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Reframing the Image

Contents

Revisiting Michael Snow's *Wavelength*, after Deleuze's Time-Image

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Abstract. Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967) is one of the most written about avant-garde films. It has served as "a blue screen in front of which a range of ideological and intellectual dramas have been played out," as Elizabeth Legge put it in a book-length study of the film, whose recent publication testifies to the continuing relevance of the film (Legge 2009). This paper takes Annette Michelson's article, *Toward Snow*, one of the first and most often cited encounters with Snow's cinema, as its point of departure (Michelson 1978). Michelson sees the film as a reflection which reveals the cinema as a temporal *narrative* medium. Drawing on Husserl's phenomenology of time-consciousness, she argues that this reflection on the medium is at the same time a reflection on the structures of consciousness. However, the paper also draws on the work of Gilles Deleuze, whose two-volume study of the cinema has opened up new possibilities for thinking about time and the cinema (Deleuze 1983, 1985). The paper is not an interpretation of Deleuze. It appropriates and puts to work his idea that the cinema is not essentially a narrative medium; but a medium that disrupts linear time, making visible a non-chronological dimension of time, which fragments the subject and exposes it to liminal situations. *Wavelength*, I argue, reverses the flow of time, to make visible an abyss at the heart of time, which shatters the unity of the subject.

Keywords: Deleuze's time-image, Michael Snow's *Wavelength*, avant-garde, non-chronological dimension of time, narrative versus non-narrative

> "*The film is a continuous zoom which takes 45 minutes to go from its widest field to its smallest and final field. It was shot with a fixed camera from one end of an 80 foot loft, shooting the other end, a row of windows, and the street. This, the setting, and the action which takes place there are cosmically equivalent. The room (and the zoom) are interrupted by 4 human events including a death. The sound on these occasions is sync sound, music and speech,*

> *occurring simultaneously with an electronic sound, a*
> *sine wave, which goes from its lowest note to its highest*
> *in 40 minutes. It is a total glissando while the film is a*
> *crescendo and a dispersed spectrum which attempts to*
> *utilize the gifts of both prophecy and memory which*
> *only film and music have to offer*"
>
> (Snow 1994, 40–41).

It is not easy to approach a film that thematizes the impossibility of attaining what is aimed at; a film, a 45 minute zoom, whose object seems to withdraw as the camera approaches it. "A track towards the true nature of film," as Bruce Elder (1977, 320) called it; *Wavelength* questions itself, reflects on its own possibility and ontological status, yet seems to withhold the answer, deferring the end of its movement. However, as in philosophy, a question well-posed may provide an answer despite or *by* remaining open. Moreover, a path "toward Snow" has already been breached. The film has been written about extensively. Perhaps the most often cited, and the most relevant, is the work of Annette Michelson. Rather than seeing the film as a documentary or a reflection on what it means to "dwell" in a space, Michelson understands that the film is about time (Michelson 1978). Citing Valery's *Introduction to the method of Leonardo da Vinci*: "The working of his thought is thus concerned with that slow transformation of the notion of space which, beginning as a vacuum chamber, as an isotropic volume, gradually became a system inseparable from the matter it contains and from time;" she suggests that we see a similar kind of transformation take place in the film (Michelson 1978, 172). What at first appears as the image of an ordinary apartment, framed in the static geometry of perspective, is turned into a meditation on – but also an experience of – time, time and the cinema. Michelson points out that the film is punctuated by sudden changes from positive to negative, intense flashes of color, superimpositions of fixed images over the progressive zoom itself, and a series of human events, all of which create a series of still (photograph-like) moments within the forward movement. These interruptions serve to remind us that the movement of the cinematographic image "bears in its wake" discrete events, out of which the flow of time emerges (1978, 174). In other words, for Michelson the film is about the formation of time, of temporal continuity, out of fixed frames, isolated events, and spatial objects. It is a film about film, or about its essentially temporal dimension.

It is this creation of time, which *Wavelength* both performs and reflects on, that makes it such an interesting and important film for thinking about the cinema. In this regard, Michelson puts us on the right track. However, for

Michelson, time is synonymous with narrative; and in making visible the formation of time, *Wavelength* functions as a reflection on narrative. It functions as a kind of a meta-narrative. Moreover, Michelson understands narrative time through Husserl's phenomenological concept of time-consciousness. For Husserl, consciousness is intentional, in the sense that it is directed at objects in the world; and, as intentional, the temporality of consciousness is teleological (in layman's terms, goal-oriented) (Husserl 1960). Michelson equates the teleological time of intentional consciousness with the time of narrative (Michelson 1978, 173). Narrative, she argues, establishes a relation between the subject (viewer or artist) behind the camera and the world given before the camera, which exhibits intentional activity; insofar as it compels the viewer to organize the flow of images in reference to a meaningful end, the end of the story; and to experience the perpetual modification and development of that end across time. The experience of film time, in this sense, mirrors the experience of a subject intentionally positing a goal and acting to realise it in the world. *Wavelength*, for Michelson, is a perfect example, because it strips the narrative down to this essential temporal aspect: the experience of moving towards a resolution (Michelson 1978, 173–177).

However, not every narrative has a teleological structure, not every story resolves itself in a single revelation. There are many open-ended and pluralistic narratives in modern literature and film. In contrast to Michelson, I argue that *Wavelength* only seems to have a linear trajectory, but at a deeper level reveals a more twisted structure, projecting an end-less future, at both the beginning and end of the film. More importantly, however, it strikes me that the film should not be considered a narrative at all (even an open-ended one). *Wavelength* is composed as a movement. From the beginning to the end of the film, the zoom sketches a figure in time; a figure, a back and forth movement, which creates a certain sense of time. The time of the film is the effect of a certain ordering of the flow of time in the image and between images; of a certain montage that takes place within the zoom. In other words, it is by purely cinematographic means, and not by way of the story, that Snow is able to create that sense of temporal continuity, the stretch of time, which Michelson was not far from conceptualizing.

In order to better understand the experience of time that lies at the heart of *Wavelength*, Gilles Deleuze's work on the cinema is a valuable resource. Deleuze emphasizes the irreducibility of the movement and time of the cinematographic image to narrative. In classical cinema, he argues, time was bound up with narrative development more closely. It thus took a more teleological form (Deleuze 1986). However, according to Deleuze, modern cinema is preoccupied with time more directly, often foregoing the rational

development of events, in order to explore empty or disjointed time; in order to explore the unfolding of time for itself (Deleuze 1989). This is the case with *Wavelength*, the "focus" of which is not the end of the story, but the experience of being on the way. It is this experience of being on the way, that is, of moving towards a future, a future which will not arrive, that I will try to conceptualize, in its metaphysical and cinematographic aspects, through an approach that is informed by the work of Deleuze.

Back to the Future: the Zoom

Michelson is right to point out that *Wavelength* begins by installing a threshold of expectation through the searching, narrowing movement of the zoom. The film appears as having "relentless directionality," or "that regard for the future that forms a horizon of expectation" (Michelson 1978, 174). The sense of a "towards which" becomes visible as the photograph comes progressively into view on the horizon, and is, as it were, thematized. It is made visible as that in relation to which the present of the image, and, correlatively, the consciousness that is situated in the present, is constituted, as a present in time, on its way "towards" the future.

At the same time, Michelson points out, the film makes visible a "horizon of the past," through superimpositions (of the image just seen) and events "passing into the field from behind the camera and back again" (Michelson 1978, 174). "And back again," that is to say, there is a recursive movement whereby the past is re-projected (superimposed) onto the future; as a memory is re-activated in the present. What is initially projected ahead becomes past (falling behind the camera) and serves as the basis for a new horizon. For Michelson, this re-course to the past does not disturb the film's "relentless directionality." It gives it shape, in the way that a memory serves to fix the end point of a new action.

The film (or its time) seems to move like an arrow towards its target, suggesting a linear schema, and the promise of a resolution. However, this progressive movement is foiled, or serves as a foil for a different type of temporality that soon becomes apparent in the course of the film. We are "moving from uncertainty to certainty," as Michelson puts it; but what happens at the moment of "revelation," when the camera discovers the object of its search? It turns out to be a photograph of ocean waves, and the zoom continues. The image regains the depth that it started with and that it only seemed to have exhausted. Michelson writes: "The photograph is re-projected in superimposition upon itself. The eye is projected through a photograph out beyond the wall and screen into a limitless space" (Michelson 1978, 175). What takes place is a sort of

return to the beginning; a return, that is, to the condition of being on the way towards or being suspended before an uncertain future.[1]

The future, that is, the photograph *towards which* the zoom moves, ceases to appear simply as what is ahead on the horizon. It "turns out" as having already been given, as what the zoom aims at *retrieving*. It is as though it were (a future) past. In his description of the film, Snow spoke of "the gifts of both prophecy and memory that only film and music have to offer" (Snow 1994, 40). Considering the loop-like structure of the zoom, the conjunction "and" could be taken as suggesting an imbrication of prophecy and memory, past and future, which makes each the function of the other. The gift of time would then be this imbrication: the givenness – in memory – of the future; or the "yet to be" character of what is given (as past).

The effect of this imbrication, or of the folding of the future onto the past, is a kind of *mise-en-abyme*: there appears a horizon behind the horizon, a veil behind the veil. The recommencement of the zoom into a horizon which lay behind the horizon, in other words, implies the possibility of an infinite regress. The future *mise-en-abyme* appears as *infinitely deferred*. As the zoom approaches it, at the very moment, the future opens anew as already still to come; and so on, ad infinitum, as though the movement had no end. It is in this sense that the zoom returns to its "origin." It repeats and recommences the un-ending movement towards the future.

The time of the film is not therefore linear, but it is not simply circular either. It does not simply return to what was already there, since what was already there, and what comes to have the status of the past in the course of the film, was itself simply a possibility, a vague future on the horizon. In other words, what was given beforehand was a movement that still had to be made, a horizon that had not yet been given or had only been given in the form of the not yet. The zoom returns only to the future, to that which continually escapes it, to that which it can never be done with. Its trajectory is therefore more paradoxical than that which is implied by a simple circle. Spinning away from and towards itself at the same time, it traces something like a broken or decentred circle.

The "human events" that punctuate the zoom do not constitute a narrative, so much as they serve to mark the time of the film. A woman walks into the apartment accompanied by two men carrying a book-shelf; later she returns

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1   The climactic moment of the film, when the photograph moves clearly into view, is marked by a rapid series of superimpositions of the photograph as it *was* just projected, as well as by the sine wave (the soundtrack of the film), which begins to slide up and down its range of cycles as though it were turning back and doubling upon itself after having steadily progressed, until then, to its highest pitch. Both of these devices serve to emphasize the loop-like or repetitive structure of the zoom.

with a friend, and they listen to *Strawberry Fields Forever*; a long while later, a sound of breaking glass is heard, and a man (played by Hollis Frampton) stumbles in and dies on the floor; the woman returns and calls someone to tell him about the dead man in her apartment, whom she has never seen before. This absurd little "narrative" constitutes a before and an after, with a death in-between. What is essential here is the fact that it is *at the moment of death* that the camera turns into the photograph (passing just above the dead body). Death coincides with the transition, with the moment when the film turns back (to the future). From this standpoint the photograph of ocean waves appears as a sort of visualization of death, or of the point of rupture, the moment, the time of death. But if in this sense the film unveils the great mystery of life, it is only, alas, to unveil another veil. For if it is death that is projected, it is projected as infinitely deferred, that is, it is made present as what cannot be made present. It is given as unattainable, or "imprevisible;" – and what, conceivably, is more "imprevisible" than death?

This reading of the film is confirmed in a certain way by Snow's *Wavelength for Those Who Don't Have the Time* (2003). The film, which is *Wavelength* cut into three parts and superimposed upon one another, does more than economize on time. It reveals what is most essential about *Wavelength*. The film folds *Wavelength* upon itself such that the end is co-present with the beginning: the photograph of waves is already there while the zoom is just beginning to move towards it. We see the photograph up close, occupying the whole screen, and *at the same time* we see it superimposed upon itself, as a small image, far on the horizon. [Fig. 1.] The zoom moves toward a future that has already past and is still to come… From the point of view of Snow's sequel, what is essential about *Wavelength* is neither narrative nor linear perspective, but that doubling up of time that is best understood in terms of the anachronism: *back to the future.*[2]

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2   The fact that the central and final image of *Wavelength* is a photograph sheds further light on the temporality of the film. If a photograph fixes a moment of time, a photograph projected in a film is itself fixed in time. Snow explored this paradox (of photographs cinematographically projected in time) in his film *One Second in Montreal*. The film projects a series of photographs of parks in Montreal. Each still is held progressively longer, which reveals, ineluctably, the irreducible inscription of time on the cinematographic image. As Michelson puts it, in *One Second in Montreal* "the flow of time is superimposed, inscribed upon the photograph's fixity – as the discrete images of the loft had been superimposed upon its traversal by the zoom [in *Wavelength*]" (1978, 177). However, in the final moments of *Wavelength* the projection of the photograph serves to reveal the infinite dimension of time itself.

From a Phenomenological towards a Deleuzian Concept of Time and the Cinema

Is *Wavelength* a metaphor of the subject's experience of being in time? Michelson is not the only significant film critic to make this argument. What it implies is that the film *refers* to a reality given in the world, by *mirroring* the "intentional" structure of subjective experience. Understood phenomeno-logically, consciousness is "intentional" in the sense that it is always directed at objects in the world. Insofar as intentionality is an activity (of the subject in the world) it is fundamentally temporal. This is what, according to Michelson, the film dramatizes: with the camera in the role of consciousness, and the photograph in that of the world. Like phenomenology, the film does not describe this relation as static, or the movement from the one to the other as "deterministic" (that is, uni-directional, like a cause and effect relation). For phenomenology, subject and object, intention and goal, past and future are never given once and for all. In *Wavelength* we are to see the perpetual transformation of subject and object in relation to one another, through the perpetual reversal of horizons, whereby what was projected ahead becomes the starting point for new initiatives. We are to see, that is to say, the perpetual transformation of the world by the camera's subjective eye, and of the eye by the world. The phenomenological reading of film is not strictly "realist" (Michelson herself always identified as a modernist) since from this standpoint reality is not simply reproduced. Nonetheless, the reading refers the camera's eye to the horizon of the world and to its subjective correlate, as to an original structure, of which it becomes "a metaphor."[3]

However, if *Wavelength* reverses the direction of time in the way that I have described it above, then it ruins intentionality. Even if, following Michelson, we begin by considering the camera in the role of consciousness and the

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3   The question of what kind of image of the subject is constituted by *Wavelength* was much discussed in the seventies and eighties, during the heyday of Film-Theory. Stephen Heath argued with Michelson, suggesting that the film's implied narrative and linear perspective prevents it from questioning how the apparatus of cinema constitutes the subject in the first place; and makes it complicit with a certain ideology of the (all-powerful) subject. Snow, for his part, claimed that neither narrative nor perspective were the true subjects of the film. Guided by Deleuze, I have focused on the time that is articulated by the movement of the image in the film, which implies a different way of looking at the question of the cinema and its relation to the subject.

For a summary of these more classical debates about *Wavelength*, see Elizabeth Legge's *Michael Snow, Wavelength* (Legge 2009).

photograph in that of its object, and if we understand the relation between the two, as "dramatized" by the film, in terms of time, we cannot fail to see the ruin of intentionality. The photographic object appears in the guise of a future that withdraws from the grasp of consciousness as it approaches it. It does not function as a goal that the subject can recognize or represent. It does not refer back to the original intention of the subject, as its actual or potential realization. It appears to the subject as the unknown, the unforeseeable, the limitless. Exposed to such a future, plunging, that is, zooming into it, the subject is undone. That is to say, the coherence of the subject, its identity across time is broken; broken by the fact that a part of it, the future into which it is projected, remains inaccessible and unrecognizable. If there is a unity between consciousness and its object, the camera eye and the photograph, it lies in the continuity that the zoom establishes; and this continuity links the one to the other, the past (self) to the future, as to a radical otherness. In other words, the point of connection, of the self with its object and through this object with itself, is a point of divergence.

In the film the projection of the future and the ruin of the subject are marked by death. Similarly, in the history of philosophy, it is the meditation on death, in the work of Heidegger, that introduces a rupture with the modern theory of the subject. Having defined the subject as situated in time (*Dasein*) and having defined time by the possibilities that the subject aims to realize in the world, Heidegger identifies death as the limit of all these possibilities (Heidegger 1996). Death is not only the possibility that cannot be realized; it also marks the limit of all possibilities, of all possible realizations. However, the possibility of not realizing a possibility, or of not being able to, is a feature of all possibility and serves to define the very character of possibility, that is, its essentially contingent "not yet" quality. Moreover, this "not yet" essence of possibility, which is marked by the possibility of death, is also what enables the realization of possibilities, since it implies that the course of action is not fixed in advance. This reasoning leads Heidegger to conclude that death is the ultimate human possibility, the horizon that sustains every horizon, enabling the realization and the negation of all possibilities. If the subject is defined by a possibility that it cannot master, if its "ownmost" (as Heidegger calls it) possibility escapes it, then it is divided within (Heidegger 1996, 232). Being towards death, the subject cannot know itself or what will become of it. It is defined, rather, by a movement away from itself; that is to say, the movement towards itself, towards its own possibilities, pushes it outside itself. The subject is outside of itself (as Heidegger would say, it is ec-static), or, which amounts to the same thing, it is an other to itself. This reflection on death and the ruin of the subject is radicalized in the work of Blanchot, Levinas, Derrida, and Deleuze. It takes

place in *Wavelength* (both as reflection and experience) through the movement of the zoom towards an infinitely deferred horizon.

There is thus a universal or metaphysical aspect to the film, which brings it into relation with philosophy. Although Snow was not thinking about Heidegger or Deleuze, he did have metaphysical "aims," calling the film a summation of his religious inklings (Snow 1994, 40). It is hard not to see the photograph of the ocean, projected at the moment of death, as invoking some sort of transcendence. However, it would be presumptuous to see it as invoking the beyond of death as the place of everlasting bliss. The ocean is too vague and indeterminate for that. It appears, rather, as a limit towards which the subject moves but can never cross. Death is this limit: at once full of promise and infinite possibility and, at the same time, a hopeless black hole in which everything comes to nothing. The sublime quality of the film or of its climactic moment can also be explained by this Janus-faced character of death: at once a source of great wonder and novelty, and the most harrowing, destructive experience.

In the cinema books Deleuze turns to Heidegger when discussing the cinema's relation to thought. It is Heidegger's later reflections on the nature of thinking that interest Deleuze the most. In the text *What is Called Thinking*? Heidegger exploits the double sense of the German phrase *Was Heisst Denken*? (meaning both what is called thinking and what calls for thinking) to transform the question "what is called thinking" into the question "what calls for thinking;" that is to say, what enables us to think in the first place (Heidegger 1976). His answer, at once simple and profound, is that what calls for thinking, what is most thought provoking is the fact that we are not yet thinking. It is the lack of knowledge, rather than the stock of accumulated knowledge, that makes us think in the first place; just as it is the possibility of not being able to act that gives us the possibility of action, of realizing something new and undetermined, in the first place. Deleuze writes that when the cinema discovers time, not the time that unfolds as a determined sequence, but the empty time that opens a limitless horizon, it discovers this fundamental "inpower" (*impouvoir*) of thought. In other words, with the time-image the cinema forces us to think thought itself, which is the "not yet" that lies at the origin of all thought, at the origin of all possibility.[4] The cinema has innumerable ways of making us probe

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4   "What forces us to think is 'the inpower (*impouvoir*) of thought,' the figure of nothingness, the inexistence of a whole which could be thought. [...] The cinematographic image, as soon as it takes on its aberration of movement, carries out a *suspension of the world* or affects the visible with a *disturbance*, which, far from making thought visible, as Eisenstein wanted, are on the contrary directed to what does not let itself be thought in thought, and equally to what does not let itself be seen in vision" (Deleuze 1989, 168).

the very depths of thought; *Wavelength* does it by making visible the "imprevisible" (invisible) future.

However, the universal aspect of the "not yet" should not blind us to the specificity of the medium (the time) of the cinema and the singular way that it is realized in this monumental film. Deleuze's approach, moreover, instructs us to consider this specificity as well as the singular way it is realized by each film. *Wavelength* does not give us a representation of death or simply reproduce the concept. The zoom does not function as a representation or a reproduction of a real subject moving towards a photograph of the future. Rather, it is a movement that opens the future for itself. In other words, the event that the film constitutes does not function as a mirror of experience; it effectuates a rupture with the world as it is experienced by a subject.

The effectuation of the rupture, moreover, is accomplished through purely cinematographic means. It is the "stuff of time" (as Zsuzsa Baross puts it) out of which cinematographic images are made, that constitutes the means through which *Wavelength* creates its sense of time (Baross 2011, 32). The time it takes the zoom to traverse the apartment, and the mechanical articulation of this time by the projector, are manipulated and organized in a way that allows the future to become visible as a withdrawing horizon. To put it differently, it is in the space of the 45 minutes that it takes for the projector to repeat the movement of the zoom; and in between the images mechanically articulated into a continuum; that the abyss of time (the infinite deferral of the future) surges up and becomes visible. This is why the 45 minutes feels like an eternity.[5]

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5   While the sense of an infinite stretching of time has little to do with the real-time length of the film, one does have to sit through *Wavelength*, one does have to give it time. It is the slow building up of duration that disposes us to eventually experience its limitlessness. This is why, while *Wavelength for Those Who Don't Have the Time* reveals the anachronism that lies at the heart of the film, it is not the same experience.

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Figure 1. *Wavelength for Those Who Don't Have the Time* (2003).

From a Tactile Epistemology to the Ontology of Affect: Two Readings of Deleuze's Time-Image in Film and New Media Theory

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Abstract. The paper compares how two theorists of media arts, Mark B. N. Hansen and Laura U. Marks, interpret the relation of Deleuze's time-image to corporeality. Both argue that some novel types of images – in film and media art – engage the body in new and also more intensive ways than traditional cinema did. While they remain committed to Bergson's theory of perception, their works offer different readings of how the Bergsonian concepts of Deleuze's film philosophy can be applied to new media: on the one hand, to the non-signifying, affective properties of Hansen's *digital image* in contemporary media arts, and on the other, to Marks's – in the last instance, memory-signifying – *haptic image,* which she discussed initially in connection with video art and experimental film. In *New Philosophy for New Media* (2004), Hansen asserts that "Deleuze's neo-Bergsonist account of the cinema carries out the progressive disembodying of the [body]", which "reaches its culmination in […] what he calls the 'time-image,'" and calls for "a rehabilitation of Bergson's embodied concept of affection." While Marks also offers some criticism on Deleuze, she suggests that his "theory of time-image cinema permits a discussion of the multisensory quality of cinema," and undertakes to examine "how the body may be involved in the inauguration of time-image cinema." Besides arguing that both tendencies are present in Deleuze to varying degrees, I attempt to contextualize the divergences in their lines of thought by looking at the types of media and selection of works they examine, as well as the possible theoretical commitments that might guide these selective strategies.

Keywords: Deleuze's time-image, digital, haptic image, affect, body, new media.

"[Deleuze's] writings on cinema may be brought productively to works of which he was not aware or did not exist at the time of his writing. His cinematographic philosophy is always open to transformation, to producing new concepts. […] I intend to make his theories think by bringing them into contact

with new images" – wrote Laura U. Marks in her 2000 book *Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses,* which offers an elaboration of the political implications of Deleuze's film philosophy as applied to diaspora experimental film and video art (26). For this end, she does not resort directly to what the French philosopher wrote about "modern political cinema," which he equated with third world and minority film in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985), but uses Deleuze's theory of time-image cinema to discuss "the multisensory quality of cinema" (Marks 2000, xiv) – a quality that intercultural works utilize to find new languages suitable for challenging official histories.[1]

Marks examines how the works of diaspora artists exploit our non-visual senses, such as touch, smell and taste, through the faculties of vision and hearing. She is especially interested in incomplete or – at least, seemingly – non-signifying images, which she relates to the Deleuzian time-image. In *Skin of the Film*, she identifies the latter with images that "force the viewer to draw upon his or her subjective resources" (Marks 2000, 43), which in the case of intercultural film and video – unlike for Deleuze – are influenced by collective memories, deeply seated in the body: "If a viewer is free to draw upon her own reserves of memory as she participates in the creation of the object on screen, her private and unofficial histories and memories will be granted as much legitimation as the official histories that make up the regime of the cliché – if not more" (Marks 2000, 48).

Yet, these images – which Marks relates to what Deleuze calls *fossils* in *Cinema 2* – mobilize not only the viewer's imagination, but, by various strategies, also his or her corporeal registers. It is partly through this focus on corporeality that Marks extends the notion of the Deleuzian fossil, connecting it to the social. To achieve this, Marks suggests a partial return to Bergson: "When discussing perception itself, Deleuze tends to suggest that individual perception is possible without recourse to collective memory. In contrast, I argue that the element of communal experience that is implicit in Bergson's theory of

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1 Marks traces the idea that "intercultural cinema is fundamentally concerned with the production of new languages, and the difficult task of defining intercultural cinema rests in its emergent character" (2000, xiv) to Kobena Mercer, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Hamid Naficy. The works she looks at address sensoria different from the Western, ocularcentric configurations of the senses, to represent collective memories that are repressed in the traditional – that is, European and North American – narratives of history. However, in *Cinema 2* Deleuze also pointed out the challenges that third world and minority cinema face in terms of self-representation: "Sometimes the minority film-maker finds himself in the impasse described by Kafka: the impossibility of not 'writing,' the impossibility of writing in the dominant language. [...] The third world intellectual [...] has to break with the condition of the colonized, but can do so only by going over to the colonizer's side, even if only aesthetically, through artistic influences" (Deleuze 1989, 221).

perception necessarily informs the process of cinematic spectatorship as well. Perception is never a truly individual act but also an engagement with the social and cultural memory" (2000, 62).

Marks also points out a similar tendency in Merleau-Ponty's work. She claims that despite the rather schematic examples Merleau-Ponty gives for embodied perception, his arguments suggest that "the experience of the body is informed by culture" (Marks 2000, 152), as exemplified by the recent interest of feminism and cultural anthropology on phenomenology. Marks finds Merleau-Ponty inspirative also because his phenomenology "did in fact inherit and expand Bergson's implication of perception in the body" (2000, 150). She considers it an important complement to the temporal orientation of Deleuze's theory, because Merleau-Ponty's work – she suggests – reintroduces an interest on the spatial relation between viewer and image. It is only in her discussion of the French phenomenologist that she offers a criticism on Deleuze similar to Hansen's: "Deleuze says, 'Give me a body, then,' but his interest is not in exploring how cinema relates to the bodies we have already been given" (Marks 2000, 150).

But this is rather an exception in her reading of Deleuze, in which she repeatedly emphasizes the relevance of the time-image to embodied perception. In *New Philosophy for New Media* (2004), Mark B. N. Hansen offers a more radical criticism on Deleuze, privileging Bergson for his treatment of affective embodiment. While Marks maintains that "for Deleuze [...] the time-image cinema does not abandon the body" (2000, 73), for Hansen, "Deleuze's neo-Bergsonist account of the cinema carries out the progressive disembodying of the center of indetermination [i.e. the body]. This disembodying reaches its culmination in the second volume of his study devoted to what he calls the 'time-image'" (2006, 6). These contradictory readings of Deleuze root in the different types of new images the two authors are interested in, corresponding to their wider theoretical agendas.

Hansen examines the *digital image* in a selection of new media art, which – although he tends to speak generally about the category – seem to represent only a subset among various types of digital images. Although this version is itself diverse in terms of aesthetic or even technical properties, he suggests that, as a distinctive feature, they all rely on the creative capacities of bodily affect. In a review of Hansen's book, Dutch artist René Beekman criticizes him for "his fairly typical choice of artworks" (2005, 355). According to Beekman, in order to put bodily affection into the centre, "all new media artwork [the author] refers to either involves physical, bodily, haptic contact between the artwork

and the visitor [...], are representations of the human body [...] or are literal representations of the bodily expression of emotions [...]" (2005, 355).[2]

Among the exceptions might be Craig Kalpakjian's works (*Hall* [1999], *HVAC III* [2000], *Duct* [1999]) that present corporate spaces from perspectives that are – to use Hansen's Deleuzian term – incompossible with the human experience, "in order to highlight the extraction of the human presence from the artificial […] spaces he renders" (Hansen 2006, 211). Works like these echo how Deleuze describes the prefiguration of the any-space-whatever, one of the two signs of the affection-image, in experimental film: "If the experimental cinema tends towards a perception as it was before men (or after), it also tends towards the correlate of this, that is, towards an any-space-whatever released from its human co-ordinates" (2009, 125). While, however, for Deleuze, the resulting "space without reference points" (2009, 125) retains potentialities for perception,[3] Hansen argues that its digital counterpart instead "catalyze[s] the production of a space within the body that is without direct (perceptual) correlation with the non-spaces [it] represent[s]" (2006, 213), relying less on the faculty of perception than on the affective capacities of the body.

Thus, for him, the digital image marks a "paradigm shift" in aesthetic culture: "a shift from the dominant ocularcentrist aesthetic to a haptic aesthetic rooted in embodied affectivity" (Hansen 2006, 12). Here, the latter concept emerges as an alternative not only to visuality but to perception in a more general sense – following Gilbert Simondon's distinction, Hansen describes perception as a faculty of the individuated being, while affectivity is a "mode of bodily experience which mediates between the individual and the preindividual" (2006, 8).[4] Hansen later, paraphrasing artist Bill Viola, also offers a definition of

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2   This summary is rather simplified, but the assertion is correct that Hansen examines a limited selection of images. Beekman also professes that the author frees the image of its own materiality, which disregards examples like Alba D'Urbano's *Touch Me* (1995). This interactive installation invites the viewer literally to touch the screen, according to Hansen, engaging him or her with its "informational materiality" (Hansen 2006, 141).

3   "Nothingness is itself diverted towards that which comes out of it or falls back on it, the genetic element, the fresh or vanishing perception, which potentialises a space by retaining only the shadow or the account of perception" (Deleuze 2009, 125).

4   In critical theory a turn to affect was inaugurated in the mid-1990s, influenced by Spinoza's naturalist philosophy (Brian Massumi) and Silvan Tomkins's psychological theory on affects (Eve Sedgwick, Adam Frank). The meaning of affect in this context has also been differentiated from emotions recently and refers to preconscious, visceral bodily reactions that are – at least, seemingly – outside the realms of language, meaning and signification. According to Massumi, "emotion and affect […] follow different logics and pertain to different orders. An emotion is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal" (2002, 27–28). However, prepersonal

affect that more clearly reflects the neuroscience-inspired language of affect theory: "affectivity is [...] something that passes through the body and that can only be felt, often at a speed beyond and of a magnitude beneath the perceptual thresholds of the unaided human perceptual apparatus" (2006, 159).

A forceful example for this "affective bodily response" (Hansen 2006, 202) might be Hansen's description of Robert Lazzarini's sculptural installation *skulls* (2000), from the 2001 exhibition BitSreams at Whitney Museum of American Arts, New York. Lazzarini mounted four 3D-printed anamorphic skulls, one apiece on the four walls of an exhibition room, creating a warped, topological space – if seen as part of a single continuum – that refuses to translate into a coherent visual logic from any single perspective. Yet, Hansen asserts that the affective process Lazzarini's work catalyses "creates a *place* within our bodies" (2006, 203), which is not altogether analogous to the spectacle. In his account, "our visual faculties are rendered useless and we experience a shift to an alternate mode of perception rooted in our bodily faculty of proprioception" (2006, 202).[5]

But, more often, Hansen describes affectivity as "a phenomenological modality in its own right" (2006, 204) rather than a mode of perception, and attributes the digital image with the capacity of "liberation of affectivity from perception" (2006, 205). Therefore, this type of image is seen more like a process, with the affective body at its centre, instead of being simply framed by a technological

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as affect is, it is not altogether outside history: "Intensity [i.e. affect] is asocial, but not presocial – it includes social elements but mixes them with elements belonging to other levels of functioning and combines them according to different logic" (Massumi 2002, 30).

5   Just as Deleuze's affection-image introduced a new type of space into cinema with the any-space-whatever (ASW), for Hansen, *skulls* also represents a novel space, specific to the digital image. But unlike the fragmented spaces of the cinematic ASW, which Deleuze partly derives from post-war urban landscapes, Hansen claims its digital counterpart lacks such real-world equivalent: "the very existence of an 'original' correlation between the cinematic ASW and empirical space means that there is a preexistent analogy between the human experience of space and the cinematic ASW. It is precisely such a preexistent analogical basis that is missing in the case of the digital ASW. Unlike the cinematic ASW, this latter emerges from the bodily processing of a spatial regime that is, as it were, radically uninhabitable–that simply cannot be entered and mapped through human movement" (Hansen 2006, 208–209). However, even if the digital image finally manifests in the form of a "postvisual" space lived by the body, he notes that the perspectival distortion of *skulls* "can be realized (and corrected) – and that 'makes sense' visually – only within the weird logic and topology within the computer" (Hansen 2006, 202). Using the data-space of the computer as a historical reference point for the digital image, or at least its visual incarnation, might remind of Lev Manovich's concept of *cultural transcoding*, described by the latter theorist as "the process of 'conceptual transfer' from the computer world to culture at large" (Manovich 2001, 47).

apparatus. Hansen dismisses Deleuze for supposedly not paying attention to the embodied nature of perception in Bergson's philosophy when – by what Hansen calls a transformative appropriation – he applies it to modern cinema.[6] As quoted before, Hansen sees it a "progressive," gradually unfolding tendency in Deleuze's work, in which the body is reduced to the sensorimotor logic of the movement-image in *Cinema 1* (1983), while the time-image in the subsequent volume (*Cinema 2*, 1985) reflects the workings of the brain.

Thus, he is interested in new media works that relocalize "the time-image from a purely mental space [...] to an embodied negotiation with the interstice or between-two-images that necessarily takes place in the body-brain of each specific viewer-participant" (Hansen 2006, 246) and "expose the fundamental limitation of Deleuze's cinema of the brain: its investment in an isomorphism between the time-image and the contemporary brain" (Hansen 2006, 248).[7] At a later point, Hansen also finds Bergson's conception of the body somewhat limited. While in Bergson's theory embodied perception subtracts pre-existing images from its environment, which "display [...] the eventual or possible actions of [the] body" (Bergson 1991, 22), Hansen goes further and says that in the digital age it is the body that generates images from pure, formless information. That is, "beneath any concrete 'technical' image or frame lies [...] the framing function of the human body qua center of indetermination" (Hansen 2006, 8).

