneke's films, the chapter raises questions concerning narrativity and impact. I examine how the experience of unpleasure upon watching *Funny Games* parallels the Kantian conception of morality as a struggle between emotion (or instinct), and reason (or intellect). We can compare the position created for the spectator of *Funny Games* to that of the Kantian moral agent: in both cases the individual must choose between a desire for pleasure and an acknowledgement of their moral responsibilities. Drawing an analogy between the cinematic viewing situation in which people seek entertainment and critical oblivion, and Kant's conception of humanity as always and naturally drawn to seek pleasure and avoid unpleasure, I claim that, in both cases, an ethical imperative arises at the point at which rational awareness of self and society operates in contradistinction to the pleasure drive. This would account for the feeling of unpleasure that Haneke's films give rise to, manifested as discomfort, anger, even shame or guilt.

Looking back to the Eisensteinian notion of 'impact', I also elucidate the difference between the impact produced by Haneke's films and that reached through montage cinema. For the impact that arises out of Haneke's films differs from that which arises out of Eisenstein's in its creation of an individuated spectator response, rather than a collective response. In Haneke's films, impact does not consist in the spectator having specific thoughts and ideas that are directly related to the film image, as it does in Eisenstein's propaganda films. Rather Haneke uses first- and second-generation modernism, operating in tension with a generic framework, to encourage an open-ended form of moral reflection upon the film, whereby each spectator must strive to find their own position. In this respect, I shall contend, moral spectatorship of Haneke's films can be seen as a case of coming to terms with one's personal moral relationship to the film.

Chapter Four looks at the resolution of the generic framework with first and second-generation modernism in the three films which follow *Funny Games*: Haneke's first three French-language works, *Code inconnu*, *La Pianiste* and *Le Temps du loup*. Here, I examine how the shift

that Haneke makes from a national to an international context is reflected by developments in both extra-cinematic strategies (such as marketing, promotion) and intra-cinematic strategies (such as the narrative and reflexive techniques discussed in the previous chapter). I look at how Haneke's positioning of the spectator as an ethical subject is further developed within this body of work, as well as discussing some of the problems that arise as he negotiates the three frameworks. The key problem in the post-*Funny Games* films is situated at the border between coercion and spectatorial autonomy. On one level, Haneke's films become more controlling of their spectators in order to preclude over-simplistic or aggressive responses to the films; that is, to preclude what we might term the 'wrong' responses. But at the same time Haneke attempts to avoid over-determining what the alternative to these 'wrong' responses should be; that is, to render the spectator autonomous. He does not offer a 'right' response, for the only correct response to Haneke's films is to reach one's own conclusion. How Haneke seeks various solutions to this somewhat paradoxical situation is the prime focus of Chapter Four.

In Chapter Five, I return to the 'moral' emotions of shame and guilt, introduced in Chapters Three and Four. Drawing on psychological research into these emotions, I specify the way in which they are specifically linked to self-awareness and self-appraisal but also to aggression, which perhaps offers some explanation for strong negative reactions to Haneke's films. I then turn to an extended analysis of *Caché* as both exemplifying Haneke's project of placing the spectator in a specifically moral relationship to the cinematic image, and of representing this project on a diegetic level. *Caché*, I shall argue, represents the most complete harmonisation of form and content in Haneke's body of works, in addition to functioning as a comment on Haneke's cinematic project, its strengths and weaknesses.

The chapter concludes by analysing the link between Kantian ethics, the 'moral spectator' of Haneke's films and the notion of moral perfectionism, as taken from Stanley Cavell's philosophical writings on film. As will be demonstrated in earlier chapters, Haneke's films refuse clear answers to the problems they pose, both within the narrative and in relation to how we perceive them. Instead, they encourage an individual engagement with these problems. Haneke's project of moral spectatorship relies precisely on each viewer having a different relationship to the film, and so creates a cinematic form to which the spectator's response is personal and subjective. At this point, the Kantian analogy ceases to be useful, for the spectator's relationship to Haneke's film does not result in a moral output, as Kant would have the experience of morality do. Instead we find in Cavell a model of how ethics can be experienced as a constant striving to understand the moral

questions raised in any given situation, to see these clearly and to take responsibility for one's part in that ethical situation. This Cavellian model of spectatorship credits the viewer with an unprecedented autonomy. But it also carries with it a considerable burden of responsibility, and it thereby refuses the spectator any possibility of seeking refuge from the world in the darkness of the cinema. This refusal of flight from one's ethical position in the world is precisely, I argue, the endpoint that Haneke's films strive towards.

As this brief description of my methodology demonstrates, throughout the book I simultaneously proceed on a film-analytic and a theoretical level in order to fully integrate textual considerations with theoretical ones. Individual films are examined with reference to the particular issues and problems which they raise, and I trust this dual approach clarifies the ethical issues that arise from Haneke's oeuvre and their theoretical context while simultaneously stressing the changing nature of Haneke's moral project.