For Hansen, this contemporary body, partly brought about by the digital technologies, re-establishes the possibility of belief in the world. This belief was also a central problem for Deleuze, who saw the break in the sensorimotor link, associated with the emergence of time-image, accompanied by a more general disjunction of man and world. However, he shows less interest in the fact that Deleuze also saw the body as a substitute for the loss of the ability of the time-image to react: "What is certain is that believing is no longer believing in another world, or in a transformed world. It is only, it is simply, believing in

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6   It is beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate Deleuze's understanding of Bergson's philosophy of perception. The point of interest is rather how the time-image in *Cinema 2* itself relates to the body and affectivity, as understood in contemporary critical theory. Similarly, comparing the corporeality of the two cinema books against the wider context of Deleuzian thought exceeds the aims of the present endeavour.

7   He offers this interpretation of Douglas Gordon's works, which he assumes to involve the affective capacities of the body by strategies like temporal deceleration, temporal discordance or perceptual shift. For example, *24-Hour Psycho* (1993) uses Alfred Hitchcock's film *Psycho* (1960) as a found footage, projected on a screen at a 2 frames-per-second speed, instead of the normal 24 fps. According to Hansen, the slowly changing images subject the viewer to a state of "affective anticipation" (Hansen 2006, 244), an intense physiological experience that directs the attention to the properties of the lived now.

the body. It is giving discourse to the body, and, for this purpose, reaching the body before discourses, before words, before things are named: the 'first name' and even before the first name" (Deleuze 1989, 172–173).[8]

Although Deleuze indeed notes in *Cinema 2* that "the essence of cinema [...] has thought as its higher purpose, nothing but thought and its functioning" (1989, 168), he later adds that "[i]t is through the body (and no longer through the intermediary of the body) that cinema forms its alliance with the spirit, with thought" (1989, 189). His study of the time-image also describes how the emergence of a new, acentred scientific model of the brain transformed the tradition of intellectual film: the images of this new regime replace those that – like, for example, Eisenstein's dialectical montage – force us to think with ones that instead, as anticipated by Antonin Artaud's film theory, reveal a "powerlessness at the heart of thought" (Deleuze 1989, 166). The resulting "new image of thought" follows an irrational, probabilistic logic, in its formal attributes defined by elements such as the point-cut, the relinkage and the black or white screen.

The "purely optical and sound situations" (Deleuze 1989, 4) – or "purely visual situations" (1989, 169) – associated with the time-image break the link with the sensorimotor body of classical cinema,[9] but they do not necessarily lose all ties to the body.[10] In spite of Deleuze often describing the time-image as optical, Marks associates the time-image with haptic vision, assigning a cognitive function to it that, though based on a different mechanism, has a similar effect to montages in classical intellectual cinema: "Haptic images are actually a subset of what Deleuze referred to as optical images: those images that are so 'thin' and unclichéd that the viewer must bring his or her resources of memory and imagination to complete them. The haptic image forces the viewer to contemplate the image itself instead of being pulled into narrative. [...] Accordingly, the optical image in [Alois] Riegl's sense corresponds to Deleuze's movement image, as it affords the illusion of completeness that lends itself to narrative." (2000, 163.)

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8   Deleuze saw a deep-going connection between cinema and belief, either religious or revolutionary. Christian Haines suggests a direct political reading of the body that emerges in *Cinema 2* as a new basis for the belief in the world, yet the quoted passage seems to refuse both the transcendental and the revolutionary ("believing in another world, or in a transformed world" [Deleuze 1989, 167]).

9   They also expose the limits of thought by putting the viewer "in the psychic situation of the seer, who sees better and further than he can react, that is, think" (Deleuze 1989, 170).

10   Deleuze also proclaims that "the time-image does not imply the absence of movement (even though it often includes its increased scarcity) but it implies the reversal of the subordination; it is no longer time, which is subordinate to movement; it is movement, which subordinates itself to time" (Deleuze 1989, 271).

For example, Roula Haj-Ismail's video *I Wet My Hands Etched and Surveyed Vessels Approaching Marks Eyed Inside* (1992), juxtaposes close-up images of bodily scars and war-torn walls in Lebanon with the camera "caressing the buildings, searching the corners of shutters and stone-latticed windows like folds of skin" (Marks 2000, 157). These sequences challenge the traditional representations of a post-bombings Beirut by focusing on surfaces and small details, which – accompanied by a poetic voiceover – evoke collective memories in a personal way. Some of the works Marks examines use blurred images to counter the Western, ocularcentric way of knowing the other, which often turn him or her into a pure, objectified spectacle, subsuming visual control over indigenous cultures.[11] In others, knowledge and memory is embodied in physical objects: in Marta Rodriguez and Jorge Silva's *Love, Women and Flowers* (1988) carnations remain the markers of Columbian women's labour and health-damaging exploitation, from which the plants get alienated in the shopwindows of European florists, still looking freshly-cut. Rea Tajiri's *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige* (1991) interrogates a piece of tar paper taken from a WWII internment camp for Japanese-Americans in the United States to give up repressed historical memories.

Deleuze himself refers to Riegl's concept of the haptic gaze in his description of how the close-ups of hands construct a tactile space in Bresson's *Pickpocket* (1959),[12] but Marks emphasizes that haptic visuality extends further than the direct representation of touch, the latter addressing the senses indirectly, through an intermediary body, while keeping the viewer at a distance from the image[13] (2000, 171). Shauna Beharry's video *Seeing is Believing* (1991) is a good illustration of this difference. The work is based on a single photo of the Indian-Canadian artist, wearing her deceased mother's sari to establish a relationship with her memory in a more intimate way than looking at a photo would allow.

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11   Some of the works achieve the same effect by using incongruous soundtracks that undermine visual representations. Such is the case with a sequence in John Akomfrah's experimental documentary *Handsworth Songs* (1986), in which archive footage showing the arrival of West Indies immigrants to Britain, looking into the camera with a cheerful, optimistic expression, is offset by brooding, melancholic tunes. Marks relates these deliberate mismatches to the paradoxical relations between past and present in the time-image, also calling into question the truth behind representation, which Deleuze calls – borrowing the term from Leibniz – incompossibility.

12   "The hand doubles its prehensive function (of object) by a connective function (of space); but, from that moment, it is the whole eye which doubles its optical function by a specifically 'grabbing' [*haptique*] one, if we follow Riegl's formula for indicating a touching which is specific to the gaze" (Deleuze 1989, 13).

13   For Hansen, the classical sensorimotor scheme seems to confirm to Riegl's optical mode of vision, which he also relates to Adolf von Hildebrand's far-viewing (*Fernbild*), as opposed to the haptic mode or close viewing (*Nahsicht*) (Hansen 2006).

With an extreme close-up of the cloth's folding texture, the image itself challenges the autonomy of vision and engages the tactile senses. Ironically, a still from the video in the book shows Beharry's hand touching the garment over her skin, but for Marks, it is the sight of the textile's material that turns the video into a haptic medium: "I have been brushing the (image of the) fabric with the skin of my eyes, rather than looking at it" (2000, 127).

Hansen also remarks the passage on *Pickpocket* in *Cinema 2*, but challenges it for another reason: he finds Riegl's version of hapticality too confining because it is reduced to merely a mode of vision, instead of differentiating affection from vision, or "displacing the tactile-haptic from the image to the body" (2006, 225). With this strong emphasis on the autonomy of affection, it is not the sensorimotor body of classical cinema that Hansen is looking for to return with the digital image. He writes that "the body that surfaces in the age of the digital revolution – the very body that forms the 'object' of contemporary neuroscience – has scant little in common with the associational sensorimotor body of Deleuze's *Cinema 1*" (Hansen 2006, 7). What makes this body different from the one associated with movement-image is its affective disposition, that is, "its capacity [...] to experience itself as 'more than itself' and thus to deploy its sensorimotor power to create the unpredictable, the experimental, the new" (Hansen 2006, 7).[14]

Although Hansen articulates in his introductory chapter to *New Philosophy for New Media* that – quoting Brian Massumi – affectivity is intrinsically connected to motion, some of the works he later examines seem to trigger affective bodily responses not by the representation or the production of physical movement in space. For example, the warped space Hansen assigns to Lazzarini's *skulls* "refuses to map onto [the viewer's] habitual spatial schematizing" (2006, 200) and the affective space that it creates within the body is "unaccompanied by any perceptual correlate"[15] (2006, 206). Some of the images that Hansen discusses in relation to digital faciality generate an affective response in the viewer by means of facial close-ups. There are similar long takes of close-up shots and tableau

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14   While the time-image is most often associated with the emergence of a new conception of the brain, Christian Haines also argues that it inaugurates a new kind of corporeality. In his political reading of Deleuze, he identifies the sensorimotor link in *Cinema 1* with the logic of capitalism, which makes the movements of the body calculable and controllable, while in *Cinema 2* "the body emerges as incomplete, as the seed, and not actual emergence, of another world" (Haines 2011, 116). To an extent, this echoes Hansen's view of the body as a source of indeterminacy, which, for him, serves as a new basis for belief in the world – although Hansen is less interested in finding direct political implications of what he calls the contemporary body.

15   Hansen connects this inner, affective space to Bergson, who "postulates such a sensorimotor space within the body. As he sees it, affection is itself a kind of action distinct from perception: 'real' rather than 'virtual' action" (2006, 225).

vivant-like scenes in Bill Viola's digital video series *Passions* (2000-2001), shot at a 384 frame-per-second speed and played back extremely slowly, which Hansen – in its relation to temporality – considers an example of "the movement of new media art beyond cinema" (2006, 264).

Hansen introduced the notion of the Digital Facial Image (DFI) as a counterpoint, in many ways, to the Deleuzian affection-image, a form of movement-image discussed in *Cinema 1*, which foreshadows the time-image of the subsequent volume. In Hansen's account, the affection-image transcends its ties with the body by "tearing the image away from its spatiotemporal localization" (2006, 137), which refers to the "change of dimension" (Deleuze 2009, 98) that Deleuze – influenced by how Béla Balázs defined the facial close-up – attributed to this type of image: "The affection-image, for its part, is abstracted from its spatio-temporal co-ordinates which would relate it to a state of things, and abstracts the face from the person to which it belongs in the state of things" (Deleuze 2009, 100). The fact that Deleuze severs the ties of the facial close-up not only from sensorimotor action but also from its spatially embedded character is enough for Hansen to claim that it liberates affect from the body, ignoring that for Deleuze affect "surges in the centre of indetermination" (2009, 67). Marks, on the other hand, remarks that the "disengagement of affective response from action" holds a significance in understanding "how the body may be involved in the inauguration of time-image cinema" (2000, 28).

The comparison of the affection-image with the post-Deleuzian DFI requires a differentiated understanding of the body. When Hansen points out that the affection-image deindividualized the body while the DFI "carries out [its] fundamental reindividuation" (2006, 132), he is not talking about the same body: the represented body in the first part of the statement is substituted with that of the viewer in the second. Although he later elaborates that in the case of digital affection-images "the emphasis is transferred from the image to the embodied response it catalyzes" (Hansen 2006, 138), in many of his references on the body, its status remains ambiguous: the narrative of the "cinematic detachment of affect from the body" (Hansen 2006, 137) or "the disembodying of affect" (Hansen 2006, 148) is thus staged against that of "a reinvestment of the body as the rich source of meaning" (Hansen 2006, 131).

The DFI refers to digital and robotic interfaces that seduce the viewer to interact with them, but, short of a consensual, codified protocol for communication, the encounter will resist signification and instead triggers affective processes in the body "through which we open ourselves to the

experience of the new" (Hansen 2006, 133).[16] Thus, no matter how frustrating the situation gets by its challenge to a semantic understanding, its rootedness in affectivity makes it fundamentally benign for Hansen because – it is one of his key arguments – affect is the source of human creativity: "Not only it is a modality of experience in its own right, but it is that modality – in contrast to perception – *through which we open ourselves to the new*" (Hansen 2006, 133, emphasis added). This latter aspect of affect is not inevitably in conflict with how Deleuze himself thinks of it, for whom "the affect is the 'new,' and new affects are ceaselessly created, notably by the work of art" (Deleuze 2009, 101).

If this newness ultimately originates in the viewer, Hansen's understanding of affect might be not irreconcilable with Deleuze's, even if the taxonomic endeavour in *Cinema 1* and *2* puts more emphasis on the images themselves than on the responses they evoke. Hansen accuses Deleuze with bereaving affect of the autonomy Bergson furnished it with, by making it a subcomponent of perception. Yet, the following passage from Deleuze makes it possible to regard the difference between affect and perception one of kind rather than degree:

"[Affection] surges in the centre of indetermination, that is to say in the subject, between a perception that is troubling in certain respects and a hesitant action. It is a coincidence of subject and object, or the way in which the subject perceives itself, or rather experiences itself or feels itself 'from the inside' (third material aspect of subjectivity). […] It relates movement to a 'quality' as lived state (adjective). Indeed, it is not sufficient to think that perception – thanks to distance – retains or reflects what interests us by letting pass what is indifferent to us. There is inevitably a part of external movements that we 'absorb,' that we refract, and which does not transform itself into either objects of perception or acts of the subject; rather they mark the coincidence of the subject and the object in a pure quality." (Deleuze 2009, 67–68.)

Although the first sentence indeed suggests that affect is a corollary of perception, as the reasoning unfolds, it more and more appears as a function in its own right, reacting to impulses that are outside the realm of natural perception. Regarding it a "coincidence of subject and object" is also in accord with Hansen's perceiving affection as a "medium of contact," fulfilling a "suturing function" (2006, 141) between the image and the human body. Deleuze also endows affect with autonomy when observing that it "is impersonal and is distinct from every individuated state of things: it is none the

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16   In an account of such a work, British collective Mongrel's *Colour Separation* (1998), "the result is the experience of an ever mounting affective excess that emerges in the body of the viewer-participant as a kind of correlate to – perhaps even a recompense for – the incongruity between the image of a face and the voice used to narrate its story" (Hansen 2006, 151).

less *singular*, and can enter into singular combinations or conjunctions with other affects" (Deleuze 2009, 101).

Marks does not use the notion of affect in her work extensively, but – as seen before – she would not be likely to endorse Hansen's assertion that Deleuze reduced "bodily affection to one specific permutation of the movement-image (the affection-image)" (Hansen 2006, 134). In *Skin of the Film* she suggests that the time-image does engage the body, even if the image is abstract, non-signifying.[17] Marks points out that the absence of image characterizing modern cinema – "a black or white screen, underexposed or snowy image" (2000, 42) – also holds the capacity to restore the belief in the world by offering a "cinema of constitution," devoted to the constitution of bodies. Deleuze writes this first in connection with Philippe Garrel, but later also adds that Jean-Louis Schefer saw cinema more fundamentally connected to the body than theatre due to this constitutive nature: "The object of cinema is not to reconstitute a presence of bodies, in perception and action, but to carry out a primordial genesis of bodies in terms of a white, or a black or a grey (or even in terms of colours), in terms of a beginning of visible which is not yet a figure, which is not yet action. [...] Cinema thus coincides with its own essence: a proceeding, a process of constitution of bodies from the neutral image, white or black, snowy or flashed. The problem is not that of a presence of bodies but that of which is capable of restoring the world and the body to us on the basis of what signifies their absence. The camera must invent the movements or positions which correspond to the genesis of bodies, and which are the formal linkages of their primordial postures." (1989, 201–202.)

This process of becoming is just one aspect of what Deleuze calls the *cinema of the body*, one of the two major traditions of the time-image,[18] the other being the *cinema of the brain*. Their modes of operation are, of course, not independent from each other – an interest in the building elements of thought and perception also defines the cinema of the brain: "Thought is molecular. Molecular speeds make up the slow beings that we are. As Michaux said, *'Man*

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17   This tendency is already present in *Cinema 1*, in which the close-up – one of the two signs of the affection-image – does not have to represent the face to take on a facial (i.e. affective) quality, while the other sign, the any-space-whatever precipitated "non-human affects" (Deleuze 2009, 113). According to Deleuze, the second type is "more subtle than the first, more suitable for extracting the birth, the advance and the spread of affect" (Deleuze 2009, 113).

18   Cf.: "[Antonioni's] work, in a fundamental sense, passes through a dualism which corresponds to the two aspects of the time-image: the cinema of the body, which puts all the weight of the past into the body, all the tiredness of the world and modern neurosis; but also a cinema of the brain, which reveals the creativity of the world, its colours aroused by a new space-time, its powers multiplied by artificial brains" (Deleuze 1989, 197).

is a slow being, who is only made possible thanks to fantastic speeds.' The circuits and linkages of the brain don't preexist the stimuli, corpuscles, and particles [grains] that trace them" – Deleuze commented in an interview, suggesting an analogy with the idea that "cinema isn't theater; rather, it makes bodies out of grains" (Bonitzer 2000, 366).

This filmic tradition also uses non-visual resources, such as sound to create the body, while – as if it were a substitute for the sensorimotor action-reaction – it extends the function of the body beyond the everyday: drawing on experimental film, it becomes ceremonial, incorporating new temporal structures and constructing new types of spaces. The "gests" of the body in modern cinema – Deleuze here uses an adapted version of Brecht's theatrical term – magnify the lived present in a similar way as the video works in Bill Viola's *Passages*-series, focusing on the unnoticed interstices in perception: "What is important is less the difference between the poles than the passage from one to another, the imperceptible passage of attitudes or postures to gest. […] What we call gest in general is the link or knot of attitudes between themselves, their coordination with each other, in so far as they do not depend on a previous story, a pre-existing plot or an action image. On the contrary, the gest is the development of attitudes themselves, and, as such, carries out a direct theatricalization of bodies, often very discreet, because it takes place independently of any role." (Deleuze 1989, 192.)

In an interview, Viola sums up the purpose behind his work in a similar manner: "I was most interested in opening up the spaces *between* the emotions. I wanted to focus on gradual transitions – the idea of emotional expression as a continual fluid motion. This meant that the transitions, the ambiguous time when you shift from being happy to sad, is just as important as the main emotion itself" (quoted in Hansen 2006, 612–613).

These ambiguous moments are important for Hansen and Marks, because the intervals they open suspend the clichés that underlie perception. This disruption of habituality also holds the possibility of social change, a concern present in the two authors' work with different intensities. In Marks's case, it is the "hegemonic form of perception" (2000, 42) aimed at maintaining power relations that is challenged, while Hansen offers criticism on seeing contemporary media as instruments of reproducing "the universalizing logic of capitalism" (2006, 23) or – as he refers to it in another text – "the industrialization of consciousness" (2009, 301). To pursue their aims, they resort to two different conceptions of corporeality. Marks, who is looking for hidden histories, enunciates that "I am exploring sense experience in cinema not to seek a primordial state of sensory innocence, but to find culture *within* the body" (2000, 152). This recalls the temporality Deleuze ascribes to the cinema of the body, "which puts all the

weight of the past into the body" (1989, 197). For Hansen, on the contrary, the contemporary body draws on a sensory innocence as it encounters the digital image, opening towards an indefinite future rather than the past. Thus, Hansen's concept of new media art is grounded in a contingent ontology, similarly to the cinema of the brain, which, for Deleuze, "reveals the creativity of the world, its colours aroused by a new space-time, its powers multiplied by artificial brains" (1989, 197).

However, both traditions of modern cinema, at least as Deleuze understands them, are closer to the universalist position that Hansen embraces. Marks finds culture within the body to explore the political implications of Deleuze's film theory, partly by – similarly to how Elizabeth Grosz challenges the dichotomy of nature and culture – recoursing to scientifically inspired theories like that of Bergson, phenomenology or neurophysiology. Hansen's stance would more likely be welcome by a Marxist thinker like Terry Eagleton, according to whom "the postmodern cult of the socially constructed body, for all of its resourceful critique of naturalism, has been closely linked with the abandonment of the very idea of politics of global resistance" (Eagleton 2000, 111).

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(Re)framing Movement in Stan Brakhage's *Visions in Meditation N°1*

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Abstract. Considered as one of the main figures of the avant-garde lyrical cinema, Stan Brakhage questions perception. His language of inquiry constantly confronts the spectator with the limits of visual experience of the world and the multiple possibilities of their transgression. Critically addressing one of his short films, *Visions in Meditation n°1* (1989),[1] this analysis aims to discuss the way *movement* may become a principle of perception, that is to say, according to Gilles Deleuze's definition – a mode of transgressing the frame of *representation*. Reappropriating the cinematographic grammar and submitting it to a vibrating movement, Brakhage invents a rhythm which paves the way for a transcendental experience, meanwhile proposing a reflection on the meditative possibilities of the film in terms of the *image in meditation*. Gilles Deleuze's way of thinking of cinema in *Cinema 1: Movement-image*, as well as Slavoj Žižek's writings on cinema, allows one to consider movement in its cinematographic and philosophical meaning, a project which in Brakhage's case seems to be primordial.

Keywords: Stan Brakhage, Deleuze, rhythm and movement in film, avant-garde lyrical cinema.

Stan Brakhage's (1933–2003) monumental work, composed of more than 350 films, challenges the conventions of perception and the norms of expressing what "one is seeing with one's own eye."[2] According to Fred Camper "his work was made in opposition to, even in terror of, the notion of the static, the fixed, the given. Objective measurement, predetermined forms, the overall arc structure of most narratives – all were to be undermined because they block the individual from experiencing the unpredictability of the inner life."[3] In the

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1   *By Brakhage, An Anthology, Volumes One and Two*, 2010.
2   The expression is the title of one of Brakhage's films, *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eye* (1971).
3   Fred Camper, *http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/272-stan-brakhage*, last accessed at 20. 08. 2012.

absence of any narrative line or even sound – since for Brakhage the specificity of the cinema is its capacity to express and to explore the domain of the sight –, in order to be able to *see* Stan Brakhage's non-static films, one is bound to adapt one's habits of perception. In Deleuze's first book on cinema, cinema is defined as a system of movement: "In other words the essence of cinematographic movement-image lies in extracting from vehicles or moving bodies the movement which is their common substance, or extracting from movements the mobility which is their essence" (Deleuze 2005, 22). Brakhage's way to extract movement and thus to challenge the static and the given, questions the possibilities and the limits of the cinematographic language.

In *Visions in Meditation n°1* (1989) – according to the annotations provided by its author – "the filmmaker has edited a meditative series of images of landscape and human symbolism, indicative of that field of consciousness within which humanity survives thoughtfully" (Brakhage 2001, 228). As the title suggests, this film is marked by a movement towards the inside, opening thus a space where images may become "visions in meditation." The study of Brakhage's film grammar aims to show to what extent this film challenges the principles of r*epresentation* and establishes between reality and the attempts to translate it, a type of relationship that Deleuze calls *movement.* In the context of cinema, the development of this mode of transgressing the monopoly of representation implies a reappropriation of the camera which aims to transgress the dichotomies of subjective/objective, human/non-human: "Representation fails to capture the affirmed world of difference. Representation has only a single centre, a unique and receding perspective, and in consequence a false depth. It mediates everything, but mobilizes and moves nothing. Movement for its part implies a plurality of centres, a superposition of perspectives, a tangle of points of view, a coexistence of moments which essentially distort representation" (Deleuze 2004, 67).

1. For a Vibrating Shot and Montage

According to Deleuze, it is possible to recognize the global movement of a film already in its credits where it may appear in its purest form (Deleuze 2005, 16). The credits of *Visions* contains only the title of the film, unless we consider the first inscriptions that appear on the screen – the title of the film, the date of production, and the director's name –, which may have been added afterwards. This information is presented in a neutral way and deprived of any movement. Whereas the actual credits, the title of the film is literally inscribed – handwritten – in white on the black screen. The hand executing the inscription

is invisible; its presence is carried by the movement of shaping the letters. In addition to this, a constant vibration can be observed as if the letters, once inscribed on the screen, were endowed with their own vitality. Indeed, once the title is written and the handwriting movement stops, the words continue to vibrate. The two movements we distinguished overlap each other: the handwriting dictates an accelerated rhythm and the vibrating movement reinforces it. [Fig. 1.]

The sources of these movements are nonetheless invisible: although we presume, by association, that the handwriting of the title is that of the author, he remains physically absent. His presence is reduced to the movement of his handwriting, more precisely, to his signature.[4] The rhythm of the handwriting doubled by the vibration evokes the movements of an eye engaged in the act of seeing. Moreover, the rapidity of this rhythm also echoes an accelerated breathing process. In keeping with Deleuze's suggestions, these movements reveal the global movement of the film, which in this case could be considered as a movement of vitality: indeed, the film seems to be endowed with a human dimension, it sees and it breathes. For Deleuze, the global movement of a film is metaphorically equivalent with the director's signature: "certain great movements are like a director's signature, which characterize the whole of a film, or even the whole of an oeuvre, but resonate with the relative movement of a particular signed image, or a particular detail in the image" (Deleuze 2005, 22). It is a coincidence that in Brakhage's case the global movement of the film is announced through his actual signature, on condition that his handwriting be considered as a signature. His handwriting fills the screen the way images shot by his handheld camera will occupy the same space. In these conditions, the metaphorical and the literal meaning of the word signature overlap each other. The human dimension of the film also implies a new status of the camera, which is said to be the extension of the person who uses it. Brakhage explicitly expressed his desire to become one with his camera, a process which, according to him, requires daily practice: "I practice every conceivable body movement with camera-in-hand almost every day. I do *not* do this in order to formalize the motions of moving picture taking *but rather* to explore the possibilities of exercise, to awaken my senses, and to prepare my muscles and joints with the weight of the camera and the necessary postures of holding it so that I can carry that weight in the balance of these postures through my physiological *re*action during picture taking and *to* some meaningful *act* of editing" (Brakhage 2001, 132). "One thing I *did* do [...] was to practice handholding the camera, with no

4   The actual initials SB at the end of the film are written on the screen with the same handwriting and the same vibration. Therefore we consider that the title written by the author is part of his signature.

film in it, for an hour or two a day – so the camera could become one with my body. It wasn't to increase control so much as to increase the possibilities of emoted feeling that might move through me into that camera when I was actually shooting. I wanted a degree of oneness with the camera" (MacDonald and Stan Brakhage 2003, 5).

The emphasis on the physical aspect of filming reveals the fundamental principle of Brakhage's aesthetic program. Seeking "a degree of oneness with the camera" implies, of course, a strictly handheld camera. In the fifties, when Brakhage started his filming, the camera had just begun to be released from the tripod. In this perspective Brakhage was among the first ones to recognize the necessity of this release and to live with its possibilities to create a cinema of the human presence. The cinematographic attitude developed in consequence redefines the status of the camera by endowing it with the vibration of immediacy. The human presence behind the camera becomes secondary in comparison with the primary presence of the camera. Indeed, the camera, as the extension of the body, becomes a body itself; it no longer plays the role of a mediating instrument of the present, but, through its "vibration," it gets hold of the instant immediacy. It is in these conditions that the possibility of an eye "unruled by man-made laws of perspective, an eye unprejudiced by compositional logic, an eye which does not respond to the name of everything but which must know each object encountered in life through an adventure of perception" (Brakhage 2001, 12) can be envisaged.

Yet, experimental modes of perception, which undermine five hundred old conventions and aim to free the human eye of "man-made laws of perspective," question the notion of human subjectivity and its cinematographic expression. According to P. Adams Sitney, Brakhage was the pioneer of the lyrical film for he was able to invent a form in which the film-maker could "compress his thoughts and feelings while recording his direct confrontation with intense experiences of birth, death, sexuality, and the terror of nature" (Sitney 1974, 168).

In these conditions Brakhage's film is determined by the tension triggered by the cinematographic situation in which the camera is said to have its own presence not as a mediating instrument between the human organ of vision and the world seen by this organ, but as an independent eye, and yet, it is bound to express the author's subjective (selective) perception of reality. The credits of *Visions* announce the primary tension at work in Brakhage's films in terms of the absent presence of subjectivity: one can constantly feel a human presence thanks to the vibrating movement, yet the person behind the camera remains invisible, *out-of-field.* In Deleuze's distinction subjective implies the point of view of a person who is part of the narrative whole and appears in front of the camera, whereas objective implies the point of view of someone who is external.

The status of the human presence behind the camera is ambiguous for, on several occasions the position of the camera evokes the *voyeur* position (for example, most of the time the shots showing houses are taken from behind bushes, as if someone were watching the house [Fig. 2.]). This position may correspond to a semi-subjective one that Deleuze identifies in the case of Paolo Pasolini. For Deleuze Pasolini succeeds to develop the grammar of the free indirect subjectivity which favours the emergence of the camera-self-consciousness (Deleuze 2005, 77–83).

Brakhage's use of the camera results in a cinematographic language which may tend to acquire the status of a "poetic cinema" that is no longer concerned with the distinction of objective/subjective. The spectator is invited to see what the eye as an "organ without body" sees (Žižek 2012, 137).[5] However, Brakhage's experimental cinema seems to go beyond Pasolini's research of this consciousness, for he still maintains a narrative function of the point of view. If Brakhage's use of camera can be considered as endowed with its own consciousness, with its own flickering eye, its point of view is to be considered in the context of the American experimental cinema, which according to Deleuze, was the most successful in obtaining a "pure vision." This notion of purity is to be interpreted as opposed to a centred vision dependent of the laws of perspective: "A whole aspect of that cinema is concerned with obtaining a pure perception, as it is in things or in matter, to the point to which molecular interactions extend. Brakhage explores a Cézannian world before man, a dawn of ourselves, by filming all the shades seen by a baby in the prairie" (Deleuze 2005, 87).

In keeping with Dziga Vertov's aesthetics of kino-eye, Deleuze underlines that perception in cinema is not only a question of the point of view represented by the position and the movement of the camera; in the construction of perception montage plays a primordial role. According to Vertov, it is actually the montage that allows one to obtain the perception of a non-human eye which does not correspond to the perception of another animal:

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5   As Žižek points out in *Organs Without Bodies* (Žižek 2012, xii) with the notion of "body without organs" Deleuze fights against organism and not organs, that is to say he wishes to transgress "the articulation of a body into a hierarchic – harmonious Whole of organs," each at "its place," with its function. He argues that Deleuze's notion of "body without organs" when confronted with Lacan's theory of desire would acquire a more subversive dimension for drive considered as an organ without body, frees the notion of organ from its hierarchical structure of functionality. This way the body may become a space in which "autonomous organs freely float," yet an undeterminate space which opens itself to an infinite Whole. In Brakhage's case, if the organ is the camera, it is indeed autonomous of the body functions with which the historically determined cinematographic-perceiving body endows it.

"What montage does […] is to carry perception into things, to put perception into matter" (Deleuze 2005, 83). This movement towards things, towards the matter in Brakhage's case can be identified as the vibrating movement. Indeed, the vibration one can identify in a shot also defines the nature of movement that emerges from the succession of shots. Its double presence can be interpreted as a chiasmatic interaction which tends to endow the non-organic – for example in shots showing a wall – with an organic dimension, and vice-versa, to extract movement from the thing moved, as it is the case in shots of the waterfall, or of the wheat field.

According to Deleuze, a shot is movement itself: "The shot, that is to say consciousness, traces a movement which means that the things between which it arises are continuously reuniting into a whole, and the whole is continuously dividing between things (the Dividual)" (Deleuze 2005, 22). In Brakhage's film movements of reuniting and dividing contribute to the creation of the dynamics of the film. On the one hand, the shots echo each other through the repetition of the same elements such as the house, the dog, the moon, the sea, the trees, the waterfall etc. and thus provide the illusion of the existence of a whole in which all these shots would fit in, like the pieces of a mosaic. Whereas on the other hand, the possibility of the mosaic-like whole is constantly threatened by the introduction of new elements, for instance the last shots which show a little boy in a forest. The notion of the whole in Brakhage's film is a slippery one for it is not based on a narrative coherence in which every shot would have a predetermined function in the development of a story. Yet, the *whole*, as Deleuze points out, "is rather that which prevents each set, however big it is, from closing in on itself, and that which forces it to extend into a larger set" (Deleuze 2005 [1983], 18). In this perspective, the experience of the *whole* proposed by Brakhage is in keeping with the deleuzian concept.

If we consider the vibrating movement as the global movement of the film, the whole does appear as the Open which "relates back to time or even to spirit rather than to content and space" (Deleuze 2005, 18). The constant vibration sets the shots in movement, more precisely, it inscribes them in a movement through which the film lives in a continuous present where these images may coexist as memory coexists with the present moment. In order to be able to settle in the continuous present, one needs to consider the interior and exterior spaces shown as both belonging to an inner space where regardless of the "content," time is bound to unfold in the simultaneity and the continuity of the past and the present.

2. In Search of a Frame

The global movement of "the vibration of immediacy" seems to influence the function of framing to a point where one may wonder if there is any framing left? Indeed, the vibrating movement can also be interpreted as the expression of the hesitation with which the cameraman approaches the question of framing: in Brakhage's film the shot seems to be in search of its framing. The multiplication of backward zooms or forward zooms, as well as the multiplication of the points of view – on numerous occasions the spectator is invited to come back to the same spot and to consider it from a different point of view, as it is the case with house or the big wheel [Figs. 3–4] – suggest that there cannot be any fixed and standard framing of a reality. Thus, multiplicity becomes a principle of filming, and creating a cinematographic object which asserts that perception is a dynamics, a movement from one point of view to another. To come back to the example of the house, one is able to see the house from the outside and from the inside through the window, or even from the side, in a clear or in a blurry way. These procedures translate, according to Deleuze, the desire to adapt the framing to the bodies, the essence of which one is engaged to fix, and transform the screen into a "visual accordion" (Deleuze 2005, 14).

In *Visions in Meditation* this transformation takes place in a way which favours the presence of geometrical lines. Most of the time the bodies, the objects and the landscape are treated as compositions of lines: the sea appears as a horizontal line [Fig. 5.], or the wall of the house as a composition of vertical lines. According to Deleuze's distinction of the two types of framing – the geometrical and the dynamic – Brakhage's framing seems to intermingle the two conceptions: "The frame is therefore sometimes conceived of as a spatial composition of parallels and diagonals, the constitution of a receptacle such that blocs (masses) and the lines of the image which come to occupy it will find equilibrium and their movements will find an invariant. […] Sometimes the frame is conceived as dynamic construction in act (en acte) which is closely linked to the scene, the image, the characters and the objects which fill it. […] In any case framing is limitation. But depending on the concept itself the limits can be conceived in two ways, mathematically and dynamically: either as preliminary to the existence of the bodies whose essence they fix, or going as far as the power of existing bodies goes" (Deleuze 2005, 14).

Most of the shots in *Visions in Meditation* show blocs and lines – the blocs of snow for instance, or the blocs of water, and the lines mentioned previously – but these lines are not conceived mathematically but rather dynamically, as if they were engaged in the process of revealing their own power. Indeed, one can assert

that the parallels and the diagonals transgress their function of space organizers, and through their movement, which is constantly doubled by the vibrating movement, they become bodies, the essence of which the framing tempts to fix. Moreover, if we consider the recurring shots of the sea, we can say that the lines of the sea and the human figures are both shown as elements of a composition, a composition which has no centre, and therefore no hierarchies. In the absence of a narrative line, the characters are deprived of their narrative potential in order to become elements of the landscape in the same way as waves are. [Fig. 5.] Their function in the composition is to introduce discontinuity in the homogeneous landscape of the sea. The process of becoming line of the bodies is accomplished gradually, through the rhythm determined by the insistent repetition of certain shots, such as the waterfall or the branches in the snow.