The study is thus organised along two axes. On the one hand, it attempts to provide a context for the theoretical problems that arise from Haneke's films, and so moves from existing theoretical and film-historical models to an analysis of Haneke's place in relationship to these models. Within this context, Kant and Cavell serve as our two philosophical guides to the ethics of Haneke's model of film-making and the position that it offers the spectator. Kant allows us to understand the way in which ethical questions present themselves and the manner in which we respond to them psychologically and morally, by providing us with an analogy in the form of his moral agent. Cavell helps us to see why it is important that Haneke is working today – what benefits and responsibilities it offers the modern spectator, living in a post-political society in which individualism is prized above all else. As a contemporary writer with an acute awareness of the unique tensions which make up twenty-first century life, Cavell can help us understand the significance of Haneke's model of ethical spectatorship to us as spectators.

On the other hand, the book discusses how Haneke's own approach to the positioning of the spectator develops in the course of his career. It considers the manner in which, as Haneke moves from national to international film-maker, his audiences change alongside his films. Without straying too far into the terrain of reception studies, some interesting insights offer themselves as we analyse the changing nature of both film and audience, and consider to what extent one affects the other. Haneke's films engage in an ongoing dialogue with their audiences. As we will see in some detail, Haneke particularly targets specific film-going publics, the spectators he feels are most in need of the position of ethical spectatorship that his films offer. Through extra-

cinematic factors, his films lure these spectators in; and once they are sitting comfortably inside the cinema he attempts to teach them something about their relationship to the film-going experience. In this manner his films (in their formal construction and their self-representation outside the cinema) are extremely manipulative, positioning the spectator in a rather determined manner. But at each step in his oeuvre, Haneke at least appears to take into account the way in which responses to the previous films were formulated, offering the most recent film as *his* response. Spectatorial reception thus comes to influence the film, as well as vice versa. And, in this way, the position of ethical spectatorship that Haneke's films offer their spectators is reformed and refined, tailored to what the director terms the 'willing consumers of the cinema of distraction'.¹⁵

The project's focus necessarily imposes boundaries. I do not systematically cover all of Haneke's feature films in depth. Are some of the films more worthy of attention than others? I do not believe so, although there are critics who would undoubtedly disagree with me. But some do have a greater relevance to the main concerns of this book than others. *Funny Games* and *Caché* stand out as two high points within Haneke's project of positioning the spectator morally. For this reason, I devote an entire chapter to each of these films. At the other end of the spectrum, *Das Schloß* was originally made as a television film, receiving a cinematic release only after Haneke's growing reputation made that a financially astute move. A period adaptation of sorts, it notably moves away from the world of modern technology, and with it Haneke's critique of the cinematic medium, which is one of the lynchpins in his ethical positioning of the spectator. Accordingly, this film does not receive extended treatment here.

Nor, for that matter, do any of Haneke's earlier works made specifically for television. While Haneke's early style informs his later work, his television films present a very different position for the spectator since they are produced specifically for home audiences rather than the cinematic spectator. The director himself has stated that, on a formal level, there is little consistency between the television productions and the later films.¹⁶ An inquiry into how accurate this claim is would certainly yield some fascinating insights; unfortunately, however, it is outside the scope of this book.¹⁷

Given the limited nature of this study's focus, it also does not deal with other, vital aspects of Haneke's work. His French films – particularly *Code inconnu* and *Caché* – can be, and have been, considered as socio-political inquiries into the dynamics of modern European society and its multicultural integration. As mentioned, this territory has been explored by Robin Wood and Christopher Sharrett amongst others. Haneke's remarkable ability to elicit superlative performances

from his actors is evident in the outstanding work contributed to his films by Ulrich Mühe, Susanne Lothar, Arno Frisch, Juliette Binoche, Annie Girardot, Benoît Magimel, Isabelle Huppert and latterly Naomi Watts, amongst others. Although I will consider the director's use of stars briefly, I do not devote substantial attention to performance or characterisation. A detailed assessment of the production history of Haneke's collaboration with producers Veit Heiduschka and Marin Karmitz, cinematographers Christian Berger and Jürgen Jürges, and editors Nadine Muse and Andreas Prochaska also falls outside the purview of this study.

It is similarly impossible within the restrictions of this work to extend my inquiry into the ethics of spectatorship very far beyond Haneke's films and the light that they can shed on conventional cinematic practices. This is unfortunate, since the inquiry into the ethics of spectatorship has only just begun, and a great deal more work on the subject is required.¹⁸ Hopefully this book is one step in the right direction. What it offers, of course, is just one way of conceptualising the ethics of the viewing situation. But I hope that it can perhaps open the way for a systematic inquiry into the ethics of film spectatorship, and suggest a new direction for research in the field of ethics and film.

Notes

1. Simon Blackburn, *Ethics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 2.
2. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).
3. Blackburn (2003), p. 5. In the case of the photograph, Blackburn is referring here to Hung Cong ('Nick') Ut's 'Accidental Napalm Attack, 1972'.
4. I use this term to refer to a school of thought that comes primarily from the United States. However, it should not be taken too literally, for its members are not exclusively American: for example, Robin Wood, who sometimes (although not always) writes in this tradition, was born in the U.K. and is presently based in Canada.
5. Raymond Carney, *American Vision: the Films of Frank Capra* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
6. Carney (1986).
7. See, for example, Jean-Louis Baudry, 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,' *Film Quarterly* 28(2): 39–47 (1974–5); Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, trans. Michael Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Peter Wollen, 'Godard and Counter-Cinema: Vent d'Est' (1972), in *Readings and Writings* (London: Verso, 1982); and Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1973), in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: MacMillan, 1989). Further discussion of the slippage between the political and the ethical that takes place around this time is in Chapter Two.
8. D.N. Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

9. Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera*, trans. J. Willet and R. Mannheim (London: Methuen, 2000[1929]), p. 55.
10. A situation which is thankfully – and not before time – beginning to alter as a result of *Cache's* critical success: at the time of writing both BFI Publishing and Wallflower Press had anthologies devoted to Haneke in the pipeline, and the 2007 Society of Cinema and Media Studies conference had several panels devoted entirely to Haneke's films.
11. Alexander Horwath (ed.), *Der Siebente Kontinent, Michael Haneke und Seine Filme* (Wien: Europeverlag: 1991); and Alexander Horwath and Giovanni Spagnoletti, *Michael Haneke* (Torino: Edizioni Lindau, 1998).
12. Willy Riemer (ed.), *After Postmodernism: Austrian Film and Literature in Transition*, Riemer (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 2000).
13. Fatima Naqvi, *The Literary and Cultural Rhetoric of Victimhood* (Basingstoke and New York: 2007).
14. Christopher Sharrett, 'The World That Is Known: An Interview with Michael Haneke', *Cineaste* 29(3): 28–32 (Summer 2003), p. 28.
15. Haneke, in Anon., 'Beyond Mainstream Film: An interview with Michael Haneke', in Riemer (2000), p. 161.
16. See, for example, the interview with Michel Cieutat: 'Entretien avec Michael Haneke', *Positif* 478: 22–29 (December 2000), p. 24.
17. I devote some consideration to this question, as well as to the question of how Haneke's films are experienced differently by home audiences and cinema audiences, in an essay to be featured within an anthology on Haneke edited by Ben McCann and David Sorfa, to be published by Wallflower early in 2009 under the provisional title *The Films of Michael Haneke: Europe Utopia*.
18. Although one giant leap has been made recently: see Daniel Frampton, *Filmosophy* (London: Wallflower, 2006). Published too late to inform this book, Frampton's work is a significant intervention in contemporary dialogue around film and ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Rajko Grlić and Cadences of Reality

Aida Vidan

Rajko Grlić's *One More for the Road* provokes in the reader both a sense of great joy and one of deep sadness. The joy arises from the narrative opulence, balancing on an existential and political brink and propelling us to ask some of the most pertinent questions a human being can pose. At the same time, Grlić's stories, presented in the form of lexicon entries, immerse us in a complex set of artistic, ethical, and political topics while traversing the globe and offering a taste of a life lived in diverse social and cultural circumstances. Much like in his films, overtones of humor, irony, mischief, and resilience pervade the scenes before us. The sadness, on the other hand, descends upon the reader as they reach the final pages and realize that these notes about slivers of lives both real and imagined from the director's notebook will never be made into movies. Disillusioned with both socialist censorship and capitalist profiteering that prevented the production of at least some of them, one is grateful for the eye-opening journeys they afford us while capturing the recent tumultuous decades in which individual fates and feats stood up against belligerent political projects.

Rajko Grlić was born in 1947 in Zagreb, Croatia (then Yugoslavia) to a family who, over the centuries, had been settling in Zagreb and then leaving it, carrying with them memories of images, ideas, stories, songs, and tastes, and losing anew with each generation what little material possessions the previous one managed to acquire. As Grlić adeptly puts it: "In all these centuries-long migrations, in the maze of places they lived, the only anchor for arrivals and departures has always been Zagreb, a small town on the edge of Europe. They all came to it bright with hope, lost nearly everything each time they were here, and then set off on a quest for new lands" (Preface, p. xxiii). His own life follows this same pattern of departures and arrivals, as well as accomplishments undercut by retributions and lost opportunity. His family—of mixed German, Slavic, and Jew-

ish background, which in previous centuries migrated between Germany, Spain, Hungary, Austria, and England to Zagreb, and in more recent ones from Zagreb to Canada, Brazil, Congo, Switzerland, New Zealand, Pakistan, Italy, England, and the US—has been a repository of cultural memory that has colored his upbringing in the most profound way and which he selflessly shares with his readers. Unfortunately, one need not look far back to uncover horrors and suffering—despite fighting on the antifascist side, both of the director’s parents spent time on Goli Otok (Bare Island), the most ruthless Yugoslav labor camp for political prisoners. Although his father, philosopher Danko Grlić, eventually became a university professor and was among the founding members of the Praxis group which brought together influential European Marxists, the shadow of uncertainty and suspicion continued to hover over the family even after Yugoslavia was no more. And yet, despite the hardships he depicts, his narrative reveals a defiant spirit, a seemingly inexhaustible persistence, and a subtle joy of living which measure up to relentless challenges.