The oscillation between the geometric and the dynamic conception of framing is also perceptible in the playful variation of shots which can be said to favour the emergence of lines, and of shots which, on the contrary, are engaged in dissolving the lines through gradual fading. In this case, Deleuze notes: "the frame is no longer the object of geometric divisions, but of physical gradations" (Deleuze 2005, 14). On the one hand, the elements of nature are perceived as lines in a composition which is the landscape: the water, the trees, the moon, the snow are sharp lines and determine the direction of the movement. On the other hand, they are dissolved in a blurry image, and the result produces the effect of time suspended: "It is the hour when it is no longer possible to distinguish between sunrise and sunset, air and water, water and earth, in the great mixture of a marsh or a tempest" (Deleuze 2005, 14).

To these dissolving images one may add the numerous travelling shots, which, due to their rapid rhythm, contribute to the elaboration of an aesthetics based on the notion of work in progress, more precisely, on the image in progress, which seeks to transgress the necessity of framing according to the expectations and the conventions of a representation in perspective. The images in search of a frame, or, on the contrary, fleeing from a frame, suggest that engaged in *out-of-field becoming*, these images carry, in spite of themselves, the conventionally necessary movement of finding their frame. Indeed, the process of becoming implies reciprocity,[6] hence if there is a becoming out-of-field, at the same time, a becoming field is also at work.

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6   Inspired by Nitezsche, Deleuze and Guattari developed the notion of becoming in order to be able to provide a movement structure which favours hecceities, that is to say new modes of individuation. Through the example of the wasp and the orchid, the authors insist on the fact that interactions cannot be conceived without the notion of reciprocity, which actually conditions every process of becoming (Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari 1987 [1981], *A Thousand Plateaus*).

The illusion of absent framing is also the result of what Pascal Bonitzer calls *deframing*, (Bonitzer quoted by Deleuze 2005, 16) that is to say the effect of "abnormal points of view which are not the same as an oblique perspective or a paradoxical angle, and refer to another dimension of the image" (Bonitzer quoted by Deleuze 2005, 16). Brakhage's images multiply these kinds of points of view which show what one would consider according to a perception based on hierarchic distinction between the objects and elements filmed out-of-field. For instance, in one of the window shots showing the window of a house mentioned previously, one can only see a fragment of the curtain in a close-up. [Fig. 6.] The emphasis on this phantasmagorical material may evoke well known frames from the history of the cinema such as Hitchcock's framings in *Rear Window* (1954). However, Brakhage's images resist framing: even if the spectator is tempted to find a possible, already existing frame for the image which seems to be out of frame. Brakhage's camera does not know the hierarchical organization of the elements; on the contrary, even if an object appears to be in the centre of an image, as it is the case for example with the big wheel, Brakhage frames it from another point of view, suggesting, once again, that it is not possible to fix the essence of an object without the multiplication of points of view. Thus, he emphasizes the openness of his composition, increasing its availability to introduce "space to space," "of transpatial and of spiritual" (Deleuze 2005, 18–19).

In these conditions, the film opens itself to a "duration which is immanent to the whole universe, which is no longer a set and does not belong to the visible" (Deleuze 2005, 18–19). This type of duration is available, according to Deleuze, in the process of actualization of the virtual, which implies the time of becoming. "The pure structure of time 'as such' is thus available as the transcendental experience of a time released from the narrative, the progressive time segmented according to a 'before' or an 'after'" (Žižek 2012, 10). The virtual, Deleuze argues, cannot be opposed to the real, for it is "fully real in so far as it is virtual" (Deleuze 1994, 208–209). This may be a way to define cinema, as a language which is constantly held by this ambiguity – producing reality with the "image of reality, as if all this was real" (Ishagpour 2006, 12).[7] Deleuze's notion of virtual seems to grasp the – reality of cinema, that is to say it denotes a reality which is in process of actualization, a process which is completely dependent on the spectator and his/her recognition and acceptance of the image as real. Moreover, virtual means an Idea which is engaged in the process of its actualization through differentiation. Deleuze underlines that to

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7   Translation mine, E. S. from the original French ("l'image même de la réalité, 'comme si' tout cela était réel").

have an Idea is an act of creation in a specific context, and according to him, to have an Idea in cinema means to invent "blocs of movement-duration," more precisely to tell a story with "blocs of movement-duration" (Deleuze, 1987). From this perspective, and considering that Brakhage's cinema is deprived of any narrative, we may assert that Brakhage fully assumes the virtuality of the cinema and carries the cinematographic Idea to its purest form by emphasizing the reality of the image itself, more precisely the reality of the experience of movement. Brakhage's film corresponds thus to a "potential or virtual object" in case of which to be "actualized is to create divergent lines which correspond to – without resembling – a virtual multiplicity" (Deleuze 1994, 212). Indeed, Brakhage transgresses the limits of human vision by exploring a multiplicity of possibilities and constantly reinforcing the virtuality of the "kino-eye" perception, that is to say shots which are "somehow subjectivized without the subject being given" (Žižek 2012, 138). In one of his essay this program takes the shape of a long list which textually reinforces the infinite dimension of such an enterprise.[8]

3. For a Transcendental Rhythm

   The dynamics and the openness of the framing shapes the rhythm of the film, and at the same time it questions its nature and status. Once the rhythm disobeys the conventions of pre-existing narrative structures based on the linearity of the development of an intrigue, it becomes a movement which is constantly in search of its next direction. Actually, one is bound to speak of a

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8   "By deliberately spitting on the lens or wrecking its focal intention, one can achieve the early stages of impressionism. One can make this prima donna heavy in performance of image movement by speeding up the motor, or one can break up movement, in a way that approaches a more direct inspiration of contemporary human eye perceptibility of movement, by slowing the motion while recording the image. One may hand hold the camera and inherit worlds of space. One may over- and under-expose the film. One may use the filters of the world, fog, downpours, unbalanced lights, neons with neurotic color temperature, glass which was never designed for a camera, or even one may photograph an hour after sunrise or an hour before sunset, those marvelous taboo hours when the films labs will guarantee nothing, or one may go into the night with a specified daylight film or vice versa. One may become the supreme trickster, with hatfulls of all the rabbits listed above breeding madly. One may, out of incredible courage, become Méliès, that marvelous man who gave even the 'art of the film' its beginning in magic. Yet Méliès was not witch, witch doctor, priest, or even sorcerer. He was a 19th century stage magician. His films *are* rabbits." (Brakhage 2001, 16.)

network of movement the dimensions of which are determined first by the vibrating movement constantly present throughout the film. As we have seen, the organicity with which this movement endows the film reinforces the primary tension at work in Brakhage's cinema, that is to say the tension that emerges from the confrontation of two different tendencies. On the one hand, Brakhage seems to develop a way of filming, framing and editing which blurs the frontiers between the human eye from the mechanic eye of the camera. On the other hand, he does not hesitate to explore and to reveal the mechanic procedures which reinforce the artificiality of the device. It is in the context of this tension that the two types of framings and the editing are conceived, and as a result, the camera behaves as a hybrid being which observes, reconsiders, blinks its eyes, and takes long minutes to meditate, to regulate the distribution of the masses and forces, and to release "the qualitative duration of consciousness without self" (Žižek 2012, 4).

Inspired by Eisenstein's idea according to which the "montage is the whole of the film, the Idea," Deleuze defines montage as "the operation which bears on the movement-images to release the whole from them that is, the image *of* time" (Deleuze 2005, 30). If we consider the four types of montage that Deleuze distinguishes in *Cinema 1*, we can conclude that the montage in *Visions in Meditation n°1* bears the traces of the American heritage represented by Griffith, that is to say the parallel montage and those of the montage conceived by Eisenstein in response to the American one. Griffith's conception implies the idea that "the composition of movement-images" is "an organism, a great organic unity […], unity in diversity, a set of differentiated parts; there are men and women, rich and poor, town and country, North and South, interiors and exteriors, etc." (Deleuze 2005, 31.) There are, indeed, differentiated parts in Brakhage's film such as the interior and the exterior, the town and the country, the earth and the sky, the horizontal and the vertical, the water and the fire. [Fig. 7.] Yet, even if it is possible to identify these binary pairs, the duel which is supposed to develop, seems to be neglected. The alternation of these parts does not follow the logic of a duel, and the convergence of the portrayed action is only a tendency in the absence of any narrative line. In spite of this rupture, one can still identify the traces of the American heritage in the way the two aspects of the image *of* time – the "chronosigns" – persist and determine the rhythm: "on the one hand, time as whole, as great circle or spiral which draws together the set of movement in the universe; on the other, time as interval which indicates the smallest unit of movement or action" (Deleuze 2005, 33). Brakhage experiments with the relations these two aspects maintain with each other, more precisely his research aims to explore the dynamic potential of their interference. As Deleuze suggests, "time as interval is the accelerated variable

present, and time as whole is the spiral open at both ends, the immensity of past and future. Infinitely dilated, the present would become the whole itself; infinitely contracted the whole would happen in the interval" (Deleuze 2005, 33). In *Visions in Meditation,* when confronted with a two minutes long shot showing the movement of the waterfall, one may indeed experience the dilated, continuous present. In this case, the cut is postponed, movement is amplified and the spectator is invited to lengthen the duration of watching in a way as to reach a duration of contemplation that may favour meditation, that is to say the emergence of *visions in meditation.*

In any case, the experience of time proposed by Brakhage's film is the experience of duration, which on the level of the shot manifests itself as a continuous present, and on the level of the whole it may point to the infinite virtuality of the transcendental field of becoming. As we have seen, Brakhage's cinema focuses on the image in progress, a movement which endowed with the vibration of immediacy marks the movement from the virtual to the virtual actualized. Instead of being dependent on a narrative line and its conventional rhythm, Brakhage's shots, the framings and montage invent a language through which this movement unfolds its many aspects. Movement towards the matter which releases composition of its pre-established hierarchies multiplies points of view and thus decentres the image, marks the capacity of the film to transcend *representation*, that is to say a mediated mode of perception and to constantly re-enact the possibility of *movement* as an immediate mode of perceiving and translating a constantly moving reality, the vibration of immediacy. These conditions seem necessary to open an "inner field," in-between movement-image and time-image, in-between subjectivity and objectivity, where *image in meditation* can take shape. The spectator is thus invited to meditate, and why not, in a playful manner, to participate in the process of actualization of the virtual narrative possibilities these images carry. One may thus find pleasure in asking, along with the principal question of "who is watching?" a series of questions that these images suggest in the context of the virtuality of fiction: "who is living in the house?" "who are the people represented in the photos?" "who is driving the car and where to?" "where are the people absent from the hotel room?" [Fig. 8.] Thus framing and reframing the image in meditation would result in the framing and reframing of narrative structures and may endow Brakhage's film with a condensed narrative core in quest of its own accomplishment through the spectator's playful, meditative participation.

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The Never-ending Disaster: 9/11 Conspiracy Theory and the Integration of Activist Documentary on Video Websites

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Abstract. The article examines how documentary film is transformed when distributed through video sharing web sites. The conspiracy-theoretical production *Loose Change* (2005, 2006, 2007, and 2009) is used as a case study of how the mediation process connected with net-based distribution affects the materiality of film and alters our conception of both visual evidence and genre. With a point of departure in the media theory of Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin and their twin concepts of *immediacy* and *hypermediacy* it is discussed how the film culture on the internet develops new media institutions and establishes what could be described as "live" archives. A concluding reflection illustrates how this type of film is part of an ongoing media-determined and cultural transformation of the documentary genre, a process that places its historical and political content halfway between fact and fiction.

Keywords: remediation, activist documentary, video sharing websites, conspiracy theory.

> *Conspiracy,* [...] *is the poor person's cognitive mapping in the postmodern age; it is a degraded figure of the total logic of late capital, a desperate attempt to represent the latter's system, whose failure is marked by its slippage into sheer theme and content.*
> Frederic Jameson (1988, 356)

> *The paranoid is the person in possession of all the facts.*
> William Burroughs (*Friend Magazine* 1970)

A multifaceted relationship between filmic works and conspiracy theory delineates through the recent decades in American popular culture. Since the Cold War-thrillers of the 70s this marriage between socio-political paranoia and audiovisual storytelling has developed into a number of subgenres counting such

diverse works as Peter Weir's social-constructivist drama *The Truman Show* (USA 1998) and Chris Carter's science fiction television series *The X-Files* (USA 1993–2002). Conspiracy theory has been manifested as a plot-driving principle with the ability to transcend every subject matter, be that life-as-a-TV-show or alien abductions, and which can be used to create a prolonged cultural impact, as especially was the case with Carter's series. In retrospect, *The X-Files* seems like the ideal merging of the theme of conspiracy and a specific genre-format; primarily because the idea of endless connectedness permeates both content and form of this pop cultural phenomenon. On a formal level *The X-Files* mirrors a progressively paranoid undercurrent of conspiracy. With its iconic intro-combination of *Twilight Zone*-inspired music, FBI-badges and documentary-style footage of UFO-sightings, it hinted at possible endless links between government politics, scheming plots and shady business. As suggested by Peter Knight in his book *Conspiracy Culture – From the Kennedy Assassination to The X-files*, the TV series' pronouncement that "The Truth is out there" works as a dictum for the Internet *age's utopian possibilities of nothing remaining secret in the endless connexity* (sic) *of free-flowing information* (Knight 2000, 211–212). Here, *The X-files* are fittingly defined as a pop cultural phenomenon that mirrors a conspiracy-driven tendency in both content and form. Since a central logic behind the TV-series-format is its continuous airing through an ever-evolving storyline (and public demand), it is in that way comparable to what fuels any conspiracy theory: the impossibility to reach a final conclusion.

This article takes as its point of departure a recent filmic constellation of conspiracy-themed narratives and genre-consciousness, the activistic documentary *Loose Change* (USA 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009).[1] Like *The X-Files*, this net-based production is in many regards a reverberation of the medium that popularized it. [Figs. 1–4.] The documentary was created by the American independent filmmaker Dylan Avery and it exists in a number of different edited and re-edited versions, the latest one being *Loose Change 9/11: An American Coup*, which at the time of writing must have been considered as the authoritative version of the film.[2] What all of these have in common is the claim that 9/11 was an "inside job" and the purpose of the films is to introduce the viewer to an alternative interpretation of the events surrounding the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Applying a detailed analysis of filmic and photographic

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1   As of now, there exist four different official versions of the film: *Loose Change: 1ˢᵗ Edition* (2005), *Loose Change: 2ⁿᵈ Edition Recut* (2006), *Loose Change: Final Cut* (2007) and *Loose Change 9/11: An American Coup* (2009).
2   It should be noted that precisely the fact that *Loose Change* is available in a number of versions both online and as different DVD-releases is the main point of departure for my analysis.

registrations of the incident, Avery among other things argues that there were people in the American government who benefited politically and economically from the attack. The exposure of these governmental motives is presented as a scientifically substantiated comparison of concrete details in the terrorists' methods and the resulting damage of the attack. Herein Avery finds a string of differences which point to the fact that the damage on Pentagon, for example, does not correspond to that of a plane crash. Likewise, he argues that the destruction of the World Trade Center could not alone be the result of the buildings being hit by passenger planes. During the entire movie, Avery's commentary shifts between an objective rhetoric that accounts for the facts and critical remarks that hint at hidden agendas. For example, the opening sequence "Prologue," in the film's most comprehensive configuration,[3] consists of a narrative introduction by Avery, in which he sums up a number of people from different professions, who have voiced their mistrust of the official explanation to the terrorist attacks. He speculates why so many still find the aftermath unsatisfactory and introduces the 9/11 Truth movement through depictions of their demonstrations in New York City. This is contrasted in the following sequence titled "Five Years Earlier...," where different iconic visual and verbal statements from news footage associated with the incident is presented in an uncommented montage. This introduction serves to establish the historic conventions we traditionally associate with the expository documentary, at the same time it is undoubtedly loaded with the type of emotionally dramatic "establishing shots" we are so familiar with from the fiction film. Throughout the film Avery continues his argument with a comparative interplay between selected excerpts from news broadcasts and documentations of the terrorist attacks, all combined with narrative commentary and instrumental background music by DJ Skooly (Dustin Marshall). The latter gives the entire production an immediate atmosphere, which connotes the rhythmic, associative montage found in the music video. This distinct mode of presentation that characterizes large parts of Avery's film lets the viewer experience the conspiracy theories surrounding 9/11 and comprehensive amount of extremely diverse information, which is employed to back them up. The overall impression is that of a news special with a pulsating score making it possible to "tune in" during any moment of the film. [Fig. 6.]

Mirroring production with distribution, the film takes on a number of different forms since the director has edited and re-circulated the film to correct wrongful or criticised information and aim it against different types of distribution. Successful exposure of the film was made possible because Avery

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3   *Loose Change: Final Cut* (2007).

by April 2005 made it available through Google Video. In the first year the film was seen by 2 million people and by now it has been viewed or downloaded over 50 million times. Furthermore, this distribution strategy has ensured worldwide screenings of the film. As an example, a number of Scandinavian national television stations aired *Loose Change: Final Cut* as part of their documentary programmes in 2007.[4] The director and the producers Korey Rowe and Jason Bermas all have connections to the comprehensive 9/11 Truth Movement.[5] The *Loose Change* film-series connection with this activist organisation and its claim to an alternative interpretation of the events which transpired on September 11, 2001 is what places it firmly within the context of conspiracy theory. As I will try to illustrate in the following, what makes this documentary phenomenon interesting is that it – for good or worse – simultaneously becomes a reflection of the online film culture that created it.

Hyperreality

Through its successful online distribution and numerous re-editions, *Loose Change* has a number of apparent connections to the integration of the film medium on the Internet. Firstly, the film shows the overwhelming exposure it is possible to generate by means of these new distributional systems, but it also further exemplifies how the video sharing websites' fragmented collections of clips have become production logic and a common denominator for audiovisual recording. Extremely popular sites, such as YouTube and Vimeo function as alternative media archives, which give public access and exposure to all types of footage previously only distributed by TV or film companies or kept in private. On a global scale the Internet has exposed what Thomas Elsaesser, in quotation marks, has called historical evidence. Every registration imaginable, all sharing the general characteristics that: "No subject is too remote, too personal, too secret, too shameful for there not to have been photographs taken, voices recorded and films made. […] Nothing – or so it seems – has happened in the twentieth century, without a camera recording it. Brought back to life, it can speak for itself, give itself away or accuse itself: an illusion, of course, and possibly a dangerously naïve one. But this does not diminish the fact that photographs and films, both fictional and factual, have left us with the most extraordinary 'art of record' for the last 150 years, a most extensive 'archive' of

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4   Among those Danish television DR2 and Swedish television SVT2.
5   Source: *http://www.911truth.org/ and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loose_Change_* (film) as well as video interviews with Dylan Avery published on the Internet, see YouTube, Loose Change.

what, for instance, cities looked like or buildings, how people dressed or gestured, how they lived indoors and out, how they saw themselves, were seen by other or wanted to be seen." (Elsaesser 1998, 207.)

According to Elsaesser, the full usage of this material as evidence can primarily be seen in the photo documentation on TV. In connection with this he points out that the complication of the authenticity associated with moving images is not so much caused by the digital devaluation of the indexical reference, as it is the result of the institutional setting for the footage. As an example, the truth value of a TV-broadcast is determined by the current social and political legitimization of the institution "TV."[6] This sets an interesting cultural-historical perspective on the conventions we associate with a specific medium. Elsaesser's emphasis on the institutional significance brings into focus an essential aspect of the media transformation process, produced by the integration of film on the net.

Video sharing websites have precisely manifested themselves as a new series of communication networks, which function as alternatives to already existing top-down media institutions. These new "channels" however appear as hybrids. By way of the archive they draw on our mutual experience from the content of the surrounding film- and TV-culture, while at the same time all this material is integrated in an online-structure, which is defined by the speed of the information transfer. The lo-tech characteristics of the clips are a side effect of the migration of the film through the network interface. The video portals appear as cultural institutions on the net and their technological realization paradoxically entails a degradation of the material quality. The image resolution is decided by the fact that we have to be able to stream the content of the archive from one click to the next. This directness in a way mimics the telepresence of the live TV-transmission.[7]

What differentiates these websites from previous frameworks is precisely the active role of the user as contributor of content to the mass media. This type of internet-based cultural institutionalization of filmic material makes it difficult to trace any given truth value back to a single, legitimate source.

As a consequence of this participatory relation between sender and receiver, the way we perceive visual information has drastically changed. By the end of

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6   This follows from the critical writing on mass media by both McLuhan and Raymond Williams.

7   Speed is a determining, but relatively undescribed factor in the development of online video culture. A possible discourse for analysing the complex relationship between the increased speed in contemporary online technologies and our understanding of filmic representations of the world may be found with Paul Virilio and his concept of dromology (see Virilio 1977).

the nineties, a number of theoretical works called attention to the mode of expression of new, digital media. Of these, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's *Remediation – Understanding New Media* had particular impact. Herein it is argued that digital aesthetic expressions are all to be understood as products of or variations on previous media. The twin concepts of *immediacy* and *hypermediacy* are central to this process of re-mediation. *Immediacy* designates a form of media expression that is characterized by transparency. Here the perceived presents itself as directly available to the observer. To Bolter and Grusin, *immediacy* is defined by the concept's "naïve" character.

With reference to Bazin and Barthes's understanding of the photographic picture as an immediate reference to reality this sensation is compared with the spectacular experience of visual media created through digitalization. In this perspective, we find an aspect of naivety in the viewer's longing for realism: the viewer is aware that the perceived is merely a representation, but is still fascinated by the reproduction of a (possible) reality. According to Bolter and Grusin, this desire is historically and culturally conditioned (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 30–31).

Hypermediacy labels digital media, which in form and use signal their own construction and multi-referentiality. The opacity of the media accentuates its own presence as a premise for representation. Historically, *hypermediacy* is associated with the manifestations of avant-garde and experimental art. Collage and photo-montage are especially perceived as forms of expression that prescribe the fragmented combination of visual and textual information in the digital interface. In the composition of heterogeneous picture elements in new, unified wholes, this form of artistic practice furthermore accentuates a duality in the photographic media. The widespread perception of the photograph as a transparent reproduction of reality is a fragile convention that is constantly questioned by the different contexts in which it is included. On the other hand, the montage form of expression might be seen as a confirmation of the unique realistic status of the photographic elements, indicating that these are always hypermediated (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 38–39).

Bolter and Grusin's localization of the visual, digital interface between transparency and opacity presents a solid point of departure for understanding how the documentary movie is affected when integrated on the internet. Their theoretical focus on the sought-after realism in digital imagery and the simultaneous framework of hypermediation is related to two central analytical reflections on the documentary movie: the direct photographic reference to reality in the genre and the specific editing of the material. Our experience of the authenticity of the films and the message they convey is here understood as an integrated part of the process of remediation. Bolter and Grusin perceive this

as a very real experience, characterized by: "just as there is nothing prior to the act of mediation, there is also a sense in which all mediation remediates the real. Mediation is the remediation of reality because media themselves are real and because the experience of media is the subject of remediation." (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 59.)

The "Live" Archive

When a documentary like Dylan Avery's *Loose Change* is respectively integrated on the video sharing websites and integrates these portals' circulating material, it is automatically remediated in a new medial context that is defining for our perception of the genre.[8] The formal stamp that initially was distinctive for this uploaded collection of audiovisual information is appropriated into the immense archive on the net. Indicative of this process, *Loose Change* as a filmic phenomenon quite literally illustrates the conspiracy-theoretical aspect of the video sharing website. As an example, a site like YouTube presents us with a multitude of movie clips that are stylistically very similar to Avery's project, or perhaps even part of it. At the same time it contains numerous versions of the film: both the official editions by the director and selected sequences published by others.[9] The production is fragmented and displaced among the video archives' countless clips. As a user, one is subject to a potentially overwhelming and escalating experience even compared to the multiple trajectories through the information originally imposed by the director. [Fig. 5.]

This points towards the feeling of *fullness*, which Bolter and Grusin likewise connects with *hypermediacy*, an artificial sensation of authenticity caused by an excess in mediation. The navigation through the documentary material eventually becomes the real experience, that is, the physical interaction with the archive, an experience predominantly characterized by the transitory interest of the glance as opposed to the concentrated attention of the gaze.[10] The

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8   This process quite precisely illustrates Bolter and Grusin's main point: that remediation works both ways. This means that the documentary incorporates certain characteristics from net-based video web portals, while the genre is descriptive for a large part of the material published on these sites (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 55).

9   This is of course valid for other materials on YouTube, most notably classical feature films, which are often (re)circulated in any number of different editions, both as alternate cuts, uncensored versions or more frequently and for this particular context especially relevant, as selected clips uploaded in a range of different formats and durations.

10 Bolter and Grusin borrow this distinction between *glance* and *gaze* from the English art historian Norman Bryson. The notion is that the glance primarily makes the

remediation of film and video on YouTube creates a fleeting experience that balances between the fascinating detail and the trivial banality, also noted by Elsaesser: "A site like YouTube can be addictive, as one video drags you along to another. Yet after an hour or so, one realizes on what fine a line one has to balance to keep one's sanity, between the joy of discovering the unexpected, the marvellous and occasionally even the miraculous, and the rapid descent into an equally palpable anxiety, staring into the void of a sheer bottomless amount of videos, with their proliferation of images, their banality or obscenity in sounds and commentary. Right next to the euphoria and the epiphany, then, there is the heat-death of meaning, the ennui of repetition and of endless distraction: in short, the relentless progress of entropy that begins to suck out and drain away all life. The point of the exercise is thus not one or the other […] but to sense the trembling tightrope at all times, to remain suspended between epiphany and entropy." (Elsaesser 2008, 30.)

In addition to this paradoxical realization connected to navigating through the content, the framework of the net provides the filmic material with another distinctive characteristic. As mentioned, video sharing sites have a number of similarities with the TV-media. The image quality of each clip is decided by the possibility of streaming it instantly. As a result, most of the videos on YouTube are distinguished by pixelated, lo-tech aesthetics.[11] If we see this in the perspective of Bolter and Grusin's reflections on remediation, this visual distinctiveness points in the direction of TV-transmission.[12] I therefore suggest

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beholder aware of the creational process and the act of seeing (Bolter & Grusin 1999, 53–54).

11   Following the general acceleration of broadband speed, from March 2008 it was possible to upload video in HD-resolution on the site. In all probability this development will continue. However, this doesn't alter the quality of the existing footage, unless new versions are distributed on the net. In addition, the lo-tech aesthetics on YouTube can be regarded as both a negative and a positive effect of the remediation of film instituted by the video sharing websites. Sean Cubitt illustrates this with an example of the illegal distribution of Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. Strictly speaking this type of exposure doesn't grant justice to the complexity or the image-density of the work, however the fragmentation and dissolution of totality at the same time accentuates Godard's own perception of history and thereby his experiment with filmic form. Cubitt subsequently points out: "It is exactly because of their failings that YouTube and other lo-res media are less frightening than the alternative. They lie, but they are permeable. The arguments of the generation of '68 return: the dominant cinema constantly produces films which, despite their ideological project, cannot help addressing the contradictions in the dominant. Today, that role is being undertaken by software. The despair of the networked soul is still capable of a grainy, lo-res vision of hope. What makes YouTube video good is the same as what makes it bad." (Cubitt 2008, 51.)

12   In the 60s, McLuhan already emphasises the "flat" low-resolution quality of the TV-image (McLuhan 1974, 333–335).

the term *liveness* as a description for the immediacy that permeates the image-aesthetics on the video sites. Concisely formulated, it is the artificial reminiscence of the live-transmission which follows the specific archival practise on YouTube: the clip is one click away, but in an institutional perspective, it is paradoxically part of an ever-expanding online collection.[13] The different documentary footage in Avery's film explicates the specific style of realism with shaken video recordings and reframing of low-resolution images. This distinct characteristic is also evident in the majority of the clips published on the net, precisely as an effect enhanced by this specific remediation. It would therefore be relevant to emphasize that an institutional aura of authenticity clings to the images be that amateur recordings or fragments of feature films. This can further be understood with Bolter and Grusin's definition of the *immediacy* of the TV-media: "It is television's peculiar form of presentness – its implicit claim to be live – that founds the impression of immediacy. Television monitors events and reports (or at least seems to report) changes immediately. […] Although a vast network of technical devices and economic and social forces typically intervenes between the origin and delivery of the image, we still behave toward television as if it were a direct channel between ourselves and the event. We even use the term *channel* to designate the signal delivered on one frequency."[14]

As the most prominent video sharing website, YouTube specifically uses the term channel. It describes the collections of clips published by the individual user. Depending on the official status of this user, it could be anyone from a private person to a corporate business, innumerable videos of widely different categories are uploaded and it often becomes impossible to trace the specific film back to the original producer or owner of the rights. In the perspective of Avery's film, this institutional premise only serves to accentuate the authorial relationships, which surrounds the film. Initially, it is the work of an independent director with strong connections to an activist grouping. This is made clear when *Loose Change* is presented as part of the programme on a national TV channel, but in the forum of a video sharing website like YouTube, the collected material dissolves into untraceable fragments that return as the broadcasted versions from a multitude of user-generated channels. In the present perspective, a remediation process that in an eloquent way gives reminiscences of the mechanisms behind a conspiracy theory.

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13   For elaboration on this phenomenon and its further remediation through both the form and content of Hollywood-produced genre films, see my article *War, Lies and Video: Documentary Features of the War Film Genre in the Post-Media Age.*

14   Partially quoted from Sandy Flitterman-Lewis by Bolter and Grusin (1999, 187–188).

September 11, 2001 – Fiction and Beyond

An interesting development which also follows the above mentioned type of distributive circulation is that it paradoxically accentuates the documentary as subjective argument, while at the same time plays on our immediate expectation of the genre. We expect to be offered some evidence of the truth, but the fact that camera recordings are part of the visual argument doesn't necessarily mean that any universal truth is revealed. In the case of Avery's film, this is exemplified in the presentation of evidence that draws reference to science and our conception of scientific proof. As put forward by Michael Renov in his essay *Towards a Poetics of the Documentary* this distinct feature is connected with a very traditional conception of the documentary genre (Renov 1993, 12–15). The photographic material is shown as revealing *the real* truth behind the September 11 attacks or at least to factually dispute the official explanation. The numerous camera recordings of the terrorist attacks directly strengthen the motivation to uncover some sort of exhaustive explanation to this fundamentally meaningless man-made disaster. [Fig. 7.]

Simultaneously this footage is edited so that the all too familiar dramatic images of the planes crashing into the buildings and people fleeing in panic are combined with news media information and Avery's own critical commentary. Precisely the repetitive use of video recordings from the attack as hard evidence adds a bizarre and unintentionally ambiguous characteristic to *Loose Change*. As pointed out by French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, the media coverage of 9/11 gave the event a frightening illusory quality. Image and event in a radical sense became part of one another: "The New York events have radicalized the relation of image to reality, in the same way as they have radicalized the global situation. While before we dealt with an unbroken abundance of banal images […] the terrorist attack in New York has resurrected both image and event. […] Reality has absorbed the energy of fiction, and become fiction itself. […] It is a case where the real is added to the image as a terror bonus, as yet another thrill. It is not only terrifying, it is even real." (Baudrillard 2002, 7.)

The immediate experience of the filmic recordings of the attack on the World Trade Center seemed like a catastrophe movie, we had seen similar images before, but this time the film took place live. The footage was added a further fictitious distinctiveness in the subsequent news programmes and documentaries that followed the event. In a detailed analysis of this material, film scholar Geoff King calls attention to the way the different amateur and professional recordings were spliced together to create a form of continuity in the fragmented documentation of the catastrophe, a paradoxical practice that

draws on the structuring of fiction film: "We are very familiar with the practice of cutting from one viewpoint to another to get a better overall perspective on the action. This version can give the impression of more objective and unmediated access to what is happening, despite the fact that it is more densely constructed and mediated […] it offers a comfortable familiarity that moves smoothly and seemingly effortlessly from one shot to another. There is a widespread tendency in documentary, as Bill Nichols suggests, to use Hollywood-style continuity devices to efface the process of mediation in favour of a concentration on the material presented (King 2005, 54).

The real life catastrophe resembles the images of fictitious disasters and it is replayed in filmic forms dictated by the dynamic montage of Hollywood fiction. This again is edited by Avery into *his* conspiratorial narrative, as a continuously developing paranoid counter myth suspended between fact and fiction.

In this regard *Loose Change* exists as a bizarre equivalent to one of the most prominent example of conspiracy theory which American history made into fiction film, namely Oliver Stone's depiction of the Kennedy Assassination *JFK* (USA 1991). One could argue that Stone's biopic functions as a form of filmic document for the explanation of Avery's practice. In *JFK*, the famous Zapruder film serves as the documentary framing of the entire dramatization. In the beginning of the film it appears as indecipherable fragments, but by the end it is reorganized into Stone's grand conspiracy narrative by the main protagonist district attorney Jim Garrison played by Kevin Costner. Avery's series is the reversed version of this filmic strategy. His project actually started as an idea for a fiction film,[15] but ends up as a continual repetition and re-editing of the numerous documentary recordings of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and selected historical events, which contain elements similar to the ones found in this footage. [Fig. 8.] As deterministically suggested by Peter Knight, the real historical event of the 1963 presidential assassination has had such a collective, traumatic impact, that if it had not happened it would have had to be invented. He characterizes it as the primal scene of postmodernism and remarks that it is "not so much an originating cause as an effect of future effects."[16] Looking at a phenomenon like *Loose Change*, one is reminded of the sometimes woefully frail line between documentary discovery and fictitious spectacle. A current search on YouTube brings up the self-contradictory title *Loose Change – Final*

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15   See *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loose_Change_(film_series)*.
16   Peter Knight's definition of the Kennedy Assassination is primarily based on a comparative reading of Don DeLillo's *Libra* and Oliver Stone's film. He determines a common characteristic in the representation of this historic event: "It is represented as an initial moment of trauma that ruptured the nation's more innocent years, and which in retrospect has come to be seen as the origin for present woes" (Knight 2000, 115–116).

Cut 2012 (Full Length) and indicates the tragicomic logic, that is part of conspiracy thinking.

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List of Figures

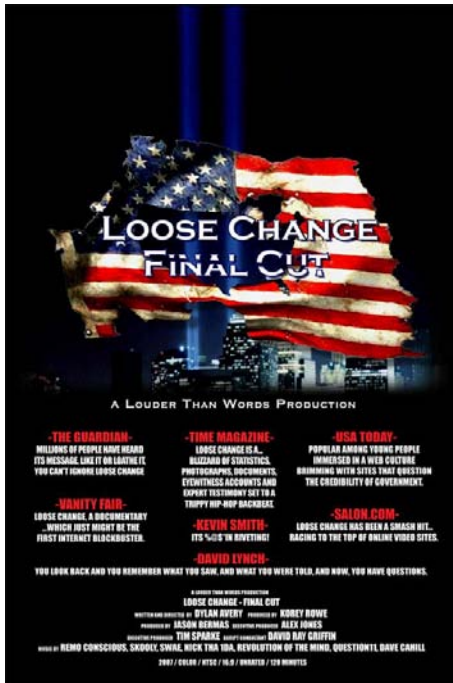**Figures 1–4.** A selection of posters, covers and ads for the four existing versions of *Loose Change*
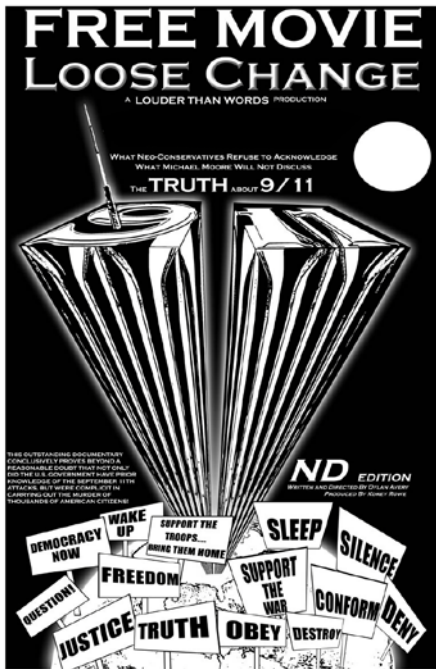
Figure 5. The latest version of *Loose Change* on YouTube. The bird's-eye shot is a consistent feature in the film, indicating an analytical overview, which zooms in and discloses the hidden facts.
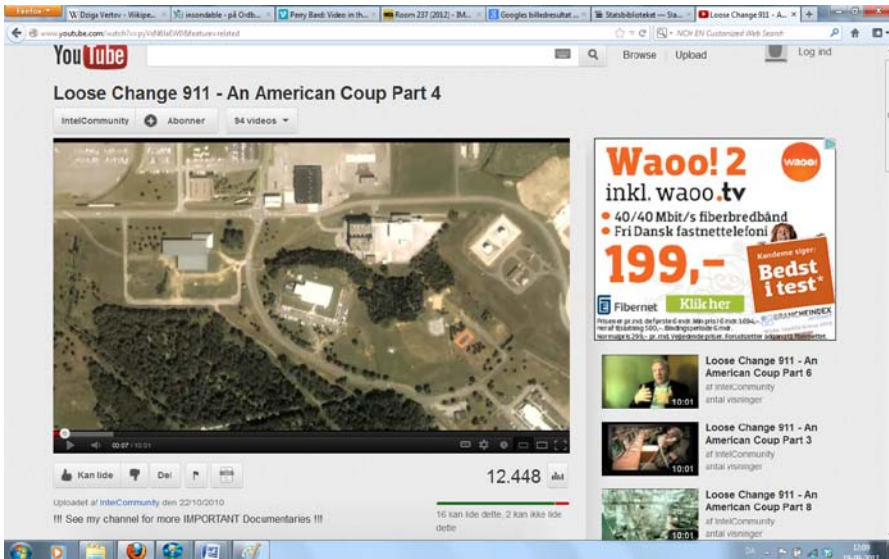
Figure 6. Example of the photographic presentation of evidence throughout the film. Here it is a crosshair accentuation of details in the collapse of the first Twin Tower.

Figure 7. The Twin Towers have an ubiquitous presence in *Loose Change*. Unintentionally and paradoxically portrayed as pixilated "ghosts" of the destroyed buildings.
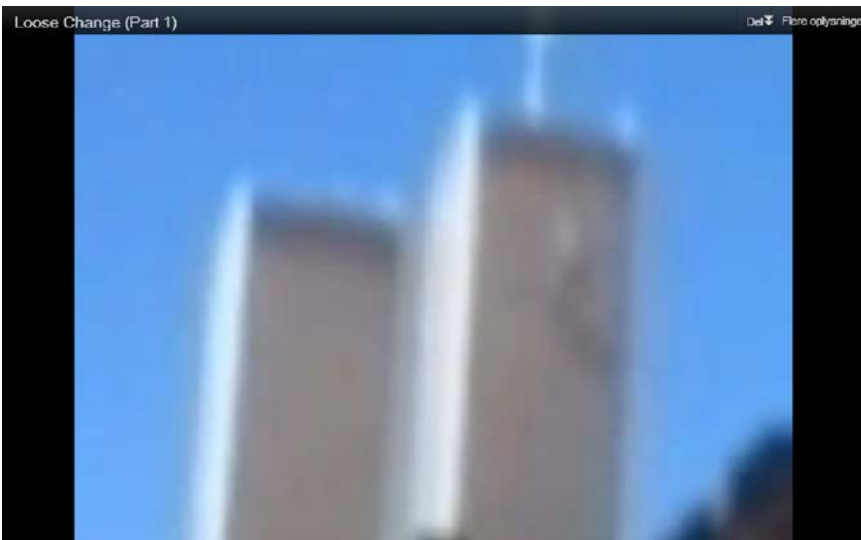
Figure 8. Archive footage of a B-25 Mitchell bomber crashing into the Empire State Building. These recordings are used in the critical analysis of the planes hitting the World Trade Center.

The Vertigo of the Single Image: From the Classic Narrative "Glitch" to the Post-Cinematic Adaptations of Paintings[1]

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Abstract. As a possible cross section of cinematic narratology and the theory of intermediality the following essay assesses some of the effects of foregrounding the single, intermedial image within film. Specific figurations of intermediality that are experienced via the consciousness of single images, or some kind of "imageness" (i.e. as "intermedial references") are presented as well as the modes in which they can interact with the narrative structure of a film. This interaction ranges from a momentary interference with the narrative structure of a film to disrupting it altogether; it may consist in constituting the gravity centre of a plot, or even in becoming the "canvas" for a palimpsest of narrative modes and narratives.

Keywords: narrativity, intermediality, painting and *tableau vivant* in film, post-cinema, Lech Majewski.

Introduction: Image versus Narrative and the Thresholds of Media

The theory of intermediality in film has so far concentrated either on fundamental issues of the relations between cinema and the other media (i.e. on how these relations can be perceived, interpreted or categorized), or on identifying figurations of intermediality, and very little attention has been paid to the way certain figurations interact with the narrative context they appear in,

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or to the relationship between intermediality and cinematic narrativity in general.[2] In recent years narratology has begun to foray into unchartered territories of inter-art relationships through its pursuit of transmedial concepts and models, and although the idea of transmediality relies on transmutability instead of the emphasis on media differences, on the whole, the search for a transmedial definition of narrativity has also, implicitly, launched the challenge to question the relationship between narrativity and medium specificity, or to explore even more specific connections between narrativity and intermediality. Marie-Laure Ryan concludes her essay *On the Theoretical Foundations of Transmedial Narratology* with these words that point in this direction: "the diversity of games that narrative can play with the resources of its medium is one of the many reasons that make the intersection of narratology and media studies, an area still largely unexplored, into a productive field of investigation." (2005, 21.) The challenge for cinema is especially intriguing, as in the case of cinema, these "games that narrative can play with the resources of its medium" are even more relevant due to the particular relationship in a film between the unfolding narrative and what constitutes its specific medium: the moving image. So much so in fact that we might even say that there is a continuous "tug of war" between "image" and "narrative," a "tug of war" that is subordinated to the "negotiation" between information received via what happens/or what is told, and via what is shown or implied by single images.

Christian Metz's description of this relationship can be used as a first stepping stone in expanding on this idea here. In his book *Film Language. A Semiotics of the Cinema* he writes the following: "The rule of the 'story' is so powerful that the image, which is said to be the major constituent of film, vanishes behind the plot it has woven […], so that the cinema is only in theory the art of images. Film, which by nature one would think adapted to a transversal reading, through the leisurely investigation of the visual content of each shot, becomes almost immediately the subject of a longitudinal reading, which is precipitous, 'anxious,' and concerned only with 'what's next.' *The sequence does not string the individual shots; it suppresses them.*" (Metz 1991, 45–6, emphasis mine, Á. P.) The same idea is highlighted by André Gaudreault's metaphor, who claims that "cinema is a machine doomed to tell stories" (1997, 171). And we know that this "machine" found its ideal form in the classical Hollywood narrative film which laid down the ground rules for the so called "canonic story" promoted by various popular genres and by screenwriting manuals up to the

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2   A notable exception in this respect is the volume *Intermediality and Storytelling* (2010) edited by Marie-Laure Ryan and Marina Grishakova which features several articles dealing with motion pictures.

present.[3] The classical Hollywood narrative film – as Bordwell (1985, 162) explains – consisted of storytelling techniques and patterns of visual composition that directed the viewer's attention not towards the contemplation of the pictorial qualities of the image but towards the comprehension of the plot and the understanding of coherent cause and effect, as well as time and space relations in film. This so called "self-effacing" style and the "narrative pressure" acting against the perception of singular images has been amply discussed in film theory.[4]

Its counterpart can be identified in what Tom Gunning described in a famously ground-breaking article as the "cinema of attractions" (1990). According to Gunning early film can be defined not as a form of storytelling but as a spectacle primarily focused on the "harnessing of visibility," on the sensation of "visual surprise." As Gunning admits "the transformation of filmic discourse [… that later] bound cinematic signifiers to the narration of stories and the creation of a self-enclosed diegetic universe" (1990, 60), i.e. the process that subordinated the "showing" to the "telling," can easily be seen as an inherent rivalry, "as a Cain and Abel story, with narrative strangling the nascent possibilities of a young iconoclastic form of entertainment" (1990, 60).[5] Nevertheless, this opposition can only be posited with a considerable degree of simplification, the "tug of war" oscillation between foregrounding the image and foregrounding the narrative in a fiction film, never results in the total surrender of one or the other. Stunning visual compositions often constitute "attractive" moments within the well oiled narrative structure or "transparent" imagery of classical genre films as well,[6] and often even films with so called "minimalist" narration unfolding against a rich, visual style, bring into play imaginary narratives or narrative expectations to a degree that they can be seen not so much as defective but as deconstructed, or simply open ended narratives.[7]

Allowing for a more nuanced view upon the interrelationship of image and storytelling, and employing a psychoanalytic framework, in a much-anthologized

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3   The fundamental elements of this "canonic story" that Bordwell describes in his book *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985) correspond to the features identified by Marie-Laure Ryan in what she calls the "cognitive template constitutive of narrative" in its most general, transmedial sense (2005, 4–5).

4   For a recent view on the subject see Verstraten's analysis (2009).

5   Hence, extending the term, recent new trends that again place the emphasis on the sheer visual experience of the image are considered as some kind of return to this pre-narrative paradigm in the form of the "cinema of attractions reloaded" (Strauven, 2006).

6   For examples of this see several essays in the volume *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (2006).

7   E.g. this is the case of the fragmented modernist narratives of Michelangelo Antonioni and his followers.

essay on "visual pleasure in narrative cinema," Laura Mulvey has analysed the way the image of women in classical Hollywood movies arrests the flow of the narrative and how classical narratives deal with such moments, and stated that: "The presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to *freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation*. This alien presence then has to be integrated into cohesion with the narrative." (1975, 11, emphasis mine, Á. P.) Feminist and Freudian interpretations of the gaze aside, this is true not only for the image of the objectified or aestheticized woman in the heyday of Hollywood genre films, but for any "attractive" single image in the cinema, as well. In a later book entitled *Death 24 x a Second. Stillness and the Moving Image* (2006) Mulvey herself considers cases in which moments of stillness break the flow of moving images, and – using Raymond Bellour's term – create a "pensive spectator" who can not only "experience the kind of reverie that Barthes associated with the photograph alone, but this reverie reaches out to the nature of cinema itself. This pause for the spectator, usually "hurried" by the movement of both film and narrative, opens a space for consciousness of the still frame within the moving image,"[8] something that is "usually concealed by the film's movement, [and] its particularly strong inscription of the index" (Mulvey 2006, 186).

Focusing on the sheer visual pleasure of stillness means becoming conscious of the single image in cinema and experiencing its double release from: a) being inscribed within and subsumed by the narrative flow, and b) from experiencing it primarily as an index of a pro-filmic reality, *thus experiencing its "imageness" as something more opaque*. And whenever the image "closes up" upon itself in this way, at the same time it may also "open up" towards illusory inter-media and inter-art "transgressions"[9] becoming more like a single photograph or a painting. We can see an eloquent example of this in the case of certain sequences focused on the portrait of Marlene Dietrich in Josef von Sternberg's films (see in Fig. 1 images from the prolonged close up from the *Shanghai Express*, 1932, a close up that has become one of the most often reproduced photographs of Marlene Dietrich). Or we may experience a similar phenomenon in modern cinema where still compositions often consciously

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8   Pausing the image with the use of new technologies may have a similar effect, i.e. may "bring to the cinema the resonance of the still photograph" (Mulvey 2006, 186).

9   I have discussed the relationship between "opaque" imageness and illusory inter-art transgression of the image from a different angle in Chapter Three of my book (*Cinema and Intermediality. The Passion for the In-Between*), entitled *The World as a Media Maze: Sensual and Structural Gateways of Intermediality in the Cinematic Image* (Pethő 2011, 95–179).

break down the barriers between cinema and the other visual arts, and are often saturated with symbolism.[10] The playful *tableau vivant* scene from the classic musical directed by Charles Walters, *The Easter Parade* (1948) makes this process self-reflexively explicit. [Fig. 2.] Here we see both the way a woman is treated like a picture and how such an arrested image becomes a threshold between cinema and graphic arts. First we have a *trompe l'oeil* setting involving a motionless model and a painting, where initially we confuse the living model with a picture as the widening of the frame reveals that the model is in fact doubled by another woman who looks exactly like her and who is sitting in front of a glass pane framed like a canvas opposite the painter. The ladies are easily stepping from one picture frame, from one medium to another, and the *trompe l'oeil* perception of women and pictures, of cinema and painting is then repeated in the subsequent shots in which a series of picturesque women are paraded posing as hybrid cinematic *tableaux vivants*, mixed photo-painting "illustrations" of a magazine.

Thus intermediality and non-narrativity, or halting the narrative are usually strongly bound together[11] even if this is not an exclusive bond on either part. In general, it is prudent to affirm that whenever some kind of a break in the seamless "welding" of image (or any other media) and narrative becomes perceptible (as the medium moves to the foreground pushing the narrative to a less perceptible level), the possibility for intermediality arises, or vice versa, figures of intermediality can render the text less transparent towards the unfolding of a story. (E.g. foregrounding single images by repetition may introduce musical structures within a film, or an overflow of verbal or written language may infuse a sense of literariness, and so on.) Here we can also remember that Joachim Paech has compared the experience of intermediality itself to the perception of the duality of "figure" and "ground" as it is understood in the visual psychology of the so called Gestalt theory. As he described it: "the medium formulates and the form figurates," i.e. the medium becomes observable as form, and the form serves as a medium for the figure that is then re-inscribed within the form of another medium.[12]

Bearing in mind that according to this view intermediality is understood as the trace of the other medium within a medium and it is always describable as

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10   A case in point for this can be Antonioni's famous closing shot of *L'Avventura* (1960).

11   We may also note that pre-narrativity is also strongly bound to intermediality in cinema, as Gaudreault explains in his chapter on "early cinema's intermedial meshing," in the beginning cinema was so intermedial that it "was *not even* cinema" (2009, 156).

12   See more on this in Pethő (2011, 40).

such through the *figures* of such an inscription,[13] I propose to outline as a possible slice of a narratological perspective over intermediality within film some of the modes in which specific figurations of intermediality can interact with the narrative structure of a film, instances of intermediality that are experienced somehow via the consciousness of single images, or some kind of "imageness."[14] As a further delimitation I propose to present only instances that can be fitted in the category of *"intermedial reference"* in its narrow sense,[15] referring in this case to what is known in German as "Einzelreferenz," i.e. "individual reference," (as opposed to Systemreferenz/"system reference"), meaning for example either a direct "quotation" or insertion of a painting, or other work of art, or media representation in a film that gains some emphasis at a given moment in the film. These references can be operational either within the bounds of a realistic representation as elements of the pro-filmic and the diegetic world, or they can be viewed within a self-reflexive frame of interpretation as figurations of intermediality. As such, their role can vary from a momentary interference with the narrative structure of a film to disrupting it altogether; it may also consist in constituting the gravity centre of a plot, or in becoming the "canvas" for a palimpsest of narratives.

1. From Narrative "Glitch" to Displacement and Extreme Fragmentation

As any other extra-textual allusion, an intermedial reference, e.g. a painting appearing amidst the cinematic images, can have the effect of de-linearizing narratives. Just like the petrifying gaze of Medusa that W. J. T. Mitchell

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13 Paech describes this "as a figured process or a specific configuration in the film" (2000).

14 I am quite aware of the fact that this constitutes a vast area of possible investigations, so what follows can in no way be a comprehensive overview of these issues, the article merely attempts to direct the attention to the interaction between figurations of intermediality and narrativity in film by pointing to areas and phenomena where this can be relevant.

15 Both Irina O. Rajewsky (2005) and Werner Wolf (2002) use it more broadly, both in the sense of individual and system reference. See Rajewsky's definition of intermedial references as "meaning-constitutional strategies that contribute to the media product's overall signification: the media product uses its own media-specific means, either to refer to a specific, individual work product in another medium […], or to refer to a specific medial subsystem (such as a certain film genre) or to another medium qua system […]. The given product thus constitutes itself partly or wholly in relation to the work, system, or subsystem to which it refers." (Rajewsky 2005, 52–53.)

described with regards to ekphrastic literature, where pictures can threaten to silence the poet's voice and fixate the observer's eye,[16] in the case of cinema, inserts of paintings or still images may introduce minor halts in the narrative either in the form of narrative blind spots, "glitches" or puzzling diversions. Belén Vidal compares the effect of "the interruption that the tableau brings about when inserted in the moving-image medium" to Lyotard's interpretation of *anamorphosis* in the famous Holbein painting, *The Ambassadors* (1533) [Fig. 3.], saying that: "the superimposition of a different mode of representation over the "realist" frame (requiring the eye to move and therefore to see) exposes the differential movement of the film-work, where narrative represses it" (Vidal 2012a, 120).

The idea is reinforced by Stephen Heath's analysis (1986) of the disruptive effect of a cubist painting in Hitchcock's *Suspicion* (1941) [Fig. 4.] as an unexpected, unexplained incident appearing as a momentary "glitch" in the narrative. Hitchcock, in fact, uses paintings or painterly compositions quite often to rupture the seamless fabric of his narratives.[17] Compared to the realist space of the narrative, the painting in his films can appear as an "opening" towards another level of existence: an abstract "space" onto which Hitchcock often displaces the horrifying experience of crime, fear or, in many cases, desire, bordering on perversion (e.g. *Vertigo*, 1958). The flow of the narrative denouement usually subsumes this strange image wedged into the cinematic space, nevertheless, the painting acts like a possible double – "a dangerous other" (to apply Mitchell's term) – for the cinematic image, hovering over the enthralling tale, ready at any time to take charge, threatening to disrupt the reasonable (and discursive/narrative) order of the world and to invade it with abstract shapes and lines, with images that resist to "tell" and impress the viewer with what they "show:" with their spellbinding visual presence. In this we can also see a displacement from "single reference" (the insertion of a painting) to "system reference" (as the moving image itself assumes the characteristics of a painting through specific techniques of lighting, framing and *mise-en-scène*).[18]

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16 According to Mitchell "Medusa is the perfect prototype for the image as a dangerous female other who threatens to silence the poet's voice and fixate his observing eye" (1994, 172).

17 I have analysed this in detail in a chapter of *Cinema and Intermediality* entitled *Spellbound by Images: The Allure of Painting in the Cinema of Alfred Hitchcock* (Pethő 2011, 179–231).

18 It has to be noted that "system references" (i.e. the cinematic image becoming like a painting) can be achieved without "individual references" to particular paintings, and can also vary from a limited "reference" (the painterly style of a particular artist) – as we see in many cases in modern cinema (e.g. the shots resembling De

On the other extreme we have Jean-Luc Godard's cinema, where for example, the multiple instances of the unexpected inserts of paintings – a case in point: the unusually fragmented narrative of *Pierrot le fou* (1965), in which all kinds of pictures pop up without any dramatic motivation[19] – not only induce a puzzling fragmentation into the narrative, and divert our attention from the story by the visual surprise, but can ultimately provide a lyrical and musical structure built on variations and repetitions. His latest work, *Film Socialism* (2010), described by its subtitle as "a symphony in three movements," offers a mélange of photo-filmic experiences "texturized" by the collage of quotations from other films and the presence of pictures within pictures, and also by the "modulation" of the cinematic image itself, while the break between image and narrative appears not as a consequence of the emergence of "imageness" as a figure but as a constant doubling, where fragments of narratives, verbal reflections flow together with the various kinds of images, but are not necessarily connected to the images.

2. The Picture as an Enigma, or Narrative as a Prolonged Caption to a Tableau

Paintings becoming more than props in a setting for a narrative always bring an excess of signification to cinematic representation that is not easily defined. Paintings in cinema always cast a certain "aura" around their referent, and they are always "attractions" capable of becoming imprints of the entanglement of great emotions. No wonder that film noir narratives are full of paintings (often portraits of their emblematic character, the *femme fatale*), and alluring, painterly compositions accompanying unexpected plot twists, and over-boiling tensions. According to Thomas Elsaesser (2002) a painting in a film signifies at the same time both too much (seen in the context of the history of art) and too little (merely another image, amidst the many others that make up a film). He also considers that "a painting in a film often creates a gap which the narrative has to motivate," and this gap can be filled either by the presentation of an artist

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Chirico, Rothko or Pollock in Antonioni's films) – to a more "generic" reference (i.e. being "like a painting" in a more general sense), as we see in the fragmented imagery of Serghei Paradjanov's highly ornamental cinema, where images become like paintings not by reference/resemblance but because of their static framing and *mise-en-scène*, and the singular sensual presence of objects and haptic textures (see Tarnay, 2003).

19   And even if we may find some elements in the image or the voice over narration that seem to connect the paintings to the moving images, the sudden change of medium is always perceived as a disruption of the cinematic sequence.

as the protagonist, or "by pointing to it as the source of an enigma – the enigma attaching itself not so much to who is being represented as to why the represented is an enigma to one or several of the characters." Or, to quote Belén Vidal who analyses the role of portrait paintings within film from several vantage points in her book on figurations of the period film genre, *Figuring the Past*: "the tableau in film is in itself an a-narrative figure which may, however, work its way into the fiction as metaphor, a secret: a representation that hides another. As Bonitzer points out, '[as] parody, homage or enigma, the shot-tableau always provokes a splitting of vision and gives the image the quality of a mystery, whether in the religious or in the detective-story sense.'" (Vidal 2012a, 120.) It is as if a painted picture in a film invariably activates what Roland Barthes called the narrative's "hermeneutic code,"[20] but we might also say – Elsaesser adds – that it activates one of Todorov's properties of the fantastic, a hovering, a consistent undecidability of discourses." In films like Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944), Fritz Lang's *The Woman in the Window* (1944), Jacques Tourneur's *Experiment Perilous* (1944), Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940) or *Vertigo* (1958), and several others from the film noir canon, narrative often unfolds as a step-by-step clarification of an enigma embodied in a painting. [Fig. 5.]

And while the paintings that appear in such films are hardly ever of much artistic value being more often than not kitsch portraits that infuse the picture with a touch of mannerism that goes well with the melodramatic genre they appear in, they are highly effective both in focalizing the emotional charges of the story, sustaining the suspense as a riddle, and in acting as a tangible form of an enigmatic content that can be only painstakingly and never fully elucidated. As even when the detective story reaches its closure, such stories invariably attest to the persistence of the myth of the inscrutable nature of femininity, something that is both flaunted and forever enfolded by the painting of a woman. At the same time, these paintings are also working essentially on an intermedial level by exhibiting a perpetual confrontation between the representational modes of cinema and painting, pointing either – as Elsaesser suggests – to the superiority of the moving picture over the expressly "bad painting" by "warming itself at the ashes of a pictorial form the cinema helped

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20   In *S/Z* (1974), a detailed analysis of Balzac's short story *Sarrasine*, published in 1970, Roland Barthes developed a concept that every narrative is interwoven with five codes that drive the reader to maintain interest in a story. The "hermeneutic code" refers to any element in a story that is not explained and, therefore, exists as an enigma for the reader that demands clarification. Most stories hold back details in order to keep the audience guessing while the reading progresses and finally all loose ends are tied off.

to consume" (2002), or reversely, to the superiority of the painting by foregrounding the limits of its mechanically reproductive nature. In modernist art cinema the mannerism induced by the kitschy portrait disappears, and while the basic function of the picture as a riddle within the narrative is preserved, its media reflexive potential building on the tension between the two art forms is much more emphatic and sophisticated.[21]

  On the other hand, the excess of signification sensed in a painting that is introduced in a film can not only make it like a sphinx that guards a mystery, but can sometimes make the painting be conceived literally as a "representation that hides another." A picture that, according to popular belief, is always "worth a thousand words," can be used as a representation to encrypt a narrative, to hide a story, a story that needs to be unearthed and deciphered through the plot. Thus we have film narratives feeding on the sheer excitement of a yarn being unravelled from the "a-narrative" excess of visual representation, and present paintings as fossilized stories that preserve fragments of private and public history. One such film is *The Vanishing Point* (*Ce que mes yeux ont vu: Le Mystère Watteau,* 2007) directed by Laurent de Bartillat, in which finding the presumed love story of Watteau and his muse hidden by a painting is shown in parallel with (and allegorized by) the uncovering of a picture within a picture, and a painting underneath a painting, and in which the thrill of detecting the story itself, of exploring, scanning the minute details of a painting, of getting immersed into the visual world of a painter equals the excitements of a detective story.[22] [Fig. 6.] Bartillat's film is

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21 Belén Vidal's examples discussing this function of the paintings eloquently demonstrate this. She quotes Jarman's reworking of the biopic in *Caravaggio* (1986) where "the *tableau vivant* explores the mutual contamination of the sacred and the profane against the background of the sixteenth-century politics of art and patronage," or Peter Greenaway's *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982), "where the double-framed vedutas of the aristocratic country estate are presented as clues to the murder mystery that structures the film" (2012a, 120), and examines the way in which the insert of a shot-tableau reproducing the lighting and composition of the canvas *The Nightmare*, by J. H. Füssli in Eric Rohmer's *The Marquise of O* (1976) "works as a call in the text – the figure as intertextual moment that evokes previous representations of the feminine body in Western art. But the frame also does something else: it flags up the materiality of the female body – its very presence – as the absence that determines the enigma of the film. The shot-tableau of the Marquise thus becomes the 'stain' at the centre of a text that displaces attention from predatory male sexuality to the enigma of feminine sexuality as both scandalous and non-representable" (Vidal 2012a, 121). For more in-depth studies of paintings used in this way see: Dalle Vacche (1996), Felleman (2006).
22 The way information is extracted from the pictures is not far from clichés of detection employed by crime and spy narratives, where we have clues hidden in images (like in *The Da Vinci Code*, 2006) or entire messages encoded within pixels of digital photographs.

also a good example of a narrative in which the excess in signification identified in a painting unfolds by way of reframing art (or history) as private history. We have the same pattern in the *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (Peter Webber, 2003), *Volavérunt: The Naked Maja* (1999) by Bigas Luna, or in Peter Greenaway's *Nightwatching* (2007). In each of these cases the film offers a narrative contextualization to a single tableau. [Fig. 7.] Belén Vidal (2012b) identified such a reframing as a key figure in historical biopics which often construct their stories as a kind of "psycho-ekprasis" "around a fetish-tableau" that is shown either at the beginning or at the conclusion of the film (e.g. *Elizabeth,* 1999, *Elizabeth, the Golden Age,* 2007, or: *The Queen*, 2006*).* Vidal also points out that the relationship in such historical or "heritage films" between spectacle and narrative is thus inverted, as the story "becomes an elaborate caption around the fetish-tableau. [Fig. 8.] In *The Private Lives of Henry VIII* and *The Madness of King George* the tableau is introduced at the beginning of the film, almost as a mythical point of origin for these fictions that seek out the man behind the public image" (Vidal, 2012b, 42).

3. The Generative Force of Images: Moving from Inspiration to Adaptation

3.1. *Pictures as Paratexts and Pre-texts*

Genette defined paratexts as the "thresholds of interpretation," or quoting Philippe Lejeune, as "the fringe of the [printed] text which in reality controls one's whole reading [of the text]" (1997, 2). In cinema, sometimes, not texts but references to concrete paintings are used to introduce the film, paintings appearing as the background image upon which the opening credits unroll, or standing between the title and the body of the film itself. In such cases both the medial difference (the textural otherness) perceptible in the paintings, and the associations generated by the sight of the familiar paintings, defer the spectator from a too early immersion in the story, constituting an "obstacle" that has to be acknowledged and preserved in our minds, and as a "mirror" to which we suspect that we will need to return after having seen the whole film to look into once more in order to see the whole picture more clearly (thus, from the very beginning, such a device is also securing a markedly reflexive, non-linear "reading" of the film). Such images are always palpable "frames" first that wrap the story, and "thresholds of interpretation" second. And when it comes to interpretation, they often pose more questions than give answers, the heavy and enigmatic "texturality" of the painting folding onto and seeping into the

cinematic images that follow, however, without its polysemy ever being diluted by the narrative.

Andrei Tarkovsky makes the viewer contemplate a detail of Leonardo da Vinci's unfinished and almost monochrome painting, *The Adoration of the Magi* as the camera glides slowly above the surface of the canvas at the beginning of *The Sacrifice* (1986), introducing not only key motifs of the film, but establishing a rapport with the cinematic image that is similar to religious icons one touches and beholds with reverence, a rapport that Tarkovsky often underscored in his films. Bernardo Bertolucci has three films that invite their spectators to step over the thresholds of paintings before being immersed in the diegetic world that opens up in the cinematic images. *The Last Tango in Paris* (1972) displays two paintings by Francis Bacon in the title sequence. These paintings are used as paratexts that set the mood for the story that will unfold in the film, pointing to a source of inspiration that generates the specific expectations that the film attempts to equal (this inspiration is later reinforced in this case by the resemblance in the portrayal of the protagonist to the portrait of Bacon himself). [Fig. 9.] Similarly, *Novecento* (1976) begins with the reproduction of Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo's painting, the *Fourth Estate* (*Quarto Stato*, 1901) and thus foreshadows not only its ideological content but also a narrative moulded as a series of loosely connected (historical) tableaux. *The Spider's Stratagem* (1970), an adaptation of a metafictional detective story by Jorge Luis Borges (*The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*), begins with the enigmatical animal symbolism of the naïve paintings of Antonio Ligabue (and reinforces the undecidability between subjective and objective viewpoints through paraphrases of Magritte and De Chirico later on in the film).

We can also distinguish an even further step in the use of paintings in this respect, when we have a minimalist narrative (or a narrative fragment) that is entirely conjured up by associations to single pictures as their pre-texts. This latter form, however, is prevalent not so much in fiction films, but in video installations or experimental short films characteristic of the so called post-cinematic age. We may list here such experiments as Eve Sussman's trans-medialization of *Las Meninas*, entitled *89 Seconds at Alcázar* (2004), [Fig. 10.] a high-definition video installation expanding the world of the Velázquez masterpiece into a string of images among which the one seen in the original painting is merely the imprint of 89 seconds (maybe questioning its status of a pregnant moment) within a world in perpetual motion, or Bill Viola's several video art projects inspired by famous paintings, like *The Greeting* (1995) based on the *Visitation* (1528–29) by the Italian artist Pontormo. Although such projects are usually interpreted from the point of view of their relationship to temporality (as the figures of the painting originally conceived in relations of

surface, space, composition are reconceived in an architectural setting, subordinated to changes in time[23]), and from the point of view of the interplay between classic iconography and contemporary screen culture, dwelling on the way in which – as Agamben (2011, 61) put it – "under the incredulous eyes of the spectator, the *musée imaginaire* becomes the *musée cinématographique*," evaluating them from the perspective of narrativity is perhaps equally relevant. Transforming the motionless picture into a slowly moving sequence of images in a way always, paradoxically, "narrativizes" the non-narrative, the descriptive qualities of paintings, unfolding before our eyes minute details (and changes) of a fictional world inhabited by characters, and foregrounding a density in gestures, sensations, and emotions. At the same time, the trans-medialization also "secularizes" the revered artwork as the painting transmutes into the more common realm of moving images and the minimalist narrative frame of everyday actions and gestures. However, this is an ambivalent process: by magnifying simple gestures and investing them with the tension of cinematic narrative expectations while preserving the reference to the painting, the image, dislocated from its original frame (and stripped of its original "fine art" aura), does not really lose one status and gains another, but becomes suspended in the "in-between" of cinema and painting.[24] Such post-cinematic projects always materialize on the sensual thresholds between "cinematic" movement and the still image, and also, markedly, between narrativity and non-narrativity, as the images do commence to unfold a possible story, yet this is at the same time folded back, re-absorbed in the "texture" of the image itself (or maybe transmuted onto a more "molecular level" to use Deleuze's term, 2004): by the sensation of forms, colours, lights, shadows, fabrics, and bodies in movement.

Short films like Marcell Iványi's *The Wind* (1996) or *Ballad* (2005) can be placed somewhere in between full blown narrative adaptations of single images,

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23 Tatiana Senkevitch (2012) examines *89 Seconds at Alcázar* in relation to its prototype, Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, and points out how Sussman's artistic technique, the staging of light, choreographed movement, sound, and gestures, in particular, dilate the image by amplifying the visual characteristics of the original Baroque painting.