A small Bell & Howell camera, the auspicious gift Rajko Grlić received from his uncle who had been living in the West, launched him on a path of cinematic exploration when he was only fourteen. His early engagement with the medium as a member of a local cine club resulted in the first amateur films made during his teenage years and acceptance at the renowned Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU) where he was deemed sufficiently advanced to skip his first year. His mentor, Elmar Klos, prominent Czech filmmaker and 1965-Oscar winner in the category of Best Foreign Language Film for his *The Shop on Main Street*, appears in multiple narratives. Klos had a major impact on Grlić’s artistic vision, especially when Klos’s creative output was obliterated by the Soviet invasion of 1968. Klos, however, was not silenced: he resisted by raising a new generation of directors who, in addition to learning the nuts and bolts of scriptwriting and directing, were also instilled with a strong sense of political responsibility and adherence to ethical values. Grlić’s time at FAMU was a period of major stylistic development through the study of works by important auteurs, whose poetics left a lasting resonance with him. He was particularly drawn to Godard and the French New Wave as well as Italian directors Antonioni and Fellini with whom he felt he shared a kindred spirit and geographic connection.

Over the years, FAMU educated several South Slavic directors of the post-World War II generation, among them Goran Paskaljević, Srđan Karanović, Lordan Zafranović, Goran Marković, and Emir Kusturica, some of whom forged life-long friendships while others found themselves on opposing sides of political barricades. Rajko Grlić and Srđan Karanović’s multiple collaborations as well as his friendship with the eminent Serbian

director Dušan Makavejev, both portrayed here in several stories, provide further testimony of solidarity prevailing over political extremism. Through an account of Grlić's studies in Prague, the reader relives the frightening uncertainty of Soviet oppression and witnesses the collapse of cultural and social institutions in a sovereign country while at the same time learning about the efforts of the local population to preserve a semblance of normal life. Several chapters and decades later, we encounter Rajko Grlić and several other young Yugoslav filmmakers in Moscow at the invitation of *Mosfilm* and the Ministry of Culture of the USSR. The stern official protocol is challenged by the disheveled appearance and informal attitude of the invitees who scramble to improvise the expected laudatory speeches. The nonconforming toasts culminate in the Yugoslav delegation's public praise of Isaak Babel and Boris Pilnyak, Russian writers executed during the Stalinist period. Consequently, the delegation's effort to meet Andrei Tarkovsky remains unanswered, however, they are lucky to be escorted by Larisa Shepitko, a former student of Alexander Dovzhenko. Their last nocturnal walk through Red Square, during which they outline the Coca-Cola logo with their footsteps in pristine snow, would these days possibly be called an installation. Back then it was a mischievous provocation, a punch back for old unsettled accounts, which did not escalate only because of Yugoslavia's special status between the East and the West.

Never a part of the mainstream, Grlić was affiliated early in his career with the intellectually provocative underground scene which resented the official "Red Wave" film production meant to glorify Partisan conquests during World War II and achievements of the socialist period. Maturing in a family distrustful of the political establishment at a time when the new order was starting to exhibit serious cracks, he had the impulse to look behind the scenes and capture raw unfiltered reality. No wonder the GEF (Zagreb's *Genre Film Festival*), a venue for experimental film which, among many others, showed the work of Jonas Mekas, had caught Grlić's attention even before his Prague years. His FAMU experience did not turn into a long-term engagement with the Czech film industry because of abysmal political circumstances so he returned to Zagreb upon graduation. In addition to the skills of the trade, he took with him the ability to envelop his films in both humor and tragedy (reflected also on the pages of this book), and to employ ambiguity and metanarrative devices as core elements of his scripts. He directed his first award-winning film *If It Kills Me* at twenty-seven and proceeded to make *Bravo Maestro* in 1978, which was nominated for the Palme d'Or at the *Cannes Film Festival*. A story about a wasted talent abandoned for social advancement, the film is as much about a young musician as it is about society depicted through its music microcosm.

Grić's next film *You Love Only Once* (a.k.a. *The Melody Haunts My Reverie*) from 1981 was equally well received at Cannes where it was included in the category *Un Certain Regard* for its "original and different" vision. The film focuses on the period immediately after World War II and on a young Partisan hero rising rapidly through the socialist hierarchy; the narrative gradually shifts its upbeat momentum for a tragic downfall. The hero, who falls in love with a beautiful ballerina from a bourgeois family, becomes suspect by the sheer act of affiliating himself with the wrong class. The true reason for his punishment, however, turns out to be the envy of his comrades, rather than any political or revolutionary motivation. Although censorship relaxed after Tito's death in 1980, as the Yugoslav leadership turned to address a cohort of pressing economic and political issues, the film still caused major consternation. Anticipating harsh criticism, the director smuggled a copy out of the country and managed to enter it into the Cannes Film Festival competition. Once it was included in the official program, it became impossible for censors to remove the film from the public domain and consequently it was seen by a large audience. Many critics consider this film one of the best Yugoslav/Croatian productions. Its subtle interplay between the notion of personal freedom and oppressive authority was a slap in the face to the leadership who responded with particular wrath to insinuations of corruption as the true motivator behind political action (Vidan 2017: 36–38). Some scholars (Gilić 2011: 129–30; Pavičić 2017: 228) find connections between *You Love Only Once* and Fassbinder's and Szabo's films from this period through their focus on family matters refracted through specific historical circumstances.