24 Agamben's analysis of "inserting time in the images" dwells also on the effect of a newly (re)constituted aura of the image through the infusion of motion. He explains: "the spectator realizes with surprise that what caught his attention is not just the animation of images that he was used to considering immobile. It is, rather, a transformation that concerns the very nature of those images. When, in the end, the iconographic theme has been recomposed and the images seem to come to rest, they have actually charged themselves with time, almost to the point of exploding. Precisely this kairological saturation imbues them with a sort of tremor that constitutes their particular aura. Every instant, every image virtually anticipates its future development and remembers its former gestures" (2011, 61).

and minimalist video installations. Moreover, these particular examples also use their intermedial references to representations taken from Western culture in a more complex interaction with their suggested narratives grounded in a specific East European historical context, thus implicitly also constituting examples not only of transmedial, but of trans-cultural narrativizations of pictures. In the former example the visual narrativization of a black and white photograph by the French photographer Lucien Hervé (*Three Women*, 1951) is achieved through imagery that connects both to a kind of "vernacular" iconography (images referring to specific Hungarian history filtered through the stylized "choreography" reminiscent of the films of Miklós Jancsó) and to a more universal, European film history (the same photo being paraphrased through a similar circular camera movement in Jean-Luc Godard's *Weekend* made in 1967). [Fig. 11.] Through this there is also another kind of meta-narrative tension that is introduced into the film: reading of the implied "narrative" is continually oscillating between the levels of reading the universal symbolism of images, and decoding a more specific, "local" signification, where the origin of the images (Hervé's photograph) and the origin of the photograph (France, Audincourt) comes as a surprising surplus of information that frames and re-frames the film (with the title being shown at the beginning and the original photograph itself being shown at the very end). Iványi's next similar project, *Ballad* (2005), which generates its images from the same *Fourth Estate* that Bertolucci used in *Novecento*, operates perhaps even more consciously with balancing in between the effects of closeness and familiarity on the one hand, and distantiating abstraction, on the other, only in another way: this time it is not the familiarity of local (film) history that attracts the viewer, but the spectator is literally drawn near to the surface of the image through the marked haptic quality of the spectacle, whereas the artificiality of the painted backgrounds reminiscent of Pellizza da Volpedo's painting (and thus perhaps even of Bertolucci's film) together with the use of a fictive language have an increased alienating effect.

3.2. *Painterly Stylization as (Authorial/Rhetorical) Metalepsis*

A painterly composition or distortion of the image can serve as the marker for metaleptic leaps between embedded and/or ontological levels of the narrative (e.g. the leap from reality to fiction/fantasy is often shown in narratives this way: we can remember in this respect the famous dream sequence that appears

as a Dali painting in movement in Hitchcock's *Spellbound*).[25] However, sometimes a painterly stylization that has its source in a well defined corpus of paintings (a limited "system reference") can also be interpreted as a "loop" between the subjectivity of the fictional character and the meta-discursive level of the author:[26] signalling both the "authorial" constructedness of the visual narrative and a cinematic vision anchored in the consciousness of the character.[27] This is the case for example in films about famous painters like *Love is the Devil* (John Maybury, 1998) presenting images from the life of Francis Bacon [Fig. 12.], or *Caravaggio* (Derek Jarman, 1986), that project stylistic features of their paintings onto the screen (colour scheme, lighting techniques in Jarman's film, skewed points of view, odd fragmentations of bodies, and image distortions in the film about Bacon, etc.) in scenes which do not necessarily reproduce actual paintings.[28] However, this authorial metalepsis can also be considered of a more or less "rhetorical" type, because even if the stylization extends to several scenes, this stylized filter soon becomes "transparent" and the viewer can be immersed in the diegetic world, almost in the same unobstructed way as it is done in the case of any classic narrative film, and ultimately this "breach of illusion does not threaten the basic structure of the narrative universe" (Ryan 2006, 207).

3.3. *The Tableau Vivant from Hypotyposis to a Palimpsest of Narratives*

In its minimal form the *tableau vivant* can be similar to the literary trope of *hypotyposis*[29] adding a vivid, painterly quality to the otherwise transparent

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25   See a more detailed presentation of the possibilities of intermediality as metalepsis in my analysis (Pethő 2010) of Agnès Varda's films from this point of view.

26   I am referring here to the author and not the "monstrator" because according to Gaudreault: "the monstrator […] is a plural agent delegated to so many facets of the production that we cannot view it as a 'true focal consciousness' unlike the textual narrator" (2009, 72).

27   It is the element of intermedial reference that makes such a technique different from the type of "free indirect vision" that we have in modernist cinema's painterly images.

28   This can be seen as opposed to the genre of a more classical biopic where we have "normal" images, and compositions resembling the famous paintings are shown on the level of *mise-en-scène*, on the level of the profilmic "reality" awaiting the eye of the painter who sees them and transfers them on canvas (such scenes can be seen in Minnelli's 1956 film about Van Gogh, *Lust for Life*). Maybury's film on Bacon also inserts such a sequence in the scene that shows George Dyer's death in the manner reminiscent of Bacon's triptych with the same subject.

29   As a literary device the most relevant features of this trope can be summarized in this way: "hypotyposis paints things so vividly and with such energy that they become in some way visible, it also turns a narrative or description into an image, a picture, or even a living scene" (Dupriez 1991, 219–220). Similes, allegories can all function as hypotyposis when they "paint a picture."

cinematic image, and providing a quick rhetorical metaleptic wink at the knowledgeable spectator. We can see such an instance in Albert Lewin's casual *tableau vivant* reproduction of Manet's *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882) in *The Private Affairs of Bel Ami* (1947), where the protagonists are seen entering the bar. The moment when the actual tableau (almost) comes together is quickly swept away, and the characters all seem ignorant of walking through a cinematic paraphrase of a painting, but the effect of the insert can remind us of Barthes's description of the *punctum* in photography, "an accident that pricks" the spectator (2010, 27), a detail within the flow of moving images that can also expand for a moment, throw the single image into relief, and infuse the otherwise insignificant cinematic frame with a liveliness and a vibration that is not diegetic, that has nothing to do with dramatic tension, but seems to communicate directly with the viewer. As such it also functions as a rhetorical metalepsis, an aside. [Fig. 13.]

A similar example can be seen in Woody Allen's film, *Midnight in Paris* (2011)*,* at the beginning of the film the long shot of the colourful park scene with the tiny characters at the bridge in the background not only resembles impressionist paintings in general but at some point the image recomposes[30] one of Monet's many paintings of water lilies. The counter-shot of the same scene, the reversed camera angle focusing on the characters pushes the Monet image into the background and proceeds with the dialogue of the light-hearted romantic comedy. Woody Allen's shot/counter-shot sequence is like a didactic explanation of how the intermedial figure/ground, image/narrative dynamics can work in a film: first we see the intermedial figure (the paraphrase of Monet) coming to the foreground, then, as the characters come to the fore in a close up, the narrative suppresses it, and the figure is visible no more, the magical "accident," the touch of impressionism over the cinematic image fades away. Later a paraphrase of Van Gogh in the starlit sky behind the characters works much in the same way.

In other cases, however, the figure appears not just as a media reflexive trope – "a composite monster" as Pascal Bonitzer put it (1985, 31), or a deliberate troping of the hybrid nature of the cinematic medium (cf. Peucker 2002, 295) – but also a trope with more complex narrative implications, despite being usually considered an a-narrative device.[31] By contrasting stasis with motion, a *tableau vivant* can be used to counterpoint the flow of the narrative, and as

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30   The Monet image emerges from the sequence of cinematic images much in the same way as we see the original painting being reconstituted by a movement that slowly fits the pieces together in Eve Sussman's *89 Seconds at Alcázar* and Bill Viola's *Greeting.*

31   See the quotation from Belén Vidal earlier in this article.

such, even to signal the inadequacy of narrative structures. Jean-Luc Godard's *Passion* (1982), for example, uses a cinematic re-enactment of a series of famous paintings exactly in this way, as a site where the palimpsest-like potential of the cinematic image emerges against conventional narrative expectations, offering a platform also for and an explicit critique of a Hollywood-style storytelling.

If a single painting wedged into the cinematic space works like *anamorphosis*, then a *tableau vivant,* in which a painting is transposed/adapted as a more or less static scene onto the screen, excels in its complexity comparable to a palimpsest. Moreover, such a tableau, as a highly saturated picture oscillating in-between the autonomous, individual image and the image subordinated to the narrative sequence, appears not only at the cross-section of several arts, but it can also always be perceived both as a palimpsest of different *narrative modes* (that of painting, cinema, theatre/opera, even literature when language is brought into play), as well as a palimpsest of *narratives*: where the "story" condensed into the painting (with its enigmatic characters), the "story" of the painting as an artwork (and all its known interpretations) collapse into the diegetic story unfolding in the film that incorporates it and feeds on it.

We have a whole encyclopaedia of the different variations of this trope in Lech Majewski's films. The work of the Polish director, who is also a renowned painter and writer, stands out in this respect not only because of the frequency he uses this trope but also because of the way he reconceives the *tableau* by exploiting its affective-performative and embodied aspects. *The Roe's Room* (1997) is recounting his own life story through tableaux compositions reminding us of famous paintings that appear literally as the sensuous present of the past, as living, breathing pictures painting an organic landscape of memory and artistic imagination. In *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (2004) we see a dying woman and her lover enacting (and recording with a small video camera) scenes from Bosch's eponymous painting – teeming with hybrid creatures transgressing their existence – in an attempt to rise above the imminence of death by using their own bodies as "living pictures" to create a sensual interface between art and life, where living the pictures and becoming the pictures themselves opens up the horizon towards a two-way transgression: of art pouring into life, and life entering into the heightened experience of the world of art.

Perhaps Majewski's most famous endeavour so far, *The Mill and the Cross* (2011) is a feature film length *tableau vivant* – a post-cinematic cross-breed between cinema and painting and installation art – that presents in a self-reflexive loop the creation of the painting by Brueghel within the "story" (or more precisely "stories") represented by the painting. At the end of the film this peculiar cinematic tableau is then wrapped up in an even further reflexive frame of the museum space (suggestive of an art historical narrative context) by

the camera that slowly backs away from the moving image revealing the original Brueghel masterpiece hanging alongside other paintings in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum. In the film the details of the painting itself are spread out into a succession of loosely connected cinematic scenes, individual vignettes focusing on the activities of the small figures seen at the foot of the Calvary. As the panorama unfolds into the individual scenes, the film also weaves together seamlessly the narrative modes of literary storytelling (with dialogues, monologues and comments), of theatrical re-enactment, character interaction and choreography of bodies in space, in addition to the density of narrative painting evoked through the picturesque cinematic images (digitally mixing painted backgrounds and photographic techniques imitating painting) that often display frames within frames acting as *tableaux* within the overall *tableau*. [Fig. 14.] And similarly to Majewski's earlier films, the hybrid, post-cinematic moving image[32] becomes in this way a unique platform for a fusion between the sublime artifice of painting, the tangibility of moving, bleeding, feeling bodies and the technical wonder of digital cinema, where the cinematic *tableau vivant* is actually *performing the basic "narrative" of the image as a medium* – just as Hans Belting (2005) describes – that of bodies caught in the process of becoming images, and images becoming bodies that we have to relate to in all kinds of situations and narratives.

Thus the *tableau vivant* – a privileged site for moving image experiments that go beyond traditional genres of cinema – can be seen as a self-reflexive trope potentially re-enacting the way images "come to life" in a narrative, and also, paradoxically, it appears both as a figure that sustains the resistance of the single image to being subsumed by the flow of cinematic narrative and a figuration that can offer the highest possible condensation of narrative modes that an inherently intermedial cinema can offer.

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32 The artist's personal website (*http://www.lechmajewski.com/*) defines the film as a "unique digital tapestry," and although *The Mill and the Cross* can be considered a theatrical movie, the film has often been shown in museum spaces around the world, and in 2011 Majewski also displayed parts of it as a moving image installation entitled *Brueghel Suite* both in the Louvre and in Venice (in the Chiesa di San Lio) as a part of the 54th Biennale.

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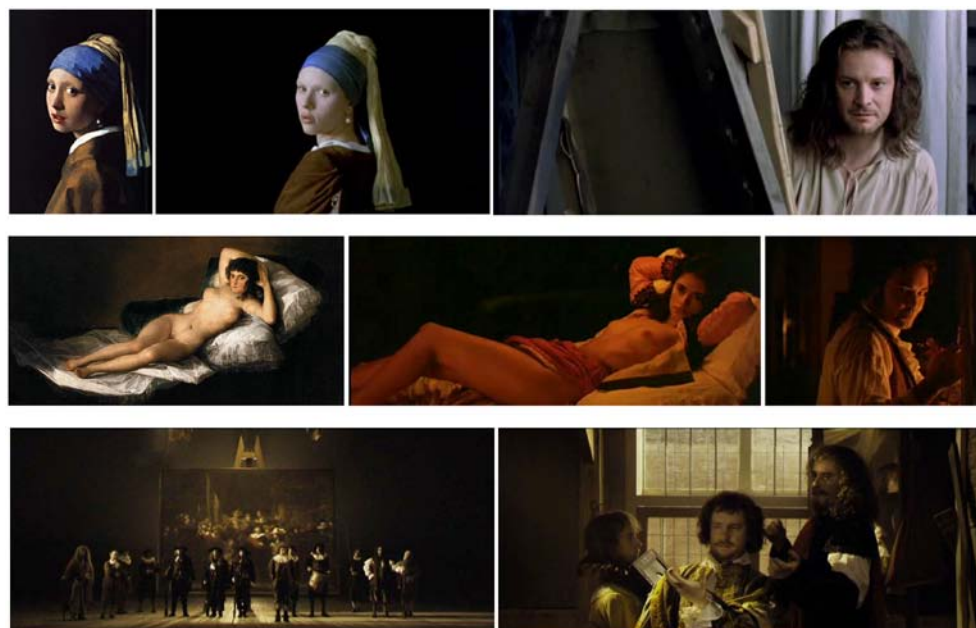
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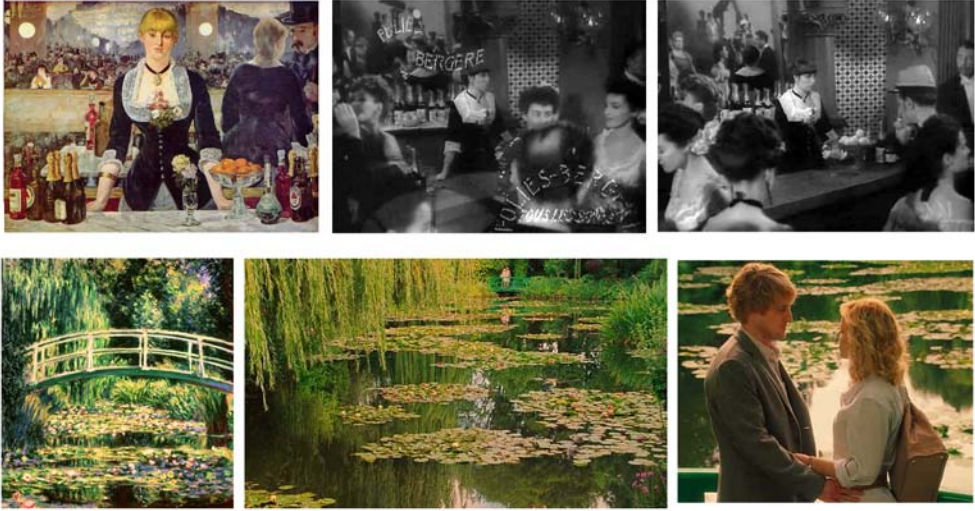

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Michael Powell's *The Thief of Bagdad* and Abbas Kiarostami's *A Taste of Cherry*: Two Faces of Orientalism

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Abstract. British director Michael Powell (1905–1990) and Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami (1940–) share several technical similarities in their film-making, most notably an interest in the visual language of still photography, painting and other visual arts, specifically light and colour. They also often comment on the art of film-making and the subject position of the audience as voyeur within their films. With respect to Orientalism – the philosophical and cultural construction that the West overlaid on the East – Powell and Kiarostami can be profitably compared. Powell appears to have accepted uncritically the notion that the East could be characterized by exotic and sensuous otherness, an attitude that is revealed in his approach to *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940) as escapist fantasy and *Black Narcissus* (1946) as a farewell to India. Kiarostami, on the other hand, a "real Oriental," not only rejected the Orientalist paradigm (while simultaneously drawing on its original language and symbols), but also refused to respond to it in the way that other Muslim artists, particularly in the post-Iranian Revolution period, consciously attempted to build a non-western cinematic art. His *Taste of Cherry* (1997), however, does draw on some of the same cultural elements that were borrowed and distorted by the European intellectuals who promulgated the Orientalist and postcolonial world-view.

Keywords: Orientalism, Michael Powell, Abbas Kiarostami, post-colonialism, painting and film.

Introduction

Michael Powell's 1940 fantasy film *The Thief of Bagdad* and Abbas Kiarostami's *A Taste of Cherry* (1997) are two seemingly incongruous films originating in different cultures and different time periods. Powell's work, noted for its advanced special effects, is sensational in stereotypical Hollywood

terms, propelling the viewer to emotional highs and lows through rapid action, special effects, panoramic camera shots and angles, and Oriental exoticism. Kiarostami's muted and introverted masterpiece, on the other hand, although eschewing plot twists and narrative movement, appeals to the senses also, but in a strikingly different manner. Juxtaposing these two films illuminates several facets of Orientalism: Powell's film participated in constructing an unproblematic 20th century British Orientalism, while the famous negative critical reaction of Chicago film critic Roger Ebert to *A Taste of Cherry* revealed western Orientalist misconceptions about eastern and Muslim concepts of time, death, place and suicide. Both films, however, share a profound interest in two aspects of "otherness:" the *Thief*'s transportation of the audience through history and physical space (a de-centred fantasy world of "long ago" with flying genies and flying carpets, based on the imaginatively transfixing power of the *1001 Nights*; and Kiarostami's portrait of the alienation of spirit of a man who has chosen to no longer live in the world). Both films draw on a complex symbolism of sensuality. Also, the films are linked stylistically and technically by the self-reflexivity of the directors and a distinct interest in the framing techniques of still photography and painting: these technical aspects in both filmmakers are intertwined with the semiotics and semantics of their art.

Development of Powell's Orientalism

Powell began his film career in 1925 working for Irish director Rex Ingram (not to be confused with the American actor of the same name who stars as the genie in *The Thief of Bagdad*) after a brief unsuccessful career in banking. In 1924, Ingram filmed *The Arab* in North Africa, a work that may have influenced Powell. The hero Jamil, a soldier in the war between Syria and Turkey, learns he is the son of a Bedouin tribal leader. He defends a mission school of orphans from being handed over by a fearful village leader to the Turks who want to slaughter them. The film draws on one aspect of imagined Arab identity common in films of the time: the "noble savage" stereotype of the hero Jamil. Also the portrayal of Turks as bloodthirsty and cruel harkens back to the English proverbial saying "as cruel as a Turk." In these Orientalist films of the 1920s–40s, historical, documentary, or cultural realism was never considered, and the plots are often simply romantic Western narratives transposed to eastern settings. As Michalak observes, "this genre includes movies such as *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), *Kismet* (1920, 1930, 1944, 1955), and *The Wonders of Aladdin* (1961), which present the Arab world as a fabulous land of snake charmers, monsters, great wealth, half-naked women, harems, flying horses and

the like. In this genre, "Bagdad" is a projection of American fantasies, a place where Western taboos are violated and where even the laws of physics are suspended for flying carpets, magical ropes and cloaks of invisibility" (Michalak 2002, 12).

Michalak's analysis is complicated by the fact that both Arabic story-telling and lyric, such as the *Alf layla wa layl* (*1001 Nights*) and the *ghazal*, have had a profound impact on western literature and narrative structures. These films were often, as was the case in Douglas Fairbanks's earlier *Thief of Bagdad* (1924), accompanied by lavish and expensive props and thousands of costumed extras. The sets for Fairbanks's *Thief* were estimated to have cost 2 million dollars, an enormous sum for the time. Thus the nexus of East/extravagance/ fantasy/otherness/sensual beauty is clear throughout these films shot in mythical eastern settings, primarily highly ornamented indoor sets [Fig. 1]. The art form of film itself in the early part of the 20th century, due to its novelty, communicated otherness by its very nature, especially considering the rarity of international travel at the time for the average person. Film *could* transport audiences to the exotic East. The wildly popular Rudolph Valentino film *The Sheik* (1921) also reinforced Orientalist visions of the East and racial taboo: the lusty Sheik abducts a white woman, but is depicted with sympathy for his bravery and nobility. We learn at the end of the film, however, that he is in fact the son of a British father and Spanish mother and was adopted by an Arab tribe after his parents' death. Thus racial barriers and stereotypes are left intact instead of being violated. The film enacts a subtle emotional movement in the audience from unease and mild shock at the vibrant, colourful and violent Sheik, to growing sympathy and tension, and then an affirmation of western identity and western values when the Sheik's origins are revealed.

During the first period of Powell's career, he occupied himself in various roles as actor and stills photographer, a position that clearly influenced the way he viewed the art of film itself, as a moving tableau. In 1928, he met Alfred Hitchcock and was hired to produce the still photography for Hitchcock's silent film *Champagne*. Powell's later Hitchcockesque production *Peeping Tom* (1960) would have seriously damaging consequences for his later career. The film narrates the crimes of a video-voyeur who films his victims as he murders them, continuing Powell's interest in the filmic eye that first arose in *The Thief of Bagdad*. As Roger Ebert points out, *Peeping Tom* shocked both viewers and critics because "it didn't allow the audience to lurk anonymously in the dark, but implicated us in the voyeurism of the title character" (Ebert 1999). Similarly Powell in the *Thief of Bagdad* draws the audience in to create the narrative, in the sense of Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief:" the director asks the

audience to participate in the fantasy, colours, exoticism and otherness of Powell's imaginatively constructed Bagdad.

A strong parallel between Powell and Kiarostami is the self-reflexiveness of their art: both directors signal to the viewer in some way that they are consciously making film and that the audience is a voyeur. Powell's *Peeping Tom* showed this very explicitly, much to the chagrin of its critics. A favourite technique of Kiarostami, which he used in *A Taste of Cherry* and *Ten* (2002), involves dual-mounted cameras inside a car recording the points of view of driver and passengers as they observe one another. In another of his films, *Shirin* (2008), the entire action involves camera cuts to the faces of famous Iranian actresses as they themselves are in a movie theatre watching the scenes of the classic Persian love story *Khosrow and Shirin.*

Light, Colour and the Orientalism of Powell

The Thief of Bagdad (1940) was produced by Alexander Korda and directed by Michael Powell, Ludwig Berger, and Tim Whelan. The cast included Conrad Veidt as Jaffar, Sabu as Abu, the Little Thief, June Duprez as the Princess, John Justin as Ahmad, and Rex Ingram as the Djinni. The plot is told in flashback (in the recursive narrative style of *The 1001 Nights*) by the blind King Ahmad, whose kingdom has been seized by his evil Vizier Jaffar. He befriends Abu the Little Thief and together they experience a series of adventures. Due to wartime interruptions, production of the film was transferred to Hollywood for finishing by Alexander, Zoltan and Vincent Korda, as Ludwig Berger had been effectively sidelined due to disputes with Alex Korda. Unfortunately, Powell did not speak at length about the production of the film in the two volumes of his autobiography, but the production values and vision of the film can be reconstructed within the context of his other films, specifically *Black Narcissus* (1947) and *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946).

Powell came to age and maturity during the period of two world wars and a devastating financial depression which greatly sapped England's financial and spiritual resources, creating several "lost generations" of men. The first half of the 20th century, interrupted by a brief "roaring twenties," was a time of austerity and rationing which necessitated a stoicism and denial that has became a stereotype of the modern British character ("keeping a stiff upper lip"). Thus to provide psychic balance in British society, some form of escapism was needed, and the motion picture fulfilled this role well. Thus Oriental themes, themselves a form of British escape from the puritanical Victorianism of the 19th century, collided felicitously with a desire to forget about war,

casualties, and the lack of material goods. Interestingly, *The Thief* was one of two films sent to then U.S. ally Russia during WWII to entertain children. Russia even more than its western European allies was suffering food shortages and massive casualties from the Hitler offensive.

The basic thesis of Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* (1978) posited a constructed binary between East and West – Orient and Occident – pervasive in western literature, art and politics, which always situated the West in a superior ontological position. While the West was vigorous, intellectual, disciplined, ordered and moral, the East was feminine, sensual, corrupt, exotic and always "other." For Sir Richard Burton, who translated both erotic and pornographic eastern works such as the *Kama Sutra*, *Arabian Nights*, and *The Perfumed Garden*, Orientalism resided in imaginative discourse, fantasy, and the sensuality of the harem and seraglio. For European visual artists such as Goodall, Ingres, and Hunt, Orientalism was embodied by rich saturated colour, intricate costumes and sensual female nudes [Fig. 2]. It is this last facet of Orientalism which most impacted Powell and the set designers and art directors with whom he worked, such as Alfred Junge, many of whom were specifically trained as painters and graphic artists.

Powell claimed credit for the enormous eye that appears on the bow of the ship that enters the harbour in the opening scene of *The Thief* (Christie 1994, 33), mimicking the standard film countdown symbol and announcing wittily the motif of the visual [Figs. 3–4]. Other related themes of seeing and eyes include the blindness of Prince Ahmad (both literal and metaphorical, as he doesn't see the treachery of Jaffar until it is too late), illusion and reality with the appearance of the Djinni, Jaffar's hypnotic powers, and Abu's theft of the All-Seeing Eye.

Powell lived before the CGI special effects revolution where action and movement, such as in *Star Wars*, *Dune*, and more recently *Lord of the Rings*, would become a central feature of fantasy and science fiction film; yet Powell made extensive use of special effects in *The Thief* and *Black Narcissus*. Just as today the purpose of special effects is to create other worlds, Powell and Korda were aiming at a completely fantastic experience, a world that the British mind associated specifically with the Orient. Powell's description of the prop created to film Abu within the Djinni's large palm provides some hint of the extravagance of the set properties: "When Abu is seen in the hand of the Djinni, that hand was a model of a real hand and was some forty feet from the wrist to the tips of the fingers. This required seven tons of clay to manufacture and was made in sections to fit over the machinery which allowed the hand to open and close in a realistic manner. When the whole hand was completed, it was sprayed with over a hundred coats of rubber

cement which took the place of the skin and masked the joints as it opened and closed" (Powell and Pressburger 2012).

In Powell's *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), heaven is portrayed as a black-and-white efficient and humourless bureaucracy devoid of love by using a special Technicolor Monochrome process, while scenes shot on earth appear in full Technicolor. Through an error, the main character, airman Peter Carter, who has been marked for death, ends up on earth and falls in love instead of being conducted to heaven by the French psychopompus "Conductor 71." When Conductor 71 returns to earth to retrieve Carter and bring him to heaven, he looks around and says "One is starved for Technicolor up there. What a night for love." The quip clearly establishes the connection between colour, love and earthly pleasures. In the 1940s, black and white film held its own against Technicolor in part because it was an expensive proprietary process: Technicolor could add up to 25% to an entire film budget. Thus a director needed to make a considered and conscious choice to use Technicolor, and therefore it became a significant film element in and of itself; this is how Powell approached the use of colour in his films, as another tool in the expressive toolkit. What Powell did in *The Thief*, and this is more evident in the luxurious colour tableaus of *The Red Shoes* (1948) and *Tales of Hoffman* (1951), was to heighten and direct the narrative through emotions created by colour, and also in part through music [Figs. 5–6]. Thus Technicolor was by its nature perfectly suited to the earlier visual arts tradition of Orientalist painting, which equated rich colours with the sensuality of the East.

Director Martin Scorsese, who has been strongly influenced by Powell, has made a similar observation: "there was something very special and unique about the English use of Technicolor […] and that became something else, and that had to do a lot with emotion; it had more to do with painting"[1] [Figs. 7–10]. Scorsese also pointed out elsewhere that "Michael [Powell] always felt that the only true authentic genius of film making was Walt Disney" (*Black Narcissus, DVD Commentary*). One of Powell's favourite films was the richly animated Disney film *Fantasia. The Thief*, according to Powell's autobiography, represented an important watershed for Powell and Pressburger (The Archers): "the Archers thought in colour from the *Thief of Bagdad* onward" (Powell 1992, 39).

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1   The source of the quotation is a documentary by Craig McCall: *Painting with Life* (2000).

Orientalism in *Black Narcissus* (1946)

Black Narcissus (1946) tells the tale of an Anglican nunnery established in the Himalayas housed in a former harem. The British nuns fight against a non-Christian culture represented by the sensual Indian dancing girl Kanchi (Jean Simmons). The local British agent Dean (David Farrar) delivers the line: "they're like children" when speaking of the Indian villagers, without any irony whatsoever. The same line is echoed later by Sister Clodagh (Deborah Kerr), who tells Dean: "We all need discipline. You said yourself, they're like children. Without discipline we should all behave like children." These lines again represent a standard British colonial view that Europe represents a more disciplined and advanced state of development than eastern nations, and that eastern peoples are impulsive and child-like. The title of the film derives from the name of the perfume that the foppish young Indian General (played by Sabu) wears, emphasizing the frivolity and narcissism of the native ruling classes. The whole film, in fact, can be interpreted as a study in the differences between East and West, since it appeared in theatres only a few months before Britain withdrew entirely from the Indian continent in 1947. As the nuns leave the nunnery in the final scene, the audience feels that two distinct cultures that could never meld together or understand one another have finally parted ways.

Viewers are often surprised to learn that *Black Narcissus* was made entirely in England, using an indoor and outdoor set at Pinewood studios as well as one English botanical park containing Himalayan plants and trees. The stunning vistas are all mattes, glasses and backdrops painted by a talented team of landscape painters directed by Alfred Junge [Figs. 11–12]. Powell commented on the role of colour in the symbolism and narrative structure of *Black Narcissus*: "Our mountains were painted on glass. We decided to do the whole thing in the studio and that's the way we managed to maintain colour control to the very end. Sometimes in a film its theme or its colour are more important than the plot" (Powell 1986, 42). Powell also noted that "in my films, images are everything" (Powell 1986, 169).

Jack Cardiff won the Academy Award for Best Cinematography and Alfred Junge won the Academy Award for Best Art Direction for *Black Narcissus*. Cardiff, the subject of two documentaries by Craig McCall (*Cameraman: The Life and Work of Jack Cardiff* [2010]*; Painting with Life* [2000]) was very much interested in painting, particularly the artists Vermeer, Rembrandt and Van Gogh. Powell equally appreciated the interconnections between painting and film: "I had learnt from Vincent Korda on *The Thief of Bagdad* the value of a painter's eye" (Powell 1986, 407). Powell's team was actually known for

introducing and developing new Technicolor techniques (despite the objections of the Technicolor company, which was sometimes dictatorial about the use of its process), because "in the early days, [Technicolor] had been talking down to technicians, art directors, and cameramen who worked in black and white [….] but now they were dealing with painters, which was a very different thing. The painters knew enough about the technical possibilities of the process, particularly people like Jack Cardiff […] and they were able to tell Technicolor where to get off" (Powell 1986, 668).

Thus Powell's *floruit* coincides with an instrumental period of film history in which black and white and colour film were nearly on the same terms before colour would come to dominate modern mainstream film production. Clearly Powell and his associates Jack Cardiff and Alfred Junge were pushing the technical boundaries of the Technicolor process and colour schemes in general to create a film element that elicited meaning and emotion and that could compete in importance with acting, dialogue, music score and narrative. In Powell's "Orientalist" films *The Thief of Bagdad* and *Black Narcissus*, these colour elements as well as spatial techniques borrowed from the graphic arts, could simultaneously convey a sense of the otherness of film itself, and its escapist and fantastic dimensions, as well as a thematic and philosophical vision of the profoundly "other" Orient. Powell's Orientalism was probably not a conscious stance, but merely a product of his social environment, especially in the light of the many pro-British films verging on propaganda that he made during and after the WWII period (*49th Parallel*, 1941; *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, 1943; *Battle of the River Plate*, 1956). Although he drew some ire for sympathetically depicting a Nazi deserter in the *49th Parallel*, these films never question fundamental British values, or call into question Britain's sense of cultural superiority.

The Neo-Orientalism of Abbas Kiarostami

Abbas Kiarostami was born in Tehran in 1940, the year that the *Thief of Bagdad* appeared in theatres. Similar to Powell's interest in photography, Kiarostami's interest in form, light, and colour led him to study graphic design and painting at the Tehran University College of Fine Arts. He is also a noted still photographer. His first work involved making television commercials in the 1960s. His first film *Bread and Alley* (1970) featured a child protagonist, a recurrent feature of his work. He directed a number of films in the 1970s and 80s including the Koker Trilogy films (1987–94), which are set in the northern Iranian town of Koker, the site of a devastating earthquake in 1990. Kiarostami

himself, however, did not conceive of the films as a trilogy. Kiarostami is sometimes grouped with a set of directors who created what is dubbed the Iranian New Wave Cinema. His work first achieved notice by European audiences at Locarno in 1989 and *A Taste of Cherry* (1997) won the Palme d'Or at Cannes.

Kiarostami's *A Taste of Cherry* appears to ignore the Orientalist viewpoint altogether in that he does not sentimentalize, or romanticize his main character Mr. Badii, or set him in opposition to western values or norms – Kiarostami clearly does not want to make political film through this particular narrative. There is no pandering to western tastes in the way that, for example, Orhan Pamuk has been skewered by Turkish intellectuals for telling the West in his novels what the West wants to hear. A great deal of postcolonial art in the Arab-speaking world has been plagued by this burden of emphasizing specifically what is unique and non-western about Islamic culture, instead of simply presenting the fullness of the fabric of Muslim life as it exists in lived experience.

Kiarostami, however, does draw on a native tradition of sensuality in Persian love poetry for his symbols and set of signs which the 19th century French and British Orientalists would also appropriate, distort and magnify, and apply to all of Eastern culture itself – i.e. Sir Richard Burton's interest in eastern pornography, Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* as a *carpe diem* masterpiece, or the Cordoban courtly love manual *The Dove's Neck-Ring* by Ibn Hazm. However, these works were clipped deliberately from the complex cloth of medieval Islam and displayed as evidence of the East's addiction to pleasure and the harem, and the East's feminine weakness in the face of the West's superior military technology and intellectual resources. They also provided an erotic escapism from the sexual repression of Victorian society. Specifically, the cherry of the title of Kiarostami's film symbolizes the Old Turk's reconnection to worldly existence and pleasure after an attempted suicide much like Badii's desire to end his own life.

The sensuality of Kiarostami's cherries forms an undercurrent in classic Persian and Sufi poetry, particularly Rumi, who would be well known by most educated Iranians. There are also references in Kiarostami's work to the Persian poet Omar Khayyam, made famous in English by FitzGerald's translation of the *Rubaiyat*. The critic Dissanayake has pointed out the concern that both Rumi and Kiarostami share about the act of making art, which Powell also signals to the viewer of his films: "One important point of similarity between Rumi and Kiarostami, to my mind, is the fact that both of them comment reflexively on their chosen media even as they communicate experiences through them. In

other words Rumi's poetry shows signs of meta-poetry while Kiarostami's films show signs of meta-cinema" (Dissanayake 2012).

Cherries appear numerous times in Kiarostami's poetry, and can symbolize youth, sexuality, and freedom from restraint, as in his *Poem 28*:

The old nun
dispenses advice
to the young nuns
amid cherry trees (2001, 28)

and *Poem 180:*

The little bud
announced itself loudly
from inside its hard sheath of cherry wood (2001, 180).

Light and Colour in Kiarostami's *A Taste of Cherry* (1997)

Interestingly, Kiarostami suffers from hypersensitivity to light and can often be seen wearing sunglasses in public. *A Taste of Cherry* contains numerous scenes that have obviously been composed solely around the organizational motif of a myriad of finely gradated shades of colour, shadow, and shape. Moreover, colour in Kiarostami, as in Powell, establishes mood, emotion and a unique symbolic language. For example, most of *A Taste of Cherry* was shot in the hills surrounding Tehran in autumn producing a dry, spiritually parched and end-of life nuance which parallels Badii's own weariness with his condition. Elena alerts us to the significance of the pervasive brownish yellows in the shots: "an ochre, yellow earth – the colour of desperation and depression in Persian tradition–is ever-present as a recurring motif that constantly suggests the idea of burial, or the burial sought by Badii, a simple minute figure, shut inside his car, crossing these lands" (Elena 2005, 128). Critic Laura Mulvey believes that Kiarostami was in essence attempting to cast the landscape as another character in *A Taste of Cherry*: "the landscape is both bleak and beautiful. Kiarostami shot the film in autumn to take advantage of the metaphorical significance of the season of dying, but the terrain has its own distinct character, almost like a constructed mise en scène" (Mulvey 1998, 5).

A constantly used shot in *A Taste of Cherry* consists of dusky sunlight bouncing off Badii's car windshield, which reflects colours of dry dirt, dead leaves, rust, a gravel pit, and faded washed-out longshots of the city. The consonance of these colours is so striking that the director is clearly asking us to reflect on a world that for Badii is inexorably turning towards the colour of

earth [Figs. 13–16]. During the film Badii appears to fade in and out of existence through the interplay of direct sunlight with reflected or translucent light as his connection to life grows more and more tenuous. These are not the rich and dark primary colours of Orientalist painting. The washed out effect, which is also paralleled by shots of Badii seen through the hazy reflections of a window, in essence distances the viewer from Badii; we are not allowed to feel pity for him or ever to know the reason for his quest of self-annihilation [Fig. 16]. That this is all a conscious and crafted technique becomes obvious in the much criticized final scene, in which Kiarostami the film maker and the actors (including the soldiers) are revealed filming in the hills where much of the action has taken place, but in the green of springtime. In the final scene, bright colours in the blue-green spectrum appear, in shocking contrast to the dominant earlier earth tones [Fig. 17]. Also, the appearance of the soldier/actors joking and playing around recalls Badii's fond reminiscences of his time in the army, when he felt connected to his fellow man and part of a bigger whole as opposed to his current state of alienation which pursues him throughout the film.

Kiarostami's interest in light and colour as the dominant elements of the landscapes in both his films and still photography, which convey a non-romanticized and non-Orientalist realism, has been perceptively analyzed by Ishaghpour: "The cinematography of Kiarostami is essentially stark – without choice of expression, emphasis, virtuosity or gesticulation on the part of the photography, and without the picturesque, effect or strangeness of nature. All signification (imaginary, poetic or symbolic), all romantic reverie or egotistical impulse is removed from his work in the face of a nature which has nothing of the sublime, of the resplendent, of the surprising, the sombre, the abysmal, the horrible, the terrible or the grandiose or incommensurable. His is not a wooded nature, a land in gestation, fat and chthonian, but the dry land of the Iran of the high plateaus with their immensity, the grey of the mountains, and rarity of the vegetation, its dry air and without atmosphere and clarity which accents the brevity of contours of the abstract and immaterial" (Ishaghpour 2000, 17).

Kiarostami himself has explicitly spoken about the importance of light in *A Taste of Cherry*. In the penultimate scene of Mr. Badii in his self-dug grave, the moon rises and his face is illuminated by lightning flashes: "But life comes from light. Here, cinema and life merge into one another. Because the cinema, too, is only light [...]. The spectator has to confront this non-existence which, for me, evokes a symbolic death" (Kiarostami, quoted by Mulvey 1998, 8). Kiarostami thus reveals his belief in the centrality of light as existence – and the parallel between the image on the screen and life itself – both the entire film and the individual scene of Badii's death make it clear that Kiarostami's statement is not a superficial metaphysics, or a stylized profundity tossed off for critical

consumption, but a deeply held conviction of an artist who has mastered so many genres of visual art.

A Critical Misinterpretation of *A Taste of Cherry*

American film critic Roger Ebert seems to have got it terribly wrong, and his misinterpretation of *A Taste of Cherry* is instructive. He appears to be disturbed by the lack of plot or action (despite his protestations to the contrary): "I am not impatiently asking for action or incident. What I do feel, however, is that Kiarostami's style here is an affectation; the subject matter does not make it necessary, and is not benefited by it […]. The film is such a lifeless drone that we experience it only as a movie" (Ebert 1998).

Paradoxically, the film is tense at times (for example, as the Kurdish soldier trapped in Badii's car attempts to divine Badii's possibly sinister intentions), but not driven by dramatic tension or the type of Hollywood-style action that Ebert yearns for: the film is emphatically not about suicide, even though the entire story revolves around Badii's search for someone to cover over his grave after he has killed himself with pills. For Western audiences, "will he or will he not commit suicide" is a real question that could propel the plot or subplot of a movie. However, this is not a real question for a Muslim audience, since suicide is strictly haram and not a subject for debate since in Islam it represents one of the questions that has long been resolved by *ijma'* or consensus, and therefore is no longer open to further legal reasoning. A Muslim knows that Badii's three Muslim passengers (the Kurdish soldier, the Afghani seminarian, and the old Turk) will be expected to dissuade him from his deed, and the audience will even know what arguments they will use on Badii. Therefore, the film cannot be "about suicide" for a Muslim audience, so instead they are left with a powerful portrait of a man driven beyond despair, intent on his mission of self-harm, and the inexorableness of his will. Thus the drama strikes at some of the most primal emotions of the audience witnessing pure human disintegration since in the end they learn nothing about Badii the individual or Badii as a Muslim in crisis. This purity of emotion is again neatly presented contrapuntally in light, landscape, and form in the same way that Powell manipulated these visual elements on the screen.

Conclusion

Powell in *The Thief of Bagdad* and *Black Narcissus* presents an unproblematic and traditional British Orientalism replete with 19th century notions of the East as sensual, feminine and exotic. Powell could not bridge East and West in his oeuvre due to his historical and cultural circumstances (the East would always remain exotic for him), but Kiarostami does seem to homogenize and blur life and art, and not so much counteract or respond to the cultural constructions imposed on his society by Orientalism, but merely to create an Iranian art situated within traditional Persian culture, and to suggest the similarities between his characters and a universal everyman. This impulse, to see his Iranian subjects and characters as both products of culture and history and simultaneously as archetypes, flies in the face of Orientalism which insists on difference and racial stereotyping.

One seemingly conscious anti-Orientalist feature of Kiarostami's films (including *A Taste of Cherry*) is the choice of male protagonists, and the lack of gratuitous sexualisation or sensualisation of his female characters. The two major roles that women could play in western Orientalist film circa 1920–1960 were either thinly clad seductresses (harem and seraglio girls) or beautiful objects of the male protagonist's desire (also dressed in revealing clothing). Kiarostami's *Ten*, on the other hand, a film which revolves around a female taxi driver and her female passengers, presents a wide range of non-sexualized "every woman" types, including the taxi driver's sister, a pious old woman, and a prostitute. Kiarostami has been praised for his daring reinterpretation of Iranian women in his films by providing portraits of the full breadth of female experience, including the other roles they play outside of family and child-bearing.

Ironically, a stark realist in one sense, Kiarostami plays with some of the same Orientalist discourse and semiotics that Powell could not transcend, in his use of colour and light as a medium to explore the ethereal (avoiding the richness, saturation, and density of colour that Orientalism would employ as shorthand for the senses and fleshly worldliness). Both Powell and Kiarostami demonstrate a fixation with both colour schemes and fixed visual elements, such as form and framing, as a source of meaning, a recognizable feature in many of their films probably ultimately related to their mutual interest in still photography, painting and graphical arts.

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List of Figures

Figure 1. Douglas Fairbanks's *Thief of Baghdad* (1924) was noteworthy for the cost of the lavish sets and costumes, and certain special effects (flying horses, flying carpets) were imitated in Powell's *Thief of Bagdad* (1940). **Figure 2.** Typical British Orientalist painting: possibly Thomas Malton, 1748–1804.

Figures 3–4. The eye of the opening scene of *The Thief of Bagdad* prepares the viewer for a visual feast of Technicolor and special effects.
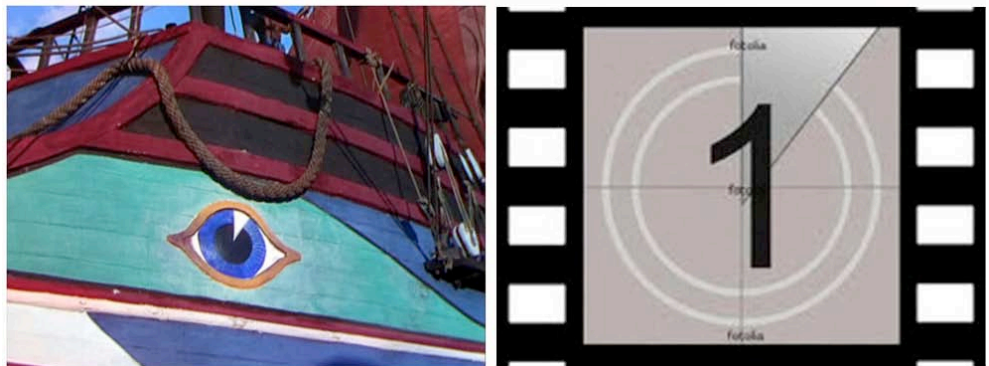
Figures 5–6. Emotion created by colour in *The Red Shoes* (1948) and evidence of Powell's visual imagination rooted in still photography framing techniques (i.e. visual S-curve recommended in standard photographic manuals).

Figures 7–10. A sequence from the *Thief of Bagdad* (1940) seen as a series of Orientalist tableaux. A comparison of **Figure 9** from the *Thief* with the Orientalist painting (circa 1880–90) in **Figure 10** by French artist Philippe Pavy reveals the similarity of Powell's procession with the common Orientalist motif of the colourful entrance of a notable person on an animal accompanied by elaborately dressed attendants.
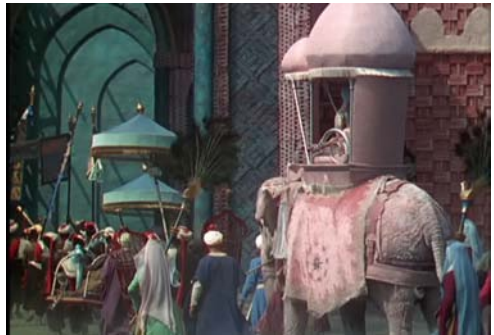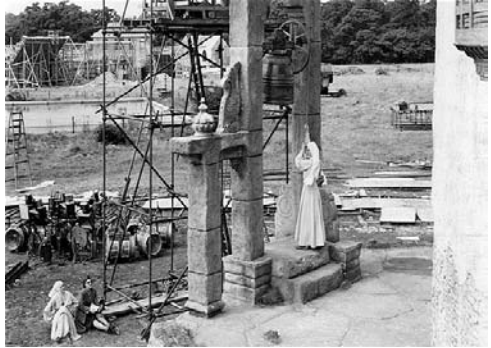
Figure 11. The outdoor backdrops in *Black Narcissus* were paintings. The landscape paintings are so realistic that even modern viewers are astonished when they learn that it was not filmed in the Himalayas. **Figure 12.** The actual set used in **Figure 11** at Pinewood Studios, London.

Figures 13–16. Consonance of earth tone colours in *A Taste of Cherry* suggesting spiritual dryness and death. **Figure 16.** Typical shot of Badii in *A Taste of Cherry* alienated from himself and the viewer – slowly disintegrating into shades of light and mirroring the colour of earth.

Figure 17. Kiarostami and cast in *A Taste of Cherry* revealed in the final scene in spring colours.

Figure 18. Another symbolic use of colour in *A Taste of Cherry*: Badii spiritually trapped in his monochrome car looks outward to a brightly coloured garden while photographing a happy couple, establishing psychic distance between the two worlds.

The "Deep Focus Construction" of Selected Characters within Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* (1923 & 1956) and Elsewhere

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Abstract. Legendary producer-director Cecil B. DeMille was a progenitor of Paramount Pictures, a seminal cofounder of Hollywood, and the master of the American biblical epic; but whose pioneering achievements and filmic practices still remain grossly unappreciated today. One of his aesthetic trade secrets was the "deep focus construction" of his on-screen characters, that is, the engineering of pertinent correspondences between his characterizations and the actors' idiosyncratic traits and/or previous roles to deepen the naturalistic resonance of authenticity. A brief review of the critical literature and an examination of selected DeMille films, particularly *The Ten Commandments* (1923 & 1956), was performed to illustrate this casting principle; utilizing humanist film criticism as the guiding analytical lens. It was concluded that DeMille was a far defter biblical filmmaker than hitherto appreciated. Further research into DeMille Studies is highly warranted, warmly recommended and already long overdue.

Keywords: Cecil B. DeMille, casting principle in film, the Golden Age of Hollywood, "deep focus construction" of characters.

Introduction: Casting, DeMille and the Golden Age of Hollywood

The Italian film director Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975) was admired by film critic Susan Macdonald (1969, 24) because he "chose his characters by the 'rule of analogy,' his peasants are genuine peasants, his sub-proletarian characters come from the sub-proletarian world, his bourgeois characters are bourgeois in real life, and so on." It was an intuitive and perfectly legitimate casting principle, but it was not unprecedented in film history. Constructing similar actor–character correspondences was a significant filmmaking feature of

legendary American producer-director[1] Cecil B. DeMille[2] (1881–1959), affectionately known as "CB" (Birchard 2004; Cherchi Usai and Codelli 1991; DeMille and Hayne 1960; Edwards 1988; Essoe and Lee 1970; Eyman 2010; Higashi 1985, 1994; Higham 1973; Koury 1959; Louvish 2008; Noerdlinger 1956; Orrison 1999; Ringgold and Bodeen 1969). DeMille [Fig. 1.] became an international moviemaking icon who earned fame and fortune as the "arch apostle of spectacle" (Clapham 1974, 21), the "high priest of the religious genre" (Holloway 1977, 26), and especially as the "King of the epic Biblical spectacular" (Finler 1985, 32) with his indelible epics: *The Ten Commandments* (1923), *The King of Kings* (1927), *Samson and Delilah* (1949) and *The Ten Commandments* (1956), plus numerous personal hosannas and industry accolades (see Essoe and Lee 1970, 245–247).

In addition to being "virtually the Sunday school teacher for the nation" (Beck 2005, 27), DeMille was a co-progenitor and chief creative force behind America's oldest existing film studio, Paramount Pictures. Therein he had "introduced a number of innovations that later became standard in films: the listing of actors' names in on-screen credits, the use of proper sets rather than painted scenery for indoor scenes, and the use of extra lighting apart from the sun to emphasize certain aspects of the screen image (he called this 'Rembrandt' lighting). He would also go on to invent the boom mike" (Donnelley 2010, 355) and "helped fashion the fundamental rules for the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style" (Gomery and Pafort-Overduin 2011, 71) in betwixt becoming one of *the* seminal cofounders of *the* centre for commercial moviemaking – Hollywood – whose very name became the moniker for an entire industry and an international synonym for success. In short, "DeMille *was* Hollywood" (Freer 2009, 11) and so it was not surprising that he was tagged "The Father of Hollywood" (Kroon 2010, 337) and it was argued that whenever "speaking of Hollywood as either the physical or spiritual center of worldwide moviemaking, one should never forget DeMille's role in its development" (Siegel and Siegel 2004, 117).

Despite his pioneering efforts and immense filmic achievements during the genesis of that billion dollar industry, including surviving the arrival of sound, colour film, wide screens, changing public tastes, shifting demographics, two

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1   There is not one DeMille but many DeMille personas that did numerous jobs and played multiple roles. His career was so long, complex and multi-faceted that to describe, let alone justify each aspect would be prohibitive. Therefore, concise hyphenated compound terms will be used herein to help disentangle his various roles and avoid needless explanation, repetition or reader boredom.

2   Many scholars have spelled Cecil's surname as "De Mille" or "de Mille" or "deMille" however, the correct professional spelling is "DeMille" (DeMille and Hayne 1960, 6), which will be employed herein along with "Cecil" and "CB" as appropriate.

World Wars, the Wall Street crash, Communist hysteria, the threat of TV etc., his career as the "Golden Age of Hollywood summed up in a single man" (Mitchell 1993, 17) is still grossly under-appreciated today. Even more worrying, the artistic skills and thematic preoccupations that he deftly engineered within his cinema were frequently ignored, belittled or dismissed during his lifetime and decades after his death. Furthermore, as Eric Smoodin (2000, 251) argued: "De Mille rarely receives the serious academic recognition and study that he deserves." This lamentable situation is in need of re-examination, rectification and renewal. Not only is the true breadth and depth of Hollywood's best-known unknown immense, complex and relatively unappreciated, but as Laurence Kardish (1972, 133) warned: "It is impossible to describe the career of Cecil B. DeMille in a few words. A whole book is needed."

Nevertheless, to get an introductory taste of Cecil's craft canniness, it is sufficient for the purposes of this paper to focus upon just one aspect of his moviemaking praxis, namely, his casting habit of choosing professional actors whose idiosyncratic private traits and/or previous acting roles fundamentally embodied the naturalistic essence of their DeMille-designed characterizations. As Richard M. Barsam and Dave Monahan (2010, 298) described it: "Screen acting appears naturalistic when actors re-create recognizable or plausible human behavior for the camera. The actors not only look like the characters should (in their costume, makeup, and hairstyle) but also think, speak, and move the way people would offscreen" (see also Baron and Carnicke, 2008). However, DeMille took this principle one step beyond their constructed appearance and professional acting skills to also include features of their actual idiosyncratic life stories to underpin their performances. This DeMillean "rule of analogy" is better described as "deep focus construction" as it provided several levels of dramatic information simultaneously, and which became one of his major casting strategies-cum-auteur signature signs, and thus intrinsically worthy of academic investigation because of it.

Consequently, the critical DeMille, biographical and related film literature was selectively reviewed and integrated into this text to enhance narrative coherence (albeit, with a strong reportage flavour). This investigative effort was followed by a selective examination of Cecil's silent and sound films to identify this DeMillean rule of analogy/deep focus casting principle, followed by a more extensive explication of the phenomenon within his 1923 and 1956 versions of *The Ten Commandments*. Although a theoretical framework embedded within Star Studies, Screen Performance Studies, Intertextuality etc. could have been gainfully employed, textually based humanist film criticism was chosen as the

guiding analytical lens herein (see Bywater and Sobchack 1989, chpt. 2).[3] This grossly under-utilized film analysis technique is applicable to all genres ranging from science fiction (Telotte 2001, chapter 2) to literary autobiography (Johnson 2007) and it assumes that audiences are cultured, accept the cinema as fine art, and have seen the movies under discussion. Its main pedagogic function is to identify noteworthy incidents and foster critical commentary rooted in both primary and secondary sources (e.g. memoirs, autobiographies, film journals); and especially the tracking and interpretation of motifs, symbols, themes and other construction secrets, tropes and topoi. This analytical focus is tailor-made for the chosen inter- and intra-filmic research task.

DeMille's "Deep Focus Construction" within His Silent Cinema

In his review of the silent castaway drama, *Male and Female* (DeMille, 1919) Ronald Bowers reported that: "the post-World War I year of 1919 saw the release of two motion pictures which heralded a new hard-edged materialism and which 'openly acknowledged sex.' The two films were *The Miracle Man* [1919], a Paramount production directed by George Loane Tucker, and *Male and Female*, the Cecil B. De Mille/Paramount production of Sir James M. Barrie's successful play, *The Admirable Crichton*. Quite by accident both films starred Thomas Meighan" (1982, 689).

However, this so-called "accident" was no accident because Ronald Bowers (1982, 691) later reported that DeMille was so "impressed with Meighan's work in *The Miracle Man*" that he hired him for *Male and Female* when Elliot Dexter (a DeMille stock player) became ill. DeMille-the-canny-businessman-director had quickly capitalized upon shifting social circumstances and the "sexy" reputation of *The Miracle Man* using a success-by-appropriation tactic. Furthermore, CB had Thomas Meighan play Crichton the butler, a servant who exhibited a profound behavioural change under shifting social circumstances when he became the natural leader of a coterie of rich castaways, which itself

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3   Bywater and Sobchack's 1989 textbook on film criticism classified the major critical approaches to narrative film according to the following schema: (a) textual (journalistic and humanist approaches): this focuses primarily upon the cinematic text and our responses to them regarding plot, characters, themes, reactions etc., (b) textual/contextual (auteur and genre approaches): this focuses primarily upon comparing the nominated films with older and other films for similar recurring patterns, and (c) contextual (social science, historical and ideological approaches): this focuses primarily upon examining the relationship of films to the sociocultural contexts outside the frame.

had thematically mirrored Meighan's previous Tucker-directed role as Tom Burke, a con man who exhibited a profound behavioural change under shifting social circumstances when he and his gang of social outcasts were miraculously healed. Audience members who had seen Tom in *The Miracle Man* could easily transfer their admiration for him to Crichton in *Male and Female* that ultimately benefitted DeMille's film and Paramount's purse.

DeMille's "deep focus construction" strategy also applied to other attributes of his on-screen characters. For example, he hired Fanny Ward to play the defrauding wife in his classic silent film, *The Cheat* (DeMille, 1915), despite the fact that she was inexperienced and had anxiously complained: "But Mr. DeMille, I am a comedienne. I have never played emotional roles." He told her: "Which is exactly the reason I want you to play in *The Cheat*." As he had planned, that put her on her mettle, and she accepted; what she had not realized, of course, was that another reason he had cast her as *The Cheat* was because he was convinced after seeing her at parties and on screen that she was very deceitful (Higham 1973, 44). Whether Ward's cheating ways was factually true or not, DeMille believed it and acted accordingly. Therefore, given his devotion to his deep focus/rule of analogy casting, it was not too surprising to find that DeMille had cast a perceived real world cheat, who could convincingly display deceptiveness on-screen, as the central cheat-protagonist in his movie eponymously titled *The Cheat*.

In a more humorous vein, whilst filming his reverential Jesus film, *The King of Kings*, DeMille once again proved that he liked his actors to be typecast in real-life as well as on-screen. During the arduous shoot, his Christ (H. B. Warner) [Fig. 2.] had started an intimate relationship with actress Sally Rand, later to become notoriously famous as an erotic fan dancer (Knox 1988), but back then just a film extra playing a slave girl belonging to Mary Magdalene (Jacqueline Logan) in her house of ill repute. One day, the two real-world lovers arrived late on the set, which greatly angered the punctilious DeMille, and so he thundered from on high: "Miss Rand, leave my Jesus Christ alone! If you must screw someone, screw Pontius Pilate [Victor Varconi]!" (Hay 1990, 53).

At least DeMille's commercial heart was in the right place because a sexually disgraced Jesus would have spelt financial disaster for the film and his fledging new studio, Cecil B. DeMille Pictures; which it nearly did "when the actor playing Christ, H. B. Warner, was found *in flagrante delicto* with a young lady whose object was blackmail" (Shipman 1982, 181). DeMille dealt decisively with this delicate issue and kept Warner working because as Gary A. Smith (1991, 129) put it: "H. B. Warner is everything DeMille had hoped his cinematic Christ would be, compassionate and tender but also exuding a powerful feeling of strength and wisdom;" and thus in accordance with CB's deep focus casting

principles (minus the blatant infidelities but itself suggestive of the many extra-canonical stories of Mary Magdalene as the secret lover of Jesus – Bellevie 2005).

Nevertheless, as a result of this blackmail scare, DeMille-the-pragmatist placed his principle star under *de facto* house arrest: "No one but the director spoke to H. B. Warner when he was in costume, unless it was absolutely necessary. He was veiled or transported in a closed car when he went between the set and his dressing-room or when we were on location, his tent, where he took his meals alone" (DeMille and Hayne 1960, 256); along with a pious PR cover story that suggested it was all done to "maintain the spirit of reverence" (DeMille and Hayne 1960, 256). DeMille briefly mentioned this problem in his autobiography but vaguely attributed it to "the purposes of some gutter journalism or blackmail" (DeMille and Hayne 1960, 257). Furthermore, Warner also needed to be watched closely because "the problems of playing the [Jesus Christ] role sparked off an old drinking problem, kept secret by DeMille's and the publicist Barrett Kiesling's most resolute efforts" (Higham 1973, 167), thus protecting their film investment-cum-future success.

DeMille's "Deep Focus Construction" within His Sound Cinema

At times, DeMille capitalized upon actor-character correspondences that had newsworthiness and other PR publicity value, for example, Jean Arthur (born Gladys Georgianna Greene) played Calamity Jane [Fig. 3.] in DeMille's Americana film *The Plainsman* (1937). As her biographer John Oller speculated: "Another reason Arthur may have fancied the role of Calamity Jane was the connection between the famous plainswoman and Arthur's own relatives. Growing up in Deadwood, Hannah Greene would have known Calamity by sight, and her family likely had some contact with the itinerant legend in South Dakota or in Billings, a town frequented by Calamity […] This connection was not enough, however, to draw favorable local review for *The Plainsman* when it reached Montana in the summer of 1937" (1997, 95).

This newsworthy historical connection possibly influenced DeMille-the-PR-man to choose the glamorous Jean Arthur to play the lead role; however, DeMille erred somewhat because he overlooked another more significant historical fact. Namely, that the "real Calamity Jane [born Martha Jane Cannary] was a vulgar, tobacco-chewing, raw-boned kid who resembled nothing more alluring than an oversized Huckleberry Finn, minus the charm of innocence" (Cody and Perry 1982, 198) and whom Wayne Michael Sarf (1983, 38) described as "a female only in the narrowest technical sense."

In which case, DeMille's passion for "deep focus construction" and the Hollywood need for beautiful stars to sell pictures severely tripped him up historically speaking; albeit, he admitted to the error as follows: "I confess to taking some liberties with authenticity in that casting: pictures I have seen of the real Calamity Jane were far removed indeed from the piquant loveliness of Jean Arthur" (DeMille and Hayne 1960, 320). DeMille's deep focus habit was quickly evidenced again in his historical railway film, *Union Pacific* (1939), when the character of Andrew Jackson was played by actor Hugh Sothern, a real-life "descendent of one of Jackson's uncles" (Rivers 1996, 113).

DeMille had also attempted a casting appropriation strategy in his swash-buckling sea adventure *Reap the Wild Wind* (1942) by approaching the famous black actress Hattie McDaniel, the Negro house servant Mammy from *Gone With the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) to play the part of his Negro house servant, Maum Maria. However, business commitments prevented McDaniel from accepting DeMille's offer, and so her look-alike, Louise Beavers got the role instead (Jackson 1990, 76). DeMille's habit of engineering actor-character correspondences appeared again in his pre-Revolutionary Americana film *Unconquered* (1947). He had cast Boris Karloff as the Indian villain Gyuasuta, chief of the Senecas, who was portrayed as a ruthless bloodthirsty beast and a menace to white maidenhood. Professionally speaking, Karloff was considered the reigning "King of the Monsters" and the "Titan of Terror" (Bona 1996, 55) following his archetypal performance as the monster in *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931), and so DeMille used Karloff's filmic reputation as the iconic monster to strongly shade his evil Indian characterization beyond the traditional red man versus white man racial stereotype prevalent in his day. As Damien Bona (1996, 55) noted regarding DeMille's deep focus/rule of analogy casting practise: "Here's how Cecil B. DeMille's thinking went: Boris Karloff plays villains. Gyuasuta, chief of the Senecas, is a villain. Ergo, Boris Karloff would be ideal as Guyasuta, chief of the Senecas." In effect, DeMille had engineered a multi-level layering of evilness (and other associations) to get his horrific emotional point across to the paying public.

DeMille had also skilfully deployed his adopted daughter Katherine Lester DeMille in this deep focus casting way. [Fig. 4.] She appeared in Cecil's *Madam Satan* (1930), *The Crusades* (1935), *Unconquered* and other non-DeMille films "usually as a jilted, jealous, or just plain unhappy woman in second leads or supporting roles" (Katz, Klein and Nolen 2001, 354). Why such morbidity and subdued prominence given the potential for massive DeMille nepotism in nepotism-infected Hollywood? Temporarily overlooking the fact that DeMille had a strong anti-nepotism credo (DeMille and Hayne 1960, 275), Katherine had experienced real unhappiness in her private life and was haunted by many

private demons that made her "a hidden girl: frightened, insecure, timorous" (Quinn and Paisner 1995, 133). For example, she suffered from bad orphanage experiences, rejecting biological relatives, a troubled marriage to Anthony Quinn, the drowning death of her young son Christopher, and many other emotional insecurity issues that followed her throughout life and assisted her fanatical devotion to religion and the afterlife (Edwards 1988, 157).

Notwithstanding all this morbidity and potential for interpersonal conflict, DeMille successfully turned Katherine's private insecurities into professional advantages by matching her dour disposition with screen roles that reflected the same traits she had privately experienced and exhibited in life, that is, deep focus casting as a form of personal mirroring-cum-professional application. However, DeMille's deep focus casting habit was put to more excellent use within both versions of his *The Ten Commandments* via the interlocking application of retrospective romances, political affiliations and beyond.

The Ten Commandments (1923): Silent Sinfulness

DeMille's first rendition of this classic was a silent, black-and-white triptych that was officially divided into two parts, one ancient and one modern.[4] Therein DeMille emphasized the film's sexual, erotic and romantic dimensions to underscore his morality tale about the dramatic consequences of breaking God's Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1–17)[5] utilising three major actor-character correspondences, namely: Nita Naldi as Sally Lung, Agnes Ayers as The Outcast, and Rod La Rocque as Dan "Danny" McTavish.

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4   The film is officially divided into two parts. Part I deals with ancient Egypt and Part II deals with modern America. However, near the end of the film, there is a small flashback scene showing Jesus with his back to the audience talking to a small group of worshippers. Therefore, the film had an ancient world scene (from the Old Testament), a modern world scene (highlighting contemporary 1920s America), and another ancient world scene (from the New Testament), thus making this film an uneven triptych.

5   The Authorised King James Version of the Bible (KJV aka AV) will be used throughout, unless quoting other translations, because it was frequently employed by DeMille (Higashi 1994, 180), most of the biblical phrases that are embedded in Western culture are from it, and it is one of the most widely used English translations of Holy Writ today (Taylor 1992, ix, 71).

1. Nita Naldi as Sally Lung: The Sexual Subversive

DeMille hired outrageous vamp Nita Naldi to play the role of the sultry Sally Lung in the modern Part II portion of *The Ten Commandments*. [Fig. 5.] Sally was a scandalous sexual suspect, a modern-day Delilah who secretly was an infected escapee from the "Leper Island of Molakai." She quickly became the exotic Eurasian mistress of bad-boy Dan McTavish (Rod La Rocque) who contracted "leprosy" from her (traditionally a code word for venereal disease in 1920s Hollywood) and was subsequently murdered by Danny when her gold-digger callousness exceeded his own. Why was Nita Naldi selected for this salacious role? According to expatriate Australian journalist, Dorothy Gordon Jenner (professionally known as Andrea), Nita Naldi in real-life had a well-known reputation for scandalous sexual behaviour and was particularly famous for never wearing underwear (Jenner and Sheppard 1975, 81). This private personal behaviour certainly resonated with the role of a rich man's mistress and genitalia-related proclivities that would have titillated audiences and prompted patrons to pay to see a putative beard-and-bathrobe production during the Roaring Twenties, thus making both DeMille-the-cinematic-lay preacher and DeMille-the-businessman very happy. Given DeMille's thorough research habits, one strongly suspects that he was very aware of Naldi's private erotic reputation, especially as the self-proclaimed "female Valentino" (Negra 2002, 276), and so he hired her for that sexy role according to his deep focus casting proclivities.

2. Agnes Ayers as The Outcast: The Erotic Resonator, Redeemed

In a similar actor-character correspondence, DeMille hired the popular Agnes Ayres to play The Outcast, a leprous sinner who approached Jesus and was cured by his holy touch and divine command during the closing New Testament triptych of *The Ten Commandments*. [Fig. 6.] Previously, her most iconic role was the expatriate English heiress, Lady Diana Mayo, who was forcibly seduced by virile desert chieftain, Sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan. As Roy Liebman (1996, 25) put it, she will: "Forever to be remembered as the object of Rudolph Valentino's fevered advances in *The Sheik*," a now classic 1921 movie directed by George Melford, which had made the women of its day scream, swoon and faint during screening. This occidental movie became an iconic symbol for erotic love with an ethnic other that propelled Valentino into cult status as the epitome of the Latin lover, with Ayers as his erotically tainted conquest. Released before *The Ten Commandments*, one strongly suspects that Agnes Ayres was Cecil's cost-conscious means of appropriating Valentino's

mystique alongside the ravaged and romantic resonances of *The Sheik* (reinforced by casting Nita Naldi – the female Valentino). Furthermore, The Outcast was cured of her leprosy by Jesus just as Mary Leigh (Leatrice Joy), Dan's leprous wife and social outcast was cured of her intimacy-associated affliction by listening to that sacred story of forgiveness and redemption read aloud by the film's Christ-figure, John McTavish (Richard Dix). These interlocking casting choices and multiple correspondences were engineered for the thematic, subtextual and fiscal benefit of Cecil's production; however, the inter-filmic and intra-filmic linkages did not stop with Agnes Ayers.

3. Rod La Rocque as Dan McTavish: The Alternative Valentino

Rod La Rocque played the evil troubled brother Danny in the modern Part II portion of *The Ten Commandments.* According to George A. Katchmer (1991, 451), he had a "striking resemblance to Valentino" whilst his screen character "Dan McTavish makes poses and facial angles which give him a most remarkable resemblance to the dusky-haired, lean faced, romantic Rudie." This comment suggests that DeMille was physiognomically, aesthetically and directorially imitating the famous lover from *The Sheik* (just like he did with Louise Beavers in *Reap the Wild Wind* when he could not hire Hattie McDaniel of *Gone With the Wind* fame). Thematically speaking, Rod La Rocque was also the perfect deep focus casting choice for the bad-boy brother given that he exhibited similar negative characteristics from his previous film incarnations. According to George A. Katchmer: "A November 1919 article states that for two or three years Rod was so tough in a professional way that he committed more crimes than Theodore Roberts, Stuart Holmes, Robert McKim, and Jack Richardson combined. He cursed, swore, drank, chewed and smoked. He plotted murder and dragged sweet young blondes about by the hair. At 16 he was Trampas, and at 17 he was the villain in *Shoreacres* [sic] [...]. Being a villain at a tender age when most boys are just learning to swipe father's cigars, had left a subtle imprint on La Rocque's character" (1991, 449).