Although loosely based on a diary by Ruža Jurković, a Croatian prima ballerina and choreographer, the film pursues its own narrative course, and through a calibrated juxtaposition of characters becomes a sharp social critique. The principal protagonists, Tomislav and Beba, are trapped in a postwar province experiencing the harsh reality of life with a shock-brigade and surrounded by political watchdogs. Owing to their dissimilar backgrounds, their relationship is complicated enough and becomes additionally saddled when her family, with whom they share close quarters, is constantly interfering. His comrades too do not hesitate to pry, under the guise of duty, and ultimately turn everyone against the couple. The lack of freedom is accentuated by the impossibility of having any personal space, and this forces the couple to withdraw from social interactions. Against this stark social canvas, the erotic scenes serve as an emotional shelter and the only psychological stronghold. However, even the most intimate sphere is not safe from political schemes and rivalry which eventually compromise their marriage, landing Tomislav in prison and leading to his demise. Along with the protagonists, the viewer quickly becomes

aware that Marxist idealism has nothing to do with the life in the provincial outpost, where differences of any sort are considered antirevolutionary. What is more, the seemingly organized society aspiring to high ideals of equality, justice, and prosperity quickly turns into a bloodthirsty pack while the idyllic space of joined labor becomes a site of terror and lawlessness. Much could be said on account of gender relations in this and in Grljić's other films that bravely depict the rawness of patriarchal relations and machismo embedded in both the private and social aspects of life even in a system that nominally espoused gender equality. The male protagonist pays the price in part because of his failure to play along with the macho schemes. Prioritizing the ordinary things in life such as preferring a relationship over the revolutionary agenda and, moreover, signaling that the agenda has been tarnished by serious ethical concerns, was problematic even for this late-stage, more tolerant brand of Yugoslav socialism. The visual vocabulary of the film with its subdued color palette, spatial organization, and a gradual transition from long shots to mid-shots and closeups underscores the protagonists' psychological drama and their sense of captivity. Tomislav Pinter, who was the director of photography, is praised as the most influential Croatian cinematographer and is also known for his work with Orson Welles.

The nonconformism exhibited in his early films has persisted throughout Grljić's career. Irrespective of the system and the name of the country where he is residing, he finds himself walking the razor edge of criticism in many of his projects; this is never voiced overtly but wrapped in the palpable everyday reality of the protagonists whose psychology is carefully counterposed to their milieu. Even when they appear to be heroes carrying the weight of the narrative arc, their fate is typically anything but. Indeed, they come away stripped of any heroic aura and their activity ends up illustrating futile endeavors, the fruits of which are obliterated by systems, governments, wars, and corrupt ploys. Grljić's next film, *In the Jaws of Life*, completed in 1985 and based on Dubravka Ugrešić's novel *Steffi Cvek in the Jaws of Life* (*Štefica Cvek u raljama života*, 1981) is a case in point. The metanarrative intervention is brought to the fore by the interplay between the subplot of film production, which mimics the content of the film that is being produced. The lives of the characters and putative film crew entwine around soap opera plots serving as prime examples for a study in behavioral gender patterns. Ugrešić's novel is based on a parodic premise, which in its cinematic iteration acquires additional dimensions by exploiting political and gender stereotypes to the maximum: it plays off the profiles of a conformist, an anarchist, and an activist, while bringing into the mix regional ethnic nuances. Urban and rural mentalities clash in humorous encounters while each character is pitched against their

metafictional doppelgänger. This East European version of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, appearing long before Hollywood's intellectually depleted version, provides a rich cultural script through its multilayered structure and witicism distributed along the axes of characterization, narrative pattern, cinematic devices, social analysis, and political activism. Although well-received by a wide audience, its noncommercial aspect places it in the niche category.

Needless to say, each of Grlić's films has had its own interesting journey reaching international audiences, festivals, and critics, which led him to enjoy a number of exciting encounters. One such example is his 1987 film *Three for Happiness*, which won the Grand Prix at the Salsomaggiore–Parma Film Festival with Sergio Leone presiding over the jury. Through the directors' informal exchange over a lunch, the reader is familiarized with the complicated editing saga of Leone's legendary *Once Upon a Time in America* and his unsuccessful quest to provide his own cut of the movie. After *Bravo, Maestro*, Grlić's path intersects with that of Erland Josephson, one of the most recognizable faces from Ingmar Bergman's films. An exceptionally gifted, modest, and open-minded actor, he accepted the invitation to act in Grlić's *You Love Only Once*. Grlić's trips to Paris included visits and walks with Milan Kundera, his former professor at the Prague Academy, during which they worked on a screenplay that, too, was sadly never realized. His stroll down the famous alley in Cannes ended in a funny episode of an enormous restaurant bill for an impoverished East European film crew with no credit cards, while his participation at Valencia Film Festival (the Mostra) afforded him a life-long friendship with Honorio Rancaño, an anti-Franco activist who was deported to the Soviet Union and worked for Fidel Castro. A dinner with Honorio turned into a movie-like scene with gunshots, robbery, and a political showcase for the ETA, the Basque separatist organization, which used Mostra as a stage for its proclamations. In Grlić's narratives, be it cinematic or literary, such ancillary episodes provide the ground for painting a complex historical picture in which regimes, outcasts, dictators, and movements shape everyday occurrences and catapult those who are caught in their orbits into unpredictable directions.