Apparently, Cecil was sensitive to this "subtle imprint" and prior casting history and so under his tutelage he had Rod La Rocque relive his on-screen youth with reprobate resonances by playing the dastardly defiant Danny. This bad boy subsequently drowned when his speed boat named "Defiance" dashed against deadly rocks during his doomed escape from both the law (the police) and the breaking of The Law (God's Ten Commandments).

The Ten Commandments (1956): Sound Manipulators

DeMille's habit of extrapolating his actors' past roles and private characteristics into his on-screen roles was particularly pronounced at the other end of his directorial career during the making of his 1956 *magnum opus*, *The Ten Commandments*. This was not a remake of his silent film of the same name, but rather, a second attempt at an epic screen biography of the life of Moses, and *without* any recourse to a modern-day morality tale to extrapolate the ethical lessons embodied within to 1950s America. As the very last film DeMille personally directed, it benefitted from a life-time of Hollywood experience from a religious man and filmic craftsman at the creative peak of his sacred storytelling power, and "even where *The Ten Commandments* invents narrative, its style and language remain redolent of the biblical Moses story. In fact, even the most daring innovations ultimately function to assert the biblical account's primacy over subsequent re-presentations" (Wright 2003, 94). DeMille had deftly demonstrated his deep focus/rule of analogy actor-character correspondences within the following four major roles, namely: Anne Baxter as Nefretiri, Edward G. Robinson as Dathan, John Carradine as Aaron and Judith Anderson as Memnet.

4. Anne Baxter (the Manipulative) as Nefretiri (the Manipulative)

Anne Baxter played DeMille's seductive Egyptian princess, Nefretiri, a possessive, in-love "sexpot" (Sauter 1996, 73), a power hungry schemer and future Queen of Egypt. [Fig. 7.] At first, Nefretiri was personally happy as the manipulative woman-behind-the-throne of the Pharaonic heir-apparent, Moses (Charlton Heston), then a prince of Egypt, and for whom she would kill to protect the secret of his Hebrew heritage. However, her dream life with Moses was quickly shattered when he was publicly revealed by his nemesis, prince Rameses (Yul Brynner) to be an Egyptian murderer and a lowly Hebrew slave, who was subsequently outlawed and exiled into the Shur desert to die. Nefretiri-as-royal-chattel subsequently married and bore a son to the now Pharaoh Rameses, whom she had initially rejected as both lover and leader to quickly become a bitter manipulative woman behind his throne. Given DeMille's professional penchant for "deep focus construction" and inter-filmic continuity, it is not too surprising to discover that Anne Baxter's most famous previous role before *The Ten Commandments* was in the classic melodrama about manipulative self-advancement, *All About Eve* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950). Therein Baxter played the devious and ruthlessly ambitious *ingenue*, Eve

Harrington, a blonde bombshell who through cunning had risen to the very top of the New York theatrical world, but despite her immense worldly success, she ended up bitter, bettered, cynical and unloved, just like Queen Nefretiri.

Furthermore, in the Alfred Hitchcock priest-film, *I Confess* (1953), Anne Baxter played Madame Ruth Grandfort, the pre-war girlfriend-cum-fiancée of Canadian Michael Logan (Montgomery Clift). She was madly in love with him and expected to be his bride; just like Nefretiri was madly in love with Moses and expected to be his bride. Consequently, Ruth dreamed of romantic fantasies and actively engaged in minor lover's trysts with him (just like Nefretiri did with Moses) that bordered on "storybook romanticism" (Spoto 1976, 224). However, her dreams of intimacy were quickly shattered when Michael got religion, was ordained and became Father Michael Logan, priest at the Quebec church (the historic Chateau Frontenac). Michael had thus romantically rejected Ruth for the celibate priesthood and she was hurt and humiliated by his rejection-cum-renunciation of her; just like Nefretiri was hurt and humiliated when Moses romantically rejected her for his Hebrew people, and then for a second time in favour of fulfilling God's divine commission to free his subjugated people.

Although Ruth still loved Michael, she saw no practical future together and so this clerk-secretary subsequently married her lawyer boss, Pierre Grandfort (Roger Dann), her marital consolation prize, and subsequently became a power behind the scene of this relationship of convenience. Later, Ruth confessed that she never loved Pierre, thus sacrificing her own personal happiness in the process; just like Nefretiri never loved Pharaoh Rameses, but married him anyway out of duty in a royal relationship of convenience. *I Confess* was another painful tale of unrequited love that was reflected in Ruth's face, which had "taken on a common harshness" (Bazin 1982, 132) simply because the "curse upon Ruth is that she is unable to forget the Eden she experienced earlier with Michael, although it is now as remote as prelapsarian grace" (Yacowar 1972–3, 21). This is the same sort of curse suffered by Nefretiri concerning Moses during her own Egyptian paradisiacal days, and which was reflected upon her own harsh face full of pain and anger, particularly following the death of her only son in DeMille's ancient tale of unrequited love.

Cecil's creative character correspondences also creatively coalesced with another DeMille signature sign – love triangles. Consequently, the triadic relationship between Ruth (Anne Baxter), Michael (Montgomery Clift) and Pierre (Roger Dann) in *I Confess* was structurally reprised in the love triangle between Nefretiri (Anne Baxter), Moses (Charlton Heston) and Rameses (Yul Brynner) in *The Ten Commandments*. Like Ruth, Nefretiri loved Moses, which was unrequited despite some brief tender moments together. Moses, like

Michael renounced Nefretiri for his own personal mission and ended up an earthly emissary of God. Nefretiri, like Ruth saw her romantic dreams crushed when she lost her lover before her pent up passions and plans could be performed. Nefretiri, like Ruth married someone else whom she did not love, which made her an unhappy and bitter woman. Consequently, for those viewers appreciative of Anne Baxter's roles in *I Confess* (and her manipulations in *All About Eve*), DeMille's Nefretiri was just reliving another unsatisfying romantic nightmare engineered by a master filmmaker. Indeed, Foster Hirsch (1991, 50) argued that Anne Baxter as the conniving Nefretiri "is *echt*-DeMille" and according to John Seville (1993, 49) she "absolutely sizzles with sex. Baxter understands DeMille and her role perfectly."

5. Edward G. Robinson (the Red) as Dathan (the Collaborator)

A similar actor-character correspondence occurred with DeMille's selection of Edward G. Robinson to play the lecherous Hebrew overseer, Dathan, the unredeemed and irredeemable traitor. [Fig. 8.] Scripturally speaking, Dathan supported the Levite Korah in his rebellion against the God-given authority of Moses and Aaron, and so he eventually died when God caused the ground to swallow him up along with the other anti-Moses dissidents (Num. 16:1-35; 26:7-11; Deut. 11:6; Ps. 106:17), whilst "the Talmud asserted that Dathan was wicked 'from beginning to end' (*Sanhedrin* 109b). Midrashim claim that he was responsible for denouncing Moses and revealing his Hebrew origins to Pharaoh, following Moses' killing of the Egyptian taskmaster (*Yd. Ex.* 167), and at the Red Sea incited the children of Israel to return to servitude (*Exodus Kabbah* 1.29)" (Wright 2003, 98). Correspondingly, DeMille's Dathan is the designated ringleader of these doomed dissidents and an ardent Egyptian informer-cum-collaborator, a blackmailer and a very nasty man only too willing to sell out his people for personal gain. More than the oppressive Egyptians, Dathan was deliberately designed to be despised, especially when as the vile Governor of Goshen he sexually preyed upon the lovely Lilia (Debra Paget), a virginal innocent, and then successfully blackmailed her by sparing from certain death her true love, Joshua (John Derek), so as to get his wicked way.

This was naturally an unsympathetic biblical villain role in which Robinson played an "agnostic Israelite who becomes a slave overlord" (Gansberg 1985, 235) and Moses's unscrupulous nemesis that easily earned him an honourable place in the history of film villainy (Stacy and Syvertsen 1984, 66–67), but why did DeMille choose Edward G. Robinson to play the despicable character of Dathan? For at least three deep focus reasons. Firstly, because Cecil hoped to capitalise upon the reprehensible resonances that Robinson's most famous

screen character could bring to his biblical film, namely, rackets czar Cesare Enrico "Rico" Bandello (aka "Little Caesar" modelled upon Al Capone) and his empire-building aspirations from the classic crime film, *Little Caesar* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1931). This iconic film launched the career of Robinson and made him "one of Hollywood's gangster prototypes" (Williams 1996, 259) and so film critics easily, if not always kindly, detected the Dathan-Rico parallel as follows: "the treacherous Dathan (played Little Caesar-style by Edward G. Robinson) (Sauter 1996, 76), or "Edward G. is here at his worst (sounding like Rico in *Little Caesar*)" (Stacy and Syvertsen 1984, 66), or "Edward G. Robinson as the evil Hebrew informer, Dathan, looks ludicrously like Little Caesar in a turban" (Druxman 1975, 209).

Secondly, physiognomically speaking, Robinson was the antithesis of the tall and regal Moses (Charlton Heston), the ruggedly handsome Joshua (John Derek), and the perpetually athletic Rameses (Yul Brynner), which itself conformed to another notable DeMillean signature sign – binarism (i.e. contrasts within multiple production dimensions). Indeed, the "craggy frog-face, squat, stocky figure, and whine/growl of a voice made Edward G. Robinson the permanent property of generations of impressionists and caricaturists" (Thompson and McCarty 2000, 1052) including being the secular icon of evil itself; after all, gangsters defy the law and act selfishly, just like DeMille's Dathan did. Furthermore, Robinson was born a Jew whose original name was "Emanuel Goldenberg" and whose full Hebrew name was "Menashe ben Yeshayahu Moshe" (Gansberg 1985, 13), which put him ethnically in the same broad ethnic camp as the Hebrew Dathan.

Thirdly, the evil betrayer theme also fitted perfectly with Robinson's private life and personal troubles during the McCarthy era when he was suspected of being a despicable Red, "(he had met the exiled Trotsky)" (Wright 2003, 109) and was "persistently found in Communist fronts" (*Newsweek* quoted in Williams 1996, 259) and so people "railed against his alleged activities as a Soviet stooge" (Wright 2003, 109). "Although America's favorite cinematic gangster eventually cleared his name, it came at the cost of a ruined career, over $100,000 in legal expenses, and the need to humiliate himself by writing an article, 'How the Reds Made a Sucker of Me,' for *The American Legion Magazine* in 1952" (Ross 2011, 90).

Communism was the secular personification of evil according to the majority of 1950s right-wing Americans, and so Robinson's unsavoury political associations contributed immensely to Dathan's aura of collaborator-style vileness. DeMille was Hollywood's most zealous Red-hater who had "remained a rabidly anti-union, anti-Communist Republican most of his life" (Ross 1998, 202), and yet he is credited with resurrecting Robinson's career by professionally

OK-ing him and giving him the role of Dathan "only weeks before starting this film, [when he] had been released from the Hollywood blacklist of reputed communist sympathisers" (Forshey 1980, 491).

This was no insignificant casting decision as it proved to be a professional life saver because "Robinson hadn't been asked to make a film in Hollywood since [Joseph L. Mankiewicz's] *House of Strangers* in 1949" (Mitchell 1998, 148–149) and "the only offers he received were minor roles, at greatly reduced pay, in minor films" (Ross 2011, 123), therefore Robinson told his friends that: "Cecil B. DeMille restored my self-respect" (Gansberg 1985, 236). However, "DeMille may have revived the actor's self-respect but not his former career. Given his tainted political past and the fact that HUAC [House Un-American Activities Committee] never officially cleared him, industry leaders still considered him a box-office risk" (Ross 2011, 123).

One strongly suspects that DeMille's motivation in hiring Robinson was less altruistic than pragmatic, less political than artistic. DeMille-the-epic-filmmaker needed a good screen villain and Robinson fitted the bill admirably on multiple deep focus levels. After all, "his on-screen identification with Dathan, a figure who, as the American Communists were alleged to do, spied and informed on his own people" (Wright 2003, 109). Furthermore, where else was DeMille going to get a publicly perceived "traitor" who was a Jew and could faithfully act on-screen as a Hebrew traitor with gangster resonances to DeMille's perfectionist standards at such short notice and without serious real-world political complications? In short, Edward G. Robinson was a casting God-send for DeMille, Hollywood's Almighty, who had given Robinson his personal absolution by professionally hiring him for the Dathan-the-traitor role.

6. John Carradine (the Boulevard Bard) as Aaron (the Mouthpiece)

Just as interesting is the choice of John Carradine to play Aaron, Moses' biological brother and co-ambassador of the Divine. [Fig. 9.] According to the Bible, Moses was "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exod. 4:10), but as a practical compromise when Moses complained about it, God provided Aaron as his personal mouthpiece saying: "Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet" (Exod. 7:1). Scripturally speaking, Aaron was more eloquent in speech than his sluggish brother (Exod. 4:14–16) and chronologically speaking he was three years older than Moses (Exod. 2:1–4; 7:7).

Similarly, Carradine was older and more vocally experienced than Charlton Heston, having had a long career as a "B" movie star (with only a few meaty "A" roles), plus previous DeMille working experience. According to Robert A. Juran (1995, 53), "in several DeMille films his compelling voice was used off-

camera to lead mob cries and read oratorical statements or proclamations. (Film historians aren't completely sure in every case just which movies this occurred in)." He also had a profound personality-cum-professional quirk that proved providential for DeMille. According to Hollywood lore: "It is told that Carradine, a Shakespearean amok, now won notoriety on Hollywood Boulevard, marching up and down that 'Street of a Thousand Heartbreaks' in slouch hat and cape, day and night, roaring the Bard's great soliloquies." Carradine freely admits that during these days he did haunt Hollywood Bowl after midnight: "I used to go up there and shout Shakespeare at 20,000 empty seats. Night after night to develop my voice" (Mank 1989, 59).

DeMille heard, remembered and gave him the Aaron role because of his powerful and eloquent vocal skills, and presumably because his tall and authoritative physicality complemented Heston's tall and regal Moses; both being biological brothers on-screen. In short, Carradine-the-eloquent-speaker was cast in deep focus fashion as Aaron-the-eloquent-speaker, even if DeMille gave the more meaty dialogues, particularly the Divine demand: "Let my people go" (aka Exod. 8:1; 9:1, 13; 10:3) to Moses in his warrior-king mode, and in accordance with Holy Scripture that said: "And the Lord said unto him [Moses], Who hath made man's mouth? […] have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Exod. 4:11–12). Filmmaking-wise, J. Stephen Lang (2007, 127) complemented DeMille because: "The events of Exodus 4, with Moses protesting that he is 'slow of speech,' are omitted, and rightly so, since Moses has proved to be quite eloquent" when it counted doing God's will.

7. Judith Anderson (the former Mrs. Danvers) as Memnet (the Usurper)

Baird Searles (1990, 20) noted that: "Judith Anderson does a pharaonic Mrs. Danvers as the nurse who knows the secret of Moses' birth." This is a plausible inter-filmic observation given that Anderson's role as the secret-holding servant, Mrs. Danvers, in *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940) significantly predated her role as the secret-holding servant, Memnet, in *The Ten Commandments* [Fig. 10.], and which was such a noteworthy parallel performance to be remembered many decades later by Searles. Thematically speaking, the trusted Memnet got her deadly comeuppance when she rejected the much-loved Moses and tried to expose the secret of his lowly Hebrew heritage (and status as an ethnic foreigner) thus usurping his high position as the next dynastic Pharaoh of Egypt. Instead, she wanted to stay faithful to her previous Egyptian master, the loved and loathed Pharaoh Sethi (Sir Cedric

Hardwicke) and Prince Rameses (Yul Brynner), but she paid a terrible price for her loyalty – death.

This behaviour was similar to the trusted Mrs. Danvers's who got her deadly comeuppance when she rejected the second Mrs. de Winter (Joan Fontaine) and attempted to usurp her high position as the next mistress of Manderly, a large country estate in Cornwall. She considered this new bride of the aristocratic widower Maxim "Max" de Winter (Laurence Olivier) to be of a lower social status and thus unworthy of the honour, position and power of the prestigious household dynasty. Instead, she wanted to stay faithful to the memory of her first mistress, the loved and loathed Rebecca, but she paid a terrible price for her loyalty – death.

Conclusion

DeMille's deep focus/rule of analogy casting principle was not always perfectly achieved on each occasion or on every level, but nevertheless, his attempts added incalculable resonances of authenticity, naturalness and emotional depth to his on-screen characterizations, even if at times it was technically unappreciated by the public and scholars alike. But this fact is not too surprising for as Simon Louvish (2008, xv) noted: "The curious, and somewhat stunning, fact of the life in art of Cecil B. DeMille is that most of his best, most intriguing, most masterfully crafted and indeed amazing movies remain invisible and unknown, even to film buffs who were brought up on the legendary sagas of this iconic movie-maker." This aesthetic tactic made his filmic *oeuvre* unique and an integral part of his signature sign that was worthy of his tag: "master storyteller and craftsman" (Bernheimer 1998, 49), which along with many others helps explain DeMille's phenomenal box-office success that propelled him far beyond his directorial peers into the realms of legendary greatness. As Roy Pickard (1978, 80) put it: "No-one before or after his death could quite capture that special DeMille touch […] [he] took his special kind of talent with him to the grave." Further research into DeMille Studies is highly warranted, warmly recommended and already long overdue.

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Mothers, Stepmoms and the Brave New Family. Intercultural Remake and Melodrama: an Analysis of the American *Stepmom* and its Bollywood Remake

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Abstract. The Bollywood remake of the American weepie *Stepmom* (Chris Columbus, 1998) is a fine and rather recent example of the intercultural remake phenomenon, a study topic that is gaining more and more attention. With the aim of suggesting conclusions generally applicable to intercultural remakes, starting from the genre, through characterization, film style and narrative, the present paper examines the remake process in the case of *We Are Family* (Siddharth Malhotra, 2010) and *Stepmom*.

Keywords: intercultural remake, melodrama, Bollywood, Chris Columbus: *Stepmom* (1998), Siddharth Malhotra: *We Are Family* (2010).

As cinemas around the world are more and more filled with remakes, be it inter- or intracultural ones, the remake phenomenon is also becoming a favourite of film study researches and publications. Entire books are filled with thorough analysis – for example the American remakes of French films,[1] or that of Japanese horrors,[2] while a few studies prepared with the aim of building the foundations of the theoretical background of remakes have also been published.[3] But these works have dealt only with one direction of the phenomenon – the American remakes of films first created in other cultures,

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[1]   Lucy Mazdon: *Encore Hollywood: Remaking French Cinema* (2008), or several chapters of Forrest, Jennifer (ed.), Koos, Leonard R. (ed.): *Dead Ringers: The Remake in Theory and Practice.*

[2]   Books about Japanese horror movies usually discuss the remake phenomenon, for example Jay McRoy's *Japanese Horror Cinema (*2005) and *Nightmare Japan – Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema* (2008).

[3]   For example *Play it again Sam: Retakes on Remakes* (1998), *Dead Ringers: The Remake in Theory and Practice* (2001), and the most recent in the line is *Film Remakes* (2005) by Constantine Verevis.

namely how American, most likely Hollywood filmmakers remake European (mostly French) and Asian originals.

While a lot can be said about remakes we should not forget that it is fundamentally a legal concept, i.e. the filmmaker buys the rights to reshoot the original. In the case of Bollywood movies even this aspect brings up exciting issues as until recently the average Bollywood filmmaker would never have thought of paying for remake rights (neither to Hollywood, nor to Bollywood, or to anyone else). In a film culture where film and other quotations, intertexts, redrafting plots, playing with earlier works of actors, directors and even choreographers is everyday practice, an indefeasible characteristic of Bollywood movies, it is hard to explain that in other parts of the world huge amounts are paid for it. Nevertheless, as a result of globalization, Bollywood filmmakers have started paying for remake rights. In fact, *We Are Family* (Siddharth Malhotra, 2010) was a pioneer in this respect. Karan Johar, one of the producers acquired the remake rights of the American original, so remake as a legal concept was clarified in this case.

Genre and Style

"The nuclear, middle-class family, the clearest representation of America's patriarchal and bourgeois social order" (Schatz 1991, 152) became a favourite of American melodramas back in the fifties. World War II and the Korean War were at the core of social changes, shifts in power relations within the family (employment of women, questioning the raison d'être of traditional male attitudes, suburbanization, generational conflicts, and so on). The genre rather popular in American filmmaking right from its early days[4] reflected on these changes and created world-famous, now classic pieces like Douglas Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), *Written on the Wind* (1956) and *Imitation of Life* (1959), or from another great director of melodramas, Vincent Minelli, *Cobweb* (1955), *Some Came Running* (1958), *Home from the Hill* (1960), but further classics can also be listed here, such as *Giant* (Stevens, 1956), *Rebel Without a Cause* (Ray, 1955), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Brooks, 1958), and so on. Despite periodic revivals during and even after the sixties, the era of such classic

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4   Just to mention some of the most prominent figures: D. W. Griffith widely considered to be the most outstanding director of silent era melodramas; moving into the talking picture era, we have Frank Borzage, John Stahl, the German Max Ophuls, and arriving to the most acclaimed melodrama directors of film history, it is Vincent Minelli and Douglas Sirk whose works take us into the world of fifties' family melodramas.

Hollywood melodramas is over (Schatz 1991) and nowadays the genre very rarely appears in its pure form.[5]

Starting in the 1970s, film critics and historians have developed the generic typology of Hollywood melodramas. On the level of the narrative a fundamental characteristic is the replacement of actions with emotions, the plot is superficial, its typical characters are weak male and dominant female figures, while the film style is essentially determined by symbolic mise-en-scène. In his critical standard of the genre outlined in *Hollywood Genres*,[6] published in 1981, Thomas Schatz collects the following characteristics: victimized protagonist; the generational conflicts of the middle-class family are in the forefront of the story; the home is the centre of social interactions; symptoms of the Freudian repression appear; the viewer continuously compares his/her own values, experiences, the conflicts of his/her life with those of the hero(es); the viewer sympathizes with the central, victimized character; and in accordance with classical Hollywood traditions the film is closed with a sudden and/or marvellous happy end.[7]

All these characteristics are certainly not unknown in Bollywood cinema. Yet similarly immaculate versions are unexampled and not even the genre purification experienced in the past few years has excelled in melodramas. The only one I have met is Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Guzaarish* (2010). The film, which tells the story of a paralysed, once very famous and very attractive magician fighting for euthanasia and saying farewell to the spectacularly shot beauties of life would have stood its ground even in the heyday of Hollywood melodramas. Bollywood masala movies starve for melodrama's bittersweet taste, but must mix in other genres as melodrama in itself seems to be indigestible for the Indian stomach.

I compare the genre characteristics of *Stepmom* and *We Are Family* on the basis of Thomas Schatz's melodrama typology summarized above and examine

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5   Some of the contemporary representatives of classic Hollywood melodramas have received numerous prestigious awards and become widely known around the globe, like *Far from Heaven* (Haynes, 2002), or *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005), while a popular version of mixed genres is melodrama meeting romantic comedy, for example *Punch-Drunk Love* (Anderson, 2002), a rom-com playing around with male melodrama characteristics, or *The Family Stone* (Bezucha, 2005), a film maneuvering amongst elements of family melodramas and romantic comedies.

6   Originally published in 1981, *The Family Melodrama* chapter was republished in 1991 in *Imitations of Life* edited by Marcia Landy. I used the 1991 text for the present paper.

7   Source: seminar led by László Strausz under the title *Family and Ideology: Melodrama in American Cinema* (original Hungarian title: *Család és ideológia: A melodráma az amerikai filmben*) at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Department of Film Studies, Autumn Semester, 2010.

whether both films can be handled as melodramas, or the Bollywood remake is more in line with masala cinema traditions. As Schatz's melodrama definition practically looks at every basic element of film analysis I also compare the two films by searching for the points where the Bollywood remake differs from the original or happens to take over certain elements.

Strong Women, Weak Men

As for characters, the American original is undoubtedly the film of the two adult women where the father at his most appears as a know-nothing servant to the emotional hardships and development of the dominant women. For most part of the movie he is not even present and by that I do not mean time in the film only, but the turning points, more precisely the emotional turning points of the plot as well. The children – even though the script gives them room for presenting more detailed, layered characters – follow their father and the Hollywood work description of supporting actors in, well, supporting the two female heroes of the story.

In this respect, *We Are Family* moves away from the American recipe. Bollywood cinema does not practically know female protagonists and it is not only scripts where they can not take the lead. An actress can never reach the star status of her male colleagues, and a woman has no chance of ever being listed among the best paid Bollywood superstars. Even if we undoubtedly talk about a women's movie here, the makers of *We Are Family* had no chance of leaving this tradition behind completely and they advanced the male hero to the level of, or somewhat even above the two female characters. Aman, the father is a well-developed character. He is present at every turning point of the plot, what is more he is the determinant force behind resolutions, in most cases the one putting an end to conflicts between the other characters. For example, when the stepmom-to-be, Shreya loses the younger girl, Anjali in a park, it is Aman stating that in the future she cannot look after the children on her own. He even sticks up for his ex-wife: "Let Maya handle the kids... She knows about the kids... She is a good mom!", then leaves his fiancé. In *Stepmom* this would be unimaginable. In a similar situation when Isabel, the American stepmom-to-be loses Ben, the smaller kid, the father for a few vague moments seems to take his ex-wife's side, but by the end of the scene that steadiness vanishes and he is happily lost in a passionate kiss with his girlfriend. He would never stick up for his ex-wife against his girl-friend/fiancé. For that matter, he does not even get into situations where either his ex-wife or his fiancé would need his support or even his opinion. The female characters fight their own battles completely on

their own, always excluding the male. An important turning point of the plot is when the family finds out about the lethal illness of the mother. When learning about the fatality of her illness, Maya, the mother in *We Are Family* makes no bones about telling it to her ex-husband right away, who does not simply help her, but breaks up with his love and moves back with his family. At the same point of *Stepmom* the ex-husband is – again – not present. What is more Isabel, the stepmom-to-be is the one first informed about the illness.

Dozens of similar examples could be listed to present the differences between the characterization of the two films, but the composition of the family portrait taken towards the end is of symbolic value. In the portrait of *Stepmom* the husband is in the background, behind the children. He appears to be the same height as they are, while the two women occupy half of the photo. [Fig. 1.] As if that was not enough, the actual closing frame is a closer shot of the old and the new mother slowly dissolving into the family portrait. [Fig. 2.] On the other hand, the similar shot of *We Are Family* is a family portrait with the father overtopping the family (including the new mother, as well). Unlike in the original film, the shot here is actually shown as a picture – first through the lens of the camera, then framed and placed on the wall as a stationary part of the decor in the home of the new family complete with the new mother. [Figs. 3–4.]

Overflow of Style

Almost ten years before the above mentioned study by Schatz was published, based on the analysis of about a dozen films, Elsaesser wrote his acclaimed essay titled *Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama*,[8] in which he underlines the outstanding importance of mise-en-scène in the films of the genre. Basically he states that as in melodramas everything happens "inside," the dramatic conflict is elaborated through the mise-en-scène, thus costumes, sets, colours, music, gestures, composition, and so on, become more important than intellectual content and story-telling.

Every bit of *Stepmom* follows on this Hollywood melodrama tradition. The film takes place in the spacious areas of the suburbs, in the living environs of the children and their mother (home, school, park), but even the flat of the father otherwise living in New York with his girl-friend meets all criteria of the suburban middle-class family home (huge, light kitchen, perfectly decorated vast rooms for the kids). Everything elaborately detailed, filled with objects

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8   The essay was first published in 1972, for the present study I used its 1991 republished version from *Imitations of Life* edited by Marcia Landy.

typical of the American bourgeois family complete with the figure of the mother wearing clothes displaying colours fading into the surroundings. [Figs. 5–6.] It is this warm world of autumn shades that Isabel's slim and tall figure intrudes as a black sword cutting through the matching colours and shapes, while in her own home she is just as pastel as any suburban mother should be. [Figs. 7–10.]

Hundreds of objects, toys, kitchen tools, pictures, mirrors, the symbols of middle-class life are spread all around the always perfectly balanced compositions. Slow camera movements introduce the spaces, crane shots accompanied by assertive musical scores lead us into the world of the American bourgeois, while each and every frame is flawlessly photographed.

In *We Are Family* the environment is in line with the milieu of Indian middle-class living in the West as it is usually represented in contemporary Bollywood cinema (for example the children's pastel-flashy huge room decorated as a plastic Barbie castle complete with a double bed for kids (!), in which they regularly fall asleep together), as well as with social and cultural traditions (for example there is no separate room for the children, not even toys scattered around in the father's home as the child does not belong to the father who left his family, but only to the mother and the original family home). However, it is not exaggerated, even a bit meagre compared to the usual stage-like interiors of Bollywood mainstream. The same applies to the immaculate cinematography and the perfectly balanced compositions. While *Stepmom* in this respect is again rather different from contemporary Hollywood movies, *We Are Family* has nothing to differ from. We could even say that Bollywood film style is actually a warm, welcoming environment for American melodrama mise-en-scène, thus there is not much to do when shooting the remake. Simply handle it as another mainstream Bollywood film.

Music is another favourite element of American melodramas and it is not the least different in the case of *Stepmom* either (for example the ever returning song *Ain't no mountain high enough* or the musical score loudly barging in whenever we are supposed to feel the drama). Yet in the case of the Bollywood remake it is a very interesting question that even leads us into the world of masala films.

We Are Family is full of music, sound effects are used to stress dramatic moments, and at first it is hard to differentiate it from Bollywood cinema's all familiar devotion to music. But if we take a closer look it is clearly something very, very different. An inevitable characteristic of the musical inserts of masala films is that they break the flow of the plot, in several cases bringing the world of dreams and desires that can otherwise never come true – mostly due to social and cultural reasons – into the text of the film, stressing emotional culmination, singing and dancing instead of saying and doing. Bollywood cinema also has an

incurable affection for attaching certain tunes to a given character or to a certain emotional state. If we look for these characteristics in *We Are Family* we find rather interesting solutions.

Musical inserts break the flow of the film at five points. The first of these is the opening sequence itself, when Shreya and Aman (i.e. stepmom-to-be and father) appear as young lovers expressing their love in a montage sequence of driving a car (convertible, of course) in spectacular surroundings, passing time by the sea including walking, hugging, eating, reading, taking photos of each other, and feeding birds. All this accompanied by a love ballad performed as a duet. But they neither dance, nor sing, thus the scene moves away from traditional Bollywood musical inserts. Another similar montage sequence is used when Aman deicides to leave his fiancé and moves in with his (former) family because of the fatal illness of the ex-wife. At this undoubtedly important emotional turning point the role of the musical insert is to present an emotional situation that is beyond words – it is only his sense of duty that makes Aman nurse his wife. Love ties him to Shreya, while the vain hope of becoming a couple with Aman arises again in the ex-wife. The third insert of this type – again – intermits the flow of the story at the point where Maya collapses and is taken to hospital, and everyone knows that she is dying. The song and the montage sequence in fact interprets the emotional state of the characters.

The two other musical inserts completely diverge from these three, albeit in different ways. The only, more or less Bollywood masala style scene takes place when all characters live together in the same house and go out to a karaoke bar. The establishment of the situation is absolutely down-to-earth, is in line with the plot and the real world, as, after all, there is nothing unusual about singing in a karaoke bar. Not even an emotional or any other turning point is around. The casus belli is Shreya telling Maya that she is always too tense, she might not even know how to have fun. Maya protects her fun-loving nature by swinging onto the stage and a musical insert conceived in the traditions of masala cinema submerges the screen. A chorus line dressed in clothes evoking the world of cabarets emerges led by the otherwise completely average, middle-class characters, who all of a sudden turn into eye-catching show stars singing and dancing rock and roll. [Figs. 11–14.]

The fifth and within the film the last musical insert is again very different. It is the only one that completely takes us away from the space and the time of the film. The washed out Maya sitting in a wheelchair is pushed into the spotlight by Aman. Then an emotional song starts as in a stage-like space surrounded by hundreds of light chains she watches the photos of her past family life projected on giant screens with tears in her eyes while her children and ex-husband are sobbingly hugging her. And Shreya is the VJ; and the photographer. And it all

ends with the family photograph discussed earlier. The function of the scene in the film is to lead us into the future, to the wedding day of the older daughter from the scenes of Maya saying good-bye to the members of her family and to Shreya, to whom Maya hands over her wedding jewellery asking her to adorn the older daughter with them when the time of her wedding-day arrives. So she practically hands over her motherly duties to the new wife. All in all, while not showcasing the singing and dancing musical insert familiar from masala movies it brings in another characteristic by breaking away from the reality of the film's space and time, and can be interpreted as the bollywoodized screening of Maya's funeral. [Figs. 15–16.]

In my opinion, these musical inserts shift the film in the direction of the world of masalas, but not by a long shot does it get there. I think that a filmmaker working in the Bollywood movie scene cannot – in case he/she wants to make a movie marketable in India, too – completely break away from that cinematic tradition. Something familiar, something old must be shown to the audience and as a reward he or she can, for example, discuss contemporary cultural or social issues that are considered taboo by many. Music, song, and dance are still inevitable to reach the audience of Bollywood movies. *We Are Family* is not the only one transforming this tradition through striving to edit musical montage sequences more in the style of Hollywood mainstream, or contextualizing songs and musical inserts, even trying to make them more realistic (for instance instead of the usual playback it really is the actor who sings, like in Abhishek Kapoor's 2008 *Rock On!!* or Zoya Akhtar's 2011 *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*), and so on.

If we also consider that – as discussed earlier – music plays a key role in the mise-en-scène of American melodramas, similarly to the above analysed scenery and cinematography, in the case of music we could also suggest that the world of Bollywood cinema is a natural environment for classic American melodrama and not much needs to be altered to produce a piece familiar and acceptable both for Western and Indian audiences.

Narrative and Abruptness

Fundamentally different from the classical Hollywood narrative structure, from its inevitable linearity, its cause-and-effect chain, the Bollywood narrative developed occluded from and in parallel with Hollywood cinema. Its abruptness roots in the already discussed musical inserts, but also in the intermissions cutting the films in two parts and the obligate lapses, holes in the plot caused by the necessity of meeting the requirements of censorship (cf.

Vincze 2007, 20–23). The mixed tone dragging the viewer suddenly from one genre to the other further strengthens the sense of abruptness, and also the characteristic described by Teréz Vincze (2007) in her study published in the Bollywood issue of *Metropolis* that Bollywood cinema is more the cinema of attractions than of storytelling, it above all strives to hold its audience visually spellbound.