His film *Charuga* is the tale of one such individual, a legendary rebel-outcast figure from the northern part of Croatia living in the turbulent 1920s, a period of political instability similar to that of 1991, when the film was made. The film examines the topic of leadership in a humorous manner at the very moment when the region was at a historical and political crossroads, having just gotten rid of the communist government and facing the rise of nationalist leaders in all corners of southeastern Europe. He playfully explores the compelling need of the locals to embrace a fatherly hero-figure regardless of his ethical and political stance (which is sub-

verted, needless to say, from the ostensible altruist mode to a self-serving agenda). Layering the film with the motifs of freedom, rebellion, and anarchy underscored by robbing escapades, sexual abandon, and Roma music, which in itself celebrates the notion of free living, Grlić, in this film, “in many ways pre-figures and comments on the events that were to unfold in the 1990s” (Vidan and Crnković 2012: 101). *Charuga* received funding under the old Yugoslav system but when the movie emerged, it was delivered to an entirely changed political landscape; in the meantime Croatia had become a newly established country. Owing to Grlić’s engagement in Srđan Karanović’s production, coincidentally taking place in the Dalmatian hinterland that was gradually being occupied by Serbian rebels, Grlić’s own mixed family background was being questioned as was his long-time friendship with his Serbian colleague. Although he previously taught for the Academy of Dramatic Arts on multiple occasions, after his return to Zagreb from a Fulbright leave of absence, he found his contract annulled. He and his family were threatened, his films banned from movie theaters and TV programming. In such a cultural wasteland, exacerbated by war and a nationalist agenda, he decided to turn the page even if it meant that he would never again be able to make films. The paradox has it that while in the US he showed *Charuga* at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts to a curious audience of students and faculty whose excitement generated an offer from NYU to teach there along with Spike Lee and Arthur Penn. And so the journey continued.

This move opened a new educational chapter in Grlić’s career which, like everything else, has spanned both continents. In three decades of teaching in the US, in addition to providing instruction to NYU film students, he was also a guest professor and artist in residence at Columbia University; the University of California, Los Angeles; Harvard University; and currently he has the post of Ohio Eminent Scholar in Film at Ohio University, Athens. His departure from Croatia, however, did not imply the severing of all ties. He returned there regularly and, at the time when the Croatian film industry faced its darkest period, he initiated the Motovun Film Festival with the intention of supporting independent productions from the region and abroad. Organizing such a venue with foreign financial support in 1999 amounted to a political statement as well, since the program of the national film festival held in the nearby Istrian city of Pula only considered Croatian productions that had been approved by the current government. Having inherited the Yugoslav—and, by extension, Russian—antiquated state-controlled production and distribution model, the new Croatian leadership had its fingers deep in film budgeting and programming, thereby preventing any ideological aberrations and effectively suffocating the next generation of filmmakers. Films produced to meet

the ideological agenda quickly dispersed the war-impooverished audiences and brought the industry to its knees. The Motovun Film Festival served as a critical outlet not only by presenting itself as a cultural venue which brought together writers, journalists, filmmakers of all stripes and backgrounds, musicians, visual and media artists, but also by extending educational opportunities. For seven years Rajko Grlić and Nenad Puhovski ran the so-called Imaginary Academy and the latter went on to conceive the production house Factum and Zagreb Dox—one of the most respected documentary film festivals in Europe. This program launched a new generation of filmmakers among whom are some well-recognized names such as Jasmila Žbanić, Dalibor Matanić, Dana Budisavljević, and others. In the post-war decade, those reaching maturity were burdened with war experiences that they were unable to translate into films because of the scarcity of funding. The school offered both instructional mechanisms and a platform for engaging in more easily financed documentary projects. From these the new cohort of directors was gradually able to realize larger productions and introduce much-needed diversity in both Croatian and regional production. It has to be noted that the South Slavic statistics on female directors do not mirror the low numbers in the West; with Žbanić's generation and going forward we have witnessed the emergence of several gifted female filmmakers, a trend in part set by the Imaginary Academy.