Stepmom perfectly conforms to the conventions of classical Hollywood narratives that divide the plot into three acts; the first one being the set-up (Field 2005), or exposition (see Pramaggiore and Wallis 2008) that prepares the film's central conflict and is followed by the second act, called confrontation, then by the third act, usually referred to as the resolution (see Field 2005). According to Bordwell (1985), the latter can be divided into two more parts, the second, very last few minutes being the epilogue. Each act is separated by turning points (altogether two) that split the film in a 25–50–25 percent ratio. Reconsidering this break-up, Kristin Thompson created the 4-part structure suggesting that there is actually a so-called critical turning point in the very middle of the film. At the first turning point the balance of the world as we got to know it in the first act collapses and then comes the complicating action leading us to Thompson's critical turning point, which is the starting point of our protagonist's fights to achieve a certain goal. This struggle finally takes us to the climax followed by the resolution and the epilogue. In this approach, the four parts are more or less of the same length (see Pramaggiore and Wallis 2008).

Stepmom precisely follows this four-act model. In the 30th minute (25% of the film) we can see the fight between Jackie (the mother) and Isabel (father's fiancé) at the police station after Isabel lost Ben (the son) in the park. From this point on the two female characters' impiteous crusade is at the core of the plot. Then it is in the 60th minute that Jackie is forced to directly ask for Isabel's help – from this point on the motivating theme of the plot is Jackie's fatal illness. In the 90th minute the two women's relationship consolidates when Jackie arrives back from a medical treatment in Los Angeles to be welcomed by her room decorated with life-sized prints of her children's photographs prepared by Isabel. From this point on, consigning maternal roles is in the centre of the film leading to the Christmas scene of the last minutes giving us Bordwell's epilogue.

There is not much trace of this meticulously developed classical Hollywood narrative in *We Are Family*. Conflicts unexpectedly slap the viewer in the face, important character decisions of significant effect on the flow of events are not prepared either on the level of the plot, or on the level of characterization, while certain motifs – for example the stepmom–witch parallel – are over-emphasised. At the same time, key elements of *Stepmom* are used in the Bollywood version, but mostly in different parts of the script, appearing

unexpectedly, seemingly out of context. The premise is the same: divorced parents, mother raising the children, father wants to remarry so tries to get the children and his fiancé together, and the failing fraternization process gathers momentum thanks to the fatal illness of the mother. The end is also the same, the mother consigns her role to the stepmom. Key motifs, characters are also more or less similar: charming kid committed to magic, yet of rather rational thinking and friendly (in the Bollywood version it is divided into two characters), the unbearably selfish and rude older sister, the workaholic father, the clockwork-perfect homemaker mother, the young, fashionable girlfriend. But all these thread together according to the rules of Bollywood narratives.

A script conceived in terms of abruptness, a plot interrupted with musical inserts and an intermission is further dishevelled by elements taken from different genres. When surveying the key characteristics of melodramas I reached the conclusion that Bollywood cinema is essentially a welcoming environment for melodrama and stated that *We Are Family* took over the genre framework of *Stepmom*. Yet the scheme is not at all that simple. The dominating melodrama elements are completed with elements from other genres to satisfy the special expectations of Indian audiences. From time to time we feel that we are watching a romantic comedy (the montage sequence of the opening scene), a family comedy (food fight, Shreya not wanting to give breakfast), or a children's film (every scene centred around the younger daughter evokes the world of children's films). I am not trying to suggest that there are no scenes in *Stepmom* making the audience smile (for example when the daughter clears up her love-life crisis with the help of Isabel), but these are only short moments and never make us laugh wholeheartedly. *We Are Family* patently aims at meeting the requirements of Indian audiences: no matter what the film is about, from time to time it has to have comedy elements, while it also has to function as a family movie. Without these binding rules, on the other hand, *Stepmom* is a real, traditional weepie.

Different Culture, Different Emotions?

It is very difficult, or even impossible to define the point from which we can consider a film the remake of a previous one. I think the generally accepted approach suggesting that the remake uses the key elements and motifs of the earlier one's plot can serve as a starting point, but it is only with the thorough comparison of the actual films that we can come to a decision. It is an especially complex issue in the case of intercultural remakes, especially if we consider remakes between Asian and Western cultures. The differences in

cultural conventions, conflicts and problems of the given societies touch a certain level of the films that is not necessarily revealed by film analysis alone. The question cannot be examined without knowing the two cultural and social environments, as well as their cinematic traditions and taking into consideration the differences between them.

As noted earlier in my essay, a significant, if not the most significant characteristic of melodramas is that emotion replaces action as the defining plot-development device. The physical activity of the protagonist is superseded by emotional activity, thus a key element of remakes, namely the adoption of the plot is difficult to examine. For example, however important the mother's illness is in both movies, it is the emotional reactions of the characters to the situation that conduct the plot, not, let us say, the turning points of the treatment or a marvellous recovery. Filming emotions raises the question of what emotions are important and what emotions are allowed to be felt in a given culture or society at a given time and, in parallel with that, what current social issues the members of the society must (should) learn to handle even against visceral feelings. As an example, the father of the American version is very helpful and supportive when he learns about the illness of his ex-wife. Still, the idea of him moving back with his family would be out of question, while in the Bollywood version not moving back would be out of question. This decision fundamentally affects the flow of action, but my question is this: in the world of melodramas, where emotions rather than actions are in the works is it really important who moves where? The concept of the nuclear family has been redefined dozens of times in western cultures and we no longer think about what it actually means in practice. The remarriage of divorcees is an everyday routine, the ex-husband does not leave his fiancé to nurse his dying ex-wife and does not for the world move the new woman in with the old one. Unlike in Indian culture, where the nuclear family tries to fight the storms of modern times with its immovably stable definition, the man has to move all those involved under the same roof. According to *We Are Family*, a feasible solution would be to turn the former and present love of his life into caring, loving sisters. All in all, even though the plot leads us into different directions on the level of actions, the same thing happens on the level of emotions: living and handling a very similar private life situation in a way defined by cultural and social expectations. Even the predictable end, the death of the mother is the same, meaning that – independently from cultural background – the most optimal resolution, also reconstituting the beau ideal of patriarchal societies' nuclear bourgeois family, is if the other female character, who has after all proven herself in several battles, and even satisfies daddy intellectually, emotionally and sexually, becomes the new mommy.

In an interview debut director Sidharth Malhotra said about *We Are Family* that it is not a remake, but an adaptation, an idea further stressed by the actors explaining that they had their own artistic approaches in playing the characters.[9] While the generally accepted approach that adaptation is inevitably an intermedia process that is incomprehensible in the case of a film based on another film, on the basis of the two films' comparative analysis it is more understandable what they had in mind: human emotions resulting from changes in family relations were here "adapted" from Hollywood to Bollywood. It still does not change the fact that *We Are Family* is, not only from a legal but also from a film study point of view, another classic of the intercultural remake phenomenon.

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9   He explained at a promotional press conference of *We Are Family* on August 25,[th] 2010: "This film is not the official remake of *Stepmom*, we have taken the rights but I will not say it is a remake I will say it is an adaptation because remake means the total copy of the film." He even added an example supporting his approach, namely that in the Bollywood version the characters live in the same house, which did not happen in the original film. Source: *http://ww.smashits.com/we-are-family-is-not-a-remake-siddharth/video-watch-18185.html.*

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Halloween and the Limits of Cinematic Meaning[1]

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Abstract. The article reads John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978) from the perspective of the (im)possibilities of cinematic meaning. The horror film seems to be an especially fruitful field for such studies, since its aesthetic-psychological mechanism usually aims at destroying the kind of spectatorial position necessary, at least according to semiotic and post-semiotic theory, for the generation and reading of meaningful signs. Placing the film in the theoretical context of such scholars as Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Kaja Silverman, Steven Shaviro and Todd McGowan, I attempt to analyse the ways the film disables the production of semiotic meaning and rewrites some of the well-established concepts of film theory. I call into play Barthes's concept of the *punctum*, McGowan's *cinema of intersection*, Lacan's later theory of the *sinthome*, Silverman's post-Lacanian ideas about the cinematic gaze and the spaces of spectatorship, and Shaviro's provocative insights about affective cinema so as to indicate how a film may prove its quality precisely at the points where it does not make sense.

Keywords: horror films, the cinematic gaze, meaning in semiotic and post-semiotic theory, Barthes, Lacan.

After many years of watching and teaching horror films, I still consider one of the most powerful images of the genre the picture of Michael Myers (Nick Castle) standing motionlessly, staring straight at Laurie (Jamie Lee Curtis), at the camera, and the spectator in John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978). This image may define the thrills of horror film spectatorship to a large extent, and can also serve as a perfect example of what Roland Barthes calls the *punctum*. In a now famous part of *Camera Lucida*, discussing photography, Barthes makes a distinction between two elements of photographic meaning. On the one hand there is *studium*, "a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment" to photographs

(1981, 26), a familiar way of looking at the object "as a consequence of my knowledge, my culture" that refers to "a classical body of information" (1981, 25–26); and on the other hand, there is *punctum*, the description of which – though apparently unintended by Barthes – says as much about horror as about the limits of symbolic meaning: "The second element will break (or punctuate) the *studium*. This time it is not I who seek it out (as I invest the field of *studium* with my sovereign consciousness), it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me. A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument [...]. This second element which will disturb the *studium* I shall therefore call *punctum*; for *punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole—and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)" (1981, 26–27).

Barthes's *punctum* describes my relation to the figure of Myers: it is a strong image that strikes me, pricks me, maybe the richest in meaning, yet this meaning is impossible to articulate through words. The lurking and gazing image of Myers in *Halloween* reminds me of the power of images to subjugate the subject, and of the limits of articulated, symbolic meaning: when I look at this figure looking at me there seems to be a short-circuit in the act of looking in which my distance from the image threatens to collapse. The image does to me what the killer Myers does to its victims: it actively haunts me, pierces me, disrupting my relation to symbolic and narrative meaning. I know very well that this is a crucial image, one that I should make sense of and interpret (so as to regain mastery over the visual field, for example), yet when I gaze back there is only a strange silence and the waves of affective bodily responses. [Fig. 1.]

Film theory, even at its most realist trends, is deeply embedded in a kind of idealism that supposes that images make sense, that visual impressions can be (and must be) reintegrated into structures of meaning. As Steven Shaviro argues: "Indeed, the fear and disgust of images is traditional in Western thought. [...] Metaphysics prefers the verbal to the visual, the intelligible to the sensible, the text to the picture, and the rigorous articulations of signification to the ambiguities of untutored perception" (1993, 15). From the beginnings of European thought, from Platonic idealism to semiotics, post-semiotics, constructivism, and maybe even "classical" Lacanian film theory the ideas that bodies signify human beings, the visible finds its meaning in a non-visible totality, and images can (and must) be explained have been most influential. As Hans Belting remarks apropos of early Christianity's struggle to "control images with words," "theologians were satisfied only when they could 'explain' the images" (1994, 1). Obviously, this compulsive strive to explain, to know, to grasp, to reintegrate into the field of language, is an act of regulative power that

misses the point (the *punctum*) of the image, for, as Shaviro rightly remarks (in one of his unintentionally psychoanalytical moments), "what is most important is what we are unable to acknowledge" (1993, 10).

In his informative chapter on *Halloween* in *Going to Pieces*, Adam Rockoff stumbles across the problem of meaning and meaninglessness in the film. Taking a kind of careful middle ground, he counters psychoanalytical interpretations (like that of Robin Wood) that attempt to write a case study of sexual repression behind the mask of the killer, arguing that the film is "not psychologically complex" (2002, 55) and "it is extremely difficult to try and force the film into any psychosexual context" (2002, 65). Though for Rockoff the term "meaningless" sounds like a demeaning accusation, something the film has to be protected from (2002, 56), he does offer an alternative to the "overanalysis of the film" (2002, 56) that is close to my point here. About the possible motivations and meaning of the killer's violent behaviour, he bluntly states: "Why does Michael kill? Because like the shark in *Jaws* (1975), that's simply what he does" (2002, 56). I think this is precisely the point: that there is no meaning behind that mask of Myers, no psychotic subject with a case history; what makes the film memorable (a *punctum*) is not psychological depth of character, but, on the contrary, its flatness, visual/cinematic characteristics that can be analyzed but cannot be translated into conceptual language. The point is the *punctum:* the places where it does *not* make sense.

I would argue that whether films represent (á la semiotics) and/or affect (á la Shaviro) does not depend so much on the generalizing declarations of film theorists, but much rather on the specific "film language" of the particular piece. Obviously, all films represent *and* affect, make sense and deny sense, though in different ways. I find horror film special in its relation to meaning, and I find *Halloween* especially outstanding for its brilliant techniques of collapsing distance, denying depth, and destroying spectatorial control over the image. In what follows, my aim is to analyse the techniques through which *Halloween* accomplishes this, in a loose but ever-present theoretical framework indicating why this meaninglessness may be significant.

Horror and the Cinema of Intersection

In his recent book, *The Real Gaze* (2007), Todd McGowan comes up with a classification of cinema that can be productively applied to the study of horror films. McGowan himself is not interested in horror: his aim is to establish a new kind of psychoanalytical film theory that can break away from its early forms established in the 1970's on basis of Lacan's article on the mirror stage and

Althusser's theory of the interpellation of the subject by ideology. On basis of how films relate to the impossible (Real) object, he distinguishes between the cinema of fantasy, desire, integration (of desire and fantasy), and (their) intersection. It is when he comes to the description of the cinema of intersection that the book becomes a useful tool for a reformulation of some of the theoretical issues of horror film.

Whereas the cinema of integration (the most typical example of which is mainstream Hollywood cinema) combines the worlds of desire (a world of lack) and fantasy (its imaginary fulfilment), thus putting an empirical object in the position of the impossible object of desire, and creating a narrative that leads to the attainment of this object, the cinema of intersection shows these worlds as distinct, separated, and only intersecting: "Hollywood's escapist films, for the most part, belong to the cinema of integration rather than the cinema of intersection because they transform the impossible object into an ordinary object. [...] When the impossible object becomes an empirical object, one can experience it integrated within the field of vision without a disruption of that field. In the cinema of intersection, however, the encounter with the impossible object completely shatters the field of vision. The gaze and the field of vision cannot simply coexist: the emergence of one implies the shattering of the other." (McGowan 2007, 165.)

The most thought-provoking part in McGowan's theory of the cinema of intersection is calling attention to those points where (just like in case of Barthes's *punctum*) the order of meaning collapses, and cinema fails to fulfil its "ideological function" that "consists in providing a fantasmatic image of the successful sexual relationship" (2007, 203). "Hence, when we experience this failure, we grasp the hole that exists within the symbolic order. On the one hand, this traumatizes the subject, depriving the subject of the idea of ever escaping lack, but on the other hand, it frees the subject to enjoy in the real" (2007, 203–204).

McGowan's "cinema of intersection" is a useful conceptual tool for horror film studies because it describes the traumatic collision of two worlds that does not lead either to narrative closure or to the possibility of a seamless, totalizing interpretation. What he calls the world of desire (and lack) obviously corresponds to the "normal," everyday world of the small American town in *Halloween*. However, instead of the usual fantasy of the promise of the successful sexual relationship and the usual barriers between the subject and the object that the subject has to overcome through the narrative (thus attaining an integration of subject and object, desire and fantasy), we have something horribly different. The object taking the position of the impossible object of desire is not beautiful but horrible, and instead of waiting behind barriers for

the subject to fight one's way through for it, it "rises from the scene" (Barthes 1981, 126), actively comes for the subject, transgressing all borders. This horrible object does not integrate into or communicate with the normal (symbolic) order, it intersects it, shatters it, pointing out its limits and artificiality. The subject of this kind of cinema (both protagonist and spectator) lose all mastery over the visual field, become passive, paranoid, shocked, persecuted, abjected by this meaningless image and the powerful conceptual and sensual shocks that this intersection brings about.

When Michael Myers appears in Haddonfield, his figure (referred to simply as "The Shape" in the end credits) intersects the "normal" world of meaning. Around him we see no ordinary people, only empty streets, dark houses, and dead leaves. He is the killer that cannot be killed, and (maybe even more importantly) the seer-voyeur-onlooker who cannot be looked in the eyes. The black holes of his mask become the abysses in which the visual field loses its structure and meaning. According to Kaja Silverman (who builds on Jean-Paul Sartre's analysis of voyeurism and subjectivity in *Being and Nothingness*), to be a subject means to be looked at, to exist for an Other. In Sartre's example (taken up by Lacan and Silverman as well) the moment when the voyeur at the keyhole (who imagines to be the master of the situation) realizes that he may as well be seen, an object in another's eyes, he loses his (imaginary) mastery: "The voyeur's apprehension of his own specularity also leads to the discovery that he has his 'foundations' outside himself, and that he exists for the Other" (Silverman 1996, 165). The voyeuristic Other, who keeps looking at us without blinking and shame, who does not get embarrassed when we look back (the white mask never blushes) is not a subject (like the spectator or Laurie). He is an Other lacking subjectivity, he is a mask, an empty gaze, a knife, he intersects and pierces not only bodies, but also the field of vision. The black holes of his eyes displace the focus point of monocular perspective, the transcendental focal-point of cinematic meaning that serves as the guarantee of signification and idealization. His gaze simultaneously deprives the subject of all mastery and shatters the structures of the visual field.

According to "classical" Lacanian theory, the encounter with the Real (the ultimate, impossible object) can be either one of extreme enjoyment (*Jouissance*) or traumatic. Both cases, however, entail a (momentary) loss of subjectivity. As opposed to romantic films, horror (as most films of David Lynch, McGowan's favourite example), depict this encounter and the loss of subjectivity as threatening, damaging, and traumatic. Nevertheless, even if the narrative and the fantasy that fills the place of the Real are different, the similarities between romantic films and horror are as apparent as uncanny: both put on stage the encounter with the impossible object, and both articulate the

fulfilment of this encounter through bodily interaction (a kiss in the sunset or sex in one, and the monster eating the subject or the subject killing the monster in the other). Thus, I would argue that horror film can be read as an uncanny double of romantic film, where the impossible object of desire is replaced by the "monster," sex is replaced by murder, and the phantasmatic integration of desire and the ultimate object is replaced by the shattering intersection of the Symbolic and the Real. This proximity between romance and horror may also have disorienting effects. As Rick Worland rightly notes, "part of *Halloween*'s disturbing charge comes from the ways Michael is constructed as Laurie's fantasy lover" (2007, 235).

The affair of the protagonist and the monster can be read as the story of a hysterical symptom: it is a substitute satisfaction, something replacing the (nonexistent) successful sexual relationship, something that brings as much pain as joy, but still a relationship to enjoyment that works. In horror films the Real intersects with the Symbolic, and the subject – no matter whether protagonist or spectator – is intersected by an otherness that is beyond the reach of meaning. When the knife slashes the skin, dissecting the unified body, which serves as the fundamental ground of ideology and coherence, we are looking at this meaningless intersection. Just as the shades of the venetian blinds cut Laurie's face into pieces, we are intersected, cut up, disembowelled by what we see. Together with the shape of our well-structured subjectivity, it is our relation to meaning that is threatened. [Fig. 2.]

The Symptom that does not Speak

Laurie, the "final girl" of *Halloween* (so as to use Carol Clover's term) does not have a boyfriend. She establishes the prototype of a whole set of teenage girls in the genre who never have sex, but survive the slasher film while all their sexually active friends get slashed, stabbed, and sliced up. It was Carol Clover who rescued the genre from the conventional dismissal as a simple misogynistic fantasy, and established in critical discourse the theory of "cross-gender identification" (2002, 80), "the fluidity of engaged perspective" (2002, 80), "masochistic pleasures" of spectatorship (2002, 81), and the uncanny link between the killer and the Final Girl (2002, 81). Clover systematically undermines the rigid binary system of gendered oppositions (active/passive, male/female, sadistic/masochistic, killer/victim) that characterized both former slasher-criticism and 1970's Lacanian film theory. She argues that the "fluidity of engaged perspective is in keeping with the universal claims of the psychoanalytic model: the threat function and the victim function coexist in the

same unconscious, regardless of anatomical sex" (2002, 80). In other words, the separation of male and female roles, and sadistic and masochistic pleasures are artificial and untenable ones: the subject of horror cinema is open to both positions and pleasures, "shifts back and forth with ease" (2002, 85). "When, in the final scene, she [the Final Girl] stops screaming, looks at the killer, and reaches for the knife (sledge hammer, scalpel, gun, machete, hanger, knitting needle, chainsaw), she addresses the killer on his own terms" (2002, 80). Taking Clover's argument one step further, I would argue that the shifting between these positions and the final girl's final move of taking over the killer's attributes (together with his phallic weapon) can also be interpreted as signs of their secret, unconscious connection: in the final scene the final girl *becomes* the killer, revealing that they have always been connected, have always been each other's symptomatic doubles. [Fig. 3.]

In the film, this is the moment of Laurie's "coming out." Having taken up the killer's knife and stabbing him, she comes out of the closet where she tried to hide. The scene of this "coming out" is lit from the right side, producing strong shadows on the white closet door on the left from where she appears. Her slow coming out is reminiscent of some of the earliest horror films: the lights evoke German expressionist cinema, the way she appears (slowly, first the knife and the hand) clearly evokes the emergence of the monster from the experimental cabin in Edison's 1910 *Frankenstein*, while the shadow of Laurie's stooped body on the white wall (when she is standing over the supposedly dead body of Myers with the knife in her hand) may remind one of the famous shadow of the vampire in Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922). These intertextual references clearly posit Laurie as an emerging monster, and the "threesome" of Myers, Laurie and her shadow (with the shiny knife intersecting the visual field between the three of them) produces an inextricable knot.

So Laurie does not have a boyfriend like her friends, she has no "normal" access to enjoyment. But one day a tall, dark stranger appears in town, a man without a face, in whom (as it is established in the famous first scene) sexuality and killing are connected. He stalks her, appears and disappears, initiating a game of paranoid hide and seek, he often remains invisible to others, creating the "sense of subjective delusion" (Worland 2007, 238). Their connection seems inevitable, we never ask "Why her?", they belong to each other, like to-be-lovers in a romantic film, their relationship is at the centre of the narrative. Diegetically, according to the literal logic of the story, *she* is *his* symptom, but figuratively *he* can be read as *hers*. He is a symptom that intersects with the social order, does not integrate, only cuts up, shatters, and destroys. As a symptom, Myers is the manifestation of Laurie's unconscious desires, bringing traumatic enjoyment. Visually, this relationship is represented in two ways:

sometimes we see Laurie catching sight of the stranger for a moment through blinds, windows, in the distance, or otherwise separated from her; and (later in the film) we see the man sharing the same spaces as her, but at a part of that space that she cannot visually control. It is from here that he steps forward (to use Barthes's metaphor) to wound and slash. [Fig. 4.]

The price of this perverse enjoyment embodied by the symptom is exclusion from the field of social-symbolic meaning. Therefore, the narrative must be one of curing, an attempt at understanding the symptom and healing it. In most horror films this "cure" equals to the understanding and killing of the monster/killer. Both steps are crucial: both Freud and the early Lacan regard the symptom as an unconscious message that needs deciphering first in order to be cured. Similarly, the monster must be understood, its secret revealed so as to be killed. The typical monster of horror films raises not only the questions "Does it really exist?", "What is it?", but also the question the subject asks about the big Other: "What does it want (from me)?" *Halloween* also has the double narrative that usually accompanies this logic in the horror genre: we have one plot-line about the monster/killer going its way, killing victim after victim, getting closer and closer to the protagonist, and we have another narrative (here the adventures of Dr. Loomis) which is about the investigation that aims at revealing the existence and the secret of the monster. The two plot lines go parallel and are intercut: the successful narrative resolution involves the detective (who is often the persecuted protagonist) finding out the secret of the monster, thus being able to kill it before it could kill him/her.

In other words, the typical narrative of horror film can be well described as the appearance of a disturbing, meaningless symptom that brings about traumatic enjoyment, its process of gradual deciphering, and final elimination. This process can also be read as a drama of meaning, as the shattering appearance of a piece of the Real, its going through a process of resignification, and its reintegration into the order that it initially disrupted. This is a nice and neat interpretation of horror cinema, maybe a little bit *too* nice and neat. There are basically two problems with it. First, *Halloween*, as many other horror films (following its footsteps), offers no true narrative closure (Myers's supposedly dead body disappears), suggesting that the monster/killer is not dead and the symptom is not cured at all. Secondly, the doctor's (psychoanalyst's?) investigation is based exclusively on his own subjective observations: Myers does not speak. He is a symptom that does not communicate, thus he stays outside the field of symbolic meaning and forecloses the possibility of symbolic mediation and successful reintegration. It may be important to remember the way Norman Bates's behaviour is explained in the last scene of Hitchcock's *Psycho* (that *Halloween* alludes to many times) by the psychiatrist. As Rick

Worland rightly remarks, in *Halloween* we find no such explanation (2007, 232), which, I would argue, is an important part of its strategy to "break new ground" (Worland 2007, 233), to keep its status as *punctum*, something that wounds through shattering its relation to the systems of symbolic meaning. Myers stays strictly in the field of vision (that his figure disrupts): Dr. Loomis says he saw pure evil in those darkest of eyes, and the only thing the spectator gets to know about him is the first (primal) scene of the film (shot from his point of view, through a mask) in which he kills his sister after she had sex with her boyfriend. [Fig. 5.]

In her article *Hysteria and Sinthome* Marie-Hélène Brousse notes that as opposed to dreams that involve language, a "mute vision" or "visual hallucination" (of the patient) without speech or any kind of interaction between the dreamer and the figure of the dream involves processes "outside the possibilities of symbolization by the subject, outside speech, and with no mediation being directly inscribed on his body" (Brousse 2007, 89–90). Myers's silence, his motionless gaze, his masked face (that rejects any form of subjectivity), and his emotionless, almost mechanical killings establish him as such a "mute vision" beyond the reach of meaning, symbolization, or resignification. He is a body without a subject, a body that affects the spectator without making sense. His figure is a point where the film connects with the meaningless: in the Lacanian sense he is a part of the Real that resists integration into the Symbolic, and the element of cinema that marks the limits of verbalization, symbolization, and analysis.

The resistance to symbolic meaning of such images as the gazing Myers comes very close to the late Lacan's concept of *sinthome*. As Brousse observes, the symptom for the late Lacan is less and less a relationship between the Imaginary and the Symbolic, and more and more one between the Real and the Symbolic (2007, 86). The symptom, spelled as *sinthome* in the crucial 1975–1976 seminar of the same title, is not so much a metaphor or message to be deciphered, but rather a special relation to enjoyment, a *modus operandi* for the subject in crisis, an extra ring added to the Borromean knot (made of the three rings of Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real) when the knot does not hold properly. The later Lacan, maybe as a result of an unacknowledged influence of Derrida, regards the symptom and the subject more and more like each other's necessary supplements. Reading the late seminars of *R. S. I.* and *Le sinthome* gives one the impression that there is no "normal" subject, that the subject is always already involved in a relationship with the symptom that simultaneously threatens the subject and keeps it together. In other words, the subject of the late Lacan looks very similar to Laurie and the typical horror protagonist, whose organization as a subject involves a part (the symptom) that brings such (obscene) joys and

sufferings that nobody understands (including the subject oneself). At the place of the functional centre of the ("Oedipalized") subject we find non-meaning and a radical, intimate alterity.

Another Kind of Oedipal Narrative

From this point of view, the horror film pictures Oedipalization not as a normalization of subjectivity that limits possible subject-positions (as Deleuze and Guattari argue), but as the process through which the subject loses balance, becomes forever complicated and in need of obscene supplements. This does not simply turn the subject into a being cut off from the Real, who therefore keeps producing meaning infinitely (in order to fill the lack of the Real), but also turns the subject into someone who necessarily relies on economies of obscene enjoyment that resist symbolization. The subject, like photographic meaning, is punctuated and organized around points that resist symbolic articulation. Horror film is an exceptional genre because it puts on stage this impossible relationship between the subject and its horrible other in whom one has to recognize the subject's necessary, insurmountable obscene supplement.

Therefore, horror films like *Halloween* write another (not necessarily Freudian) story of the Oedipal subject, in which the relation to enjoyment shatters one's subjection to what Lacan calls the Law of the Father. In a way, *Halloween* does stage an Oedipal drama (though not necessarily in the psychoanalytical sense): we have a problem that turns out to be symptomatic (the plague in *King Oedipus*, the figure of Myers in the film), we have a protagonist who must take on the responsibility to solve the mystery that causes suffering (Oedipus himself in Sophocles and Laurie in the film), and we have a process of events that leads to a traumatic encounter between the subject and its obscene supplement. In Sophocles's *King Oedipus* it turns out that Oedipus himself is the monster responsible for the plague, but horror films also play with the intimate, supplement-like relationship between the protagonist and his/her persecutor. Both *King Oedipus* and *Halloween* lead to a point (of *punctum*) where subjectivity is smashed together with socially constructive ideologies and fantasies of seamless, meaningful integration. Both Oedipus and Laurie attack the eyes of the monster (and both do that with objects associated with femininity): Oedipus blinds himself with her dead mother's belt buckle, while Laurie stabs Myers with a knitting needle in the neck, a straightened hanger in the eye, and finally with Myers's knife in the chest). Nevertheless, what really wounds the world of meaning, what really makes these scenes *punctums* is probably the feeling of the world's utter meaninglessness and unfairness, the collapse of our

belief in an inner sense behind the events. Oedipus, who wanted only the best for all, turns out to be a monster, an outcast, an abject; and in *Halloween*, after all the deadly stabs and shots, it turns out that the virgin could not kill the monster, the body of evil, nonsensical enjoyment is still alive.

Investigation and the deciphering of the symptom do not lead to truth, meaning, or narrative closure. They lead to a point of *punctum* where subjectivity disappears in the abyss of an unexplainable obscene enjoyment. The narrative aiming at mastery and knowledge arrives at subjugation and loss: instead of providing control or a graspable meaning, *Halloween* shows the potential of film to "marginalize consciousness" (McGowan 2007, 13).

In this sense, horror film can be read as a complementary paragraph at the end of Freud's late paper "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," a supplement that suggests that interpretation or analysis may never come to a satisfactory end, that the empire of signs is limited, that it can always happen that things just do not make sense, and idealism (which holds that at the end of the day things have to make sense) is a fantasy. At the end of the day (at least at the end of October 31, 1978), bodies, symptoms, images do *not* come together in a sublime totality of meaning.

The above mentioned relationship between the Final Girl and the killer is repeated by the relationship of the spectator and the horror film. *Halloween* directly puts on scene the act of spectatorship: the movie that Carpenter called "a point-of-view film" (Rockoff 2002, 59) is full of instances of looking (Laurie looking at Myers, Myers looking at Laurie and others) framed by windows and doors, which serve as metaphorical screens. (One memorable instance of becoming a spectacle is when Laurie's brunette friend gets stuck in a window in a shirt and panties at the time when Myers is around and watching.) It is also significant that basically everybody watches horror films in the film on Halloween night, mostly in trance-like fascination. I would argue that these framings of the characters, and the acts of looking that are so consciously and self-referentially displayed again and again make the film (also) a study on horror film spectatorship. [Figs. 6–7.]

One of the recurrent motifs of these acts of looking is the subject's lack of mastery over the field of vision, which, in the film, is equal to the subject's ignorance of what is happening. Take a typical example: a girl is changing clothes behind the window panes of the garden door. A dark, shadowy figure appears in the front right corner of the frame, watching her. We understand that *our* gaze has been *his* gaze. He makes a noise, the girl looks out, she sees nobody. In a few minutes she is killed. Or another example: Dr. Loomis is hiding in the bushes near the Myers house at night, waiting for Michael to come back. Some kids stop by the house, daring each other to enter the spooky place.

Loomis makes threatening noises from the bush, the kids run away in panic. Loomis looks happy and satisfied: he thinks he sees and knows what is going on. At that very moment a hand appears behind his shoulders, and touches him. Our characters (almost) never see things from where they think they do, and the point-of-view shots that the film operates with extend that feeling of epistemological uncertainty to the spectator as well. We can never put things into the right perspective.

In *The Threshold of the Visible World*, a cornerstone in the 1990's psychoanalytic film theory, Kaja Silverman writes: "It has long been one of the governing assumptions of film theory that the cinema derives in some ultimate sense from the Renaissance [...] and that its visual field is defined to a significant degree by the rules and ideology of monocular perspective" (Silverman 1996, 125). Most of the major figures of classical psychoanalytical film theory (such as Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Baudry, or Stephen Heath) agree that in this economy of monocular perspective "the camera designates the point from which the spectacle is rendered intelligible" (Silverman 1996, 125), and it is this superhuman point of imaginary mastery outside the field of vision that the spectator assumes (through suture, and identification with the camera's view), thus attaining meaning and mastery of the filmic image (Silverman 1996, 125–126). *Halloween* never uses shots that could serve with this kind of mastery of perspective: its point-of-view shots connect the spectator either with a stalking psychotic killer, or with characters who do not have the slightest idea of their approaching gory destiny. Myers's figure works quite similarly to the anamorphic skull in Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (analysed by both Lacan in *Seminar XI* and Silverman), as an intersecting, radical otherness, a figure of the meaninglessness of everything else depicted, a figure that shows the futility of our illusions of mastery. *Halloween* denies us the distance needed for perspective and the kind of totalized meaning associated with it. We are captured, fascinated, subdued by the film, numbed by anxiety, and a feeling of approaching horror gradually takes the place of (our illusion of) clear knowledge and epistemological mastery.

The above mentioned instances of looking that undo the fantasies of transcendence of vision play an essential role in turning the film into an experience of emotionally overloaded non-meaning. Its self-referentiality implies that the spectator may be just another position in these repeated acts of looking and that this position may be very similar to that of Laurie. This mirroring would suggest that when I am watching a horror film I am looking at my own obscene symptomatic supplement, the same way as Laurie does when looking at the killer. We are both disturbed, fascinated and excited, and our bodies probably give very similar reactions too. What we see affects us in very

similar ways. The horror film is the spectator's symptom, and I can enjoy horror only as long as films manage to develop this (perverse) enjoyment in me. Technology interacts with the human (like in Cronenberg's *Videodrome*), producing new enjoyments and frenzies of the flesh. But is it something really so new? What about Pygmalion and the dozens of stories from Antiquity in which people fall in love or make love to beautiful statues? It seems that the human subject is always already a post-human subject: open to art, to technology, to film, to new perversions that (re)organise one's relationship to enjoyment. [Figs. 8–9.]

What are my chances of making sense of my own obscene symptomatic supplement? How could the subject conceptually describe one's relation to that thing that wounds, punctuates, and organises one's enjoyment, that serves as a perverse supplement of subjectivity? How could I have control over the visual field when the point is precisely that I get lost in it? How could I have the distance, the perspective, the mastery needed for an analysis? I can analyse film only as long as I manage to break its spell, get free from its subjugating power: I stop the film, make tea, freeze the frame, turn down the volume, step back from the screen, move one frame forward and two back. This is the only way I can regain enough mastery to think, analyse and write, to put the image into perspective, to return the experience from the traumatic enjoyment of *punctum* to the pleasurable control of *studium.* And even when I manage to do that, when I make *sense* of the film like psychoanalysts make sense of symptoms and horror film protagonists make sense of monsters