In addition to bringing his students to the set and helping them realize their own projects as a part of coursework at the Ohio University School of Film, during the years when he was unable to make films, Grlić embraced an educational multimedia project. Rather than writing yet another manual on film production as requested by a publisher, he and a group of computer experts ventured to design a CD-ROM—a brand new technology at the time. The adventure, which was supposed to take only a few months, evolved into a complicated operation, both technologically and intellectually, as he found it necessary to dissect many processes over which an experienced filmmaker has an intuitive command. *How to Make Your Movie: An Interactive Film School Version* was pronounced the American film product of the year, reviewed in numerous IT publications and lauded at festivals as a supreme educational achievement. As in the case of his professor who had been silenced by political decree, Grlić was able to invest time in his students on both continents and affect the world of independent filmmaking for a long time to come. Luckily, unlike the older generation, he reentered the film scene again, initially through documentary projects, which he holds essential for a filmmaker of any orientation.

His *Croatia 2000—Who Wants To Be a President (Novo novo vrijeme)*, which he codirected with Igor Mirković, introduces a pluralist perspective during the critical election period in Croatia when the monolithic coverage

by national TV provided an anemic account of reality. By simply following the politicians on their daily tasks for three months, Grlić and Mirković captured a different, nonsterile political canvas that the audiences felt compelled to see in movie theaters even though they had been watching the same faces daily on their television sets. In many ways this documentary was for Grlić a testing-ground or probe into the reality of the Yugoslav disintegration, the subject of his *Border Post*, 2006, the first coproduction among the successor states of former Yugoslavia. Grlić cowrote the script with Ante Tomić, basing it on the latter's novel *Nothing May Surprise Us* (*Ništa nas ne smije iznenaditi*, 2003), the title of which evokes a country-wide military training program designed to prepare for an attack by a potential enemy. A war film in which two national agendas clash featuring “our good guys” against “their bad guys” was not something that interested him. Rather, he wanted to go back to the turning point in 1987 when tensions were still building, and the media incessantly added fire to the already collapsed socialist project (Vidan and Crnković 2012: 109). This disjointed moment—when Slobodan Milošević, the Serbian nationalist leader, first came into power—provided texture for crafting the memorable characters of soldiers stationed at a mountainous outpost on the border between Albania and North Macedonia. Their gossip and the street-smart attitudes of privileged urban youth listening to rock songs reveal their cynicism and disregard for any political platform, and especially for a socialist fairy tale and its slogans. Under the watchful eye of an abusive (and promiscuous) commander, this group of young men from various corners of Yugoslavia forge comradeships and rivalries, but they also support one another in amorous escapades. What unites them is their desire to outsmart their Bosnian commander, himself a frustrated casualty of political and military schemes who failed to be promoted and relocated. His rural Bosnian accent and gullible reckoning make him an easy target for pranks, but they also serve as the backdrop for cultural and political differentiation. In order to buy time he needs to treat a sexually transmitted disease; the commander announces a lockdown due to an alleged Albanian military threat. Deprived of the little entertainment and freedom the soldiers enjoyed, they start going stir-crazy. The two best friends, a Croat and a Serb, compete in mischief and disobedience: first, by eventually seducing the commander's wife on his trips to obtain the medications for the commander in a nearby town; and second, by misleading the officers about his trip on foot to Tito's memorial burial site in Belgrade. Each of them in his own way inadvertently causes an avalanche of uncontrollable events. As Levi points out “*Border Post's* narrative asserts a connection between political turmoil and the assertion of phallic authority” (Levi 2007: 63). The tenor of the film changes over the course of events

from humorous to tragic, turning it into an account of abrupt maturing and disillusionment. As Johnson correctly observes, “an ostensibly comic story, full of realistic details of life in a military outpost in the far reaches of Yugoslavia several years after Tito’s death, becomes a metaphor for Yugoslavia’s demise” (Johnson 2012: 162). The film brings into focus much of what held the country together (including the obligatory military service which forced young men of different ethnic and religious backgrounds to serve together), but also subtly reveals subcutaneous discords signaling the future collapse of the country.

Already early in his career Grlić was preoccupied with the notion of lost utopia and disillusionment or “utopia tripping over reality” as he once put it (Vidan and Crnković 2012: 108). Going into greater detail in this book, he connects his three films

that examine three pivotal moments in the utopia where we see ourselves as having lived: *Charuga*, a story about the beginnings of the utopia; *You Love Only Once*, about the clash between that utopia and real life; and *The Border Post*, about the moment when the “Yugoslav” version of the utopia came to an end. In some way, all three movies tackle the same topic. I approached each of them in a completely different way because, told through three different characters, these were three distinct stories. (p. 102)

This trilogy thus tasks itself with the intention of understanding how things took a wrong turn and at which point the ideals became permanently severed from the realm of possibility and lost their ethical currency.

Taking a temporary break from politically charged topics in his next film, entitled *Just Between Us* from 2010, Grlić weaves an intimate humorous drama of infidelity and friendship in the spirit of the best Prague school tradition. A portrait of two middle-class families whose private affairs intersect at multiple levels, the film probes questions of relationships, attraction, and marriage by fleshing out convincing and well-acted characters. Despite the somewhat lighter nature of this film, a scandal erupted when the Catholic Church took a stance against sexual explicitness. During the previous era, Grlić may have been accused of subversive intentions, however nudity in his films had never prompted censors to act. A shift in social mores was visible already in these reactions. When asked about a hiatus in political topics and a choice to occupy himself with ahistorical characters and their foibles, he stated that in his view there are no more politics since “it is all about money. Politics have been reduced to money. The element of utopia has disappeared as well as the element of the social category in politics. Politics represents the process of arriving at a position of power that can be calculated through money. In particular,

in transitional countries which have a portion of the new capital that was generated by crime, politics has become an empty category” (Vidan and Crnković 2012: 106).

Grić’s most recent film *The Constitution*, produced in 2016, reintroduces the political dimension and situates its characters in a typical four-story building in a Zagreb neighborhood. Sufficient time has elapsed since the last war for the protagonists to lead a normal life and for the most part ignore one another’s ethnic backgrounds. The main character, Vjeko Kralj, rendered superbly by the late Nebojša Glogovac, is a high school teacher and a highly esteemed member of society owing to his family’s right-wing political affiliations. At home he grudgingly cares for his bedridden father, an officer in the Croatian World War II Nazi-occupied puppet state and now a shadow of a man. Their love-hate relationship acquires a new dimension when Vjeko decides to come out and, after many years of abuse, admits he is gay. What is more, he himself becomes incapacitated after a herd of skinheads attacks him during one of his secretive outings, while dressed in drag. Although they live in the same entryway, Vjeko and his neighbors, a childless couple, avoid one another. Seeing him in this predicament, Maja (played beautifully by Ksenija Marinković), who is a nurse, comes to his aid. This hesitant and initially awkward relationship grows more intricate when her husband, who happens to be of Serbian descent, enters the picture. Serving in the Croatian police force, he has to pass an exam on the constitution and needs some coaching. Vjeko’s father’s demise eventually frees Vjeko but also forces him to face his own demons, and it is at this critical moment that the humane face of the neighborhood prevents a tragedy. *The Constitution* tackles difficult issues of nationalism, LGBT rights, oppression, revenge, solidarity, love, and hate and does so by providing a glimpse into a Croatian neighborhood while eerily reminding us of our own backyards. The topic of father–son relationships in recent Croatian film production is a layered one and deserves a separate examination but suffice it to say here that it raises the question of accountability and answerability for political outcomes that have a lasting negative impact on future generations. It just so happened that the main role was played by a Serbian actor, not as a statement, but because he was best able to portray the principal character. The anecdote shared in this book of Nebojša Glogovac’s accent-coaching by a professional linguist is yet another example of the separations and connections so well captured in this film.

Grić’s sensibility for political issues is covert, woven into the textures of life, the inescapable traits and essences of an individual who stands in opposition to the system and who lives that system through his or her everyday actions. As the characters cannot escape the intricacies of their own temperament and habits, they are similarly entrapped in the circum-

stances dictated by a specific historical and political moment. These simple human stories uncover the absurdities that lie in plain view and invite us to reflect. The notion of solidarity looms large in Grlić's works as he puts to the test the values propagated against simple human truths. He shows how human life never fits into a binary universe and why dissidents are essential for the dispersal of dogma of any kind. Although ethical and political aspects are omnipresent in his films, they never obscure the aesthetic intention. By his own admission, he does not believe in unidimensional stories, rather he indulges his viewer (and, we can say, the reader here) to play with ambiguity and discover this multiplicity of levels as they see fit. Because ultimately, in Grlić's view, films are stories about specific people and specific places, not ideas, and this is what gives them their universal potential. To the complicated question of how to tell a film story, he answers as follows: "I usually start from the main protagonist. I ask myself: if he or she were to make a movie about themselves, how would they do it? In what kind of breath, what cadences, what images, color, sound? I search for a way to tell the story from within the mindset of the lead, in their life rhythm, in short—as their story" (p. 102).

The present volume is as multilayered as Grlić's movies in the sense that these are his stories inasmuch as they are his characters', friends', and family's stories. They are self-reflective and playful, hilarious and tragic, political and subversive, metanarrative and realistic, nuanced and colorful.

The one hundred and seventy-seven film terms provide sometimes a direct and at other times a metaphoric path to Grlić's stories and concurrently serve as a self-referential mechanism to comment on a series of film attributes. The entries can be read in any order, allowing for the reader's own "montage" of the book's universe. Through this palimpsest of fates, circumstances, encounters, and calamities emerges a subtle socioanthropological account which not only provides an insight into the ins and outs of the socialist film industries but also brings us face-to-face with important film figures and venues in the West. Grlić adroitly captures the absurdities and paradoxes in one's life resulting from the sort of tectonic shifts with which East European history abounds. His collection offers a taste of "the other" Europe's reality and yet demonstrates how much this liminal space, despite the political unrest, has also been an intrinsic part of Western culture. However, it also immerses us in scenes of living in many other places and times, while forcing us to ask the same essential questions.

As Jacob Mikanowski has put it in his reflections on this corner of the world, "the stories of Eastern Europe offer another way of looking at the world. They are a reminder that we are not always the masters of our own fate" (Mikanowski 2017). Given the state of the world's affairs, Grlić's stories could not have arrived at a more opportune moment.

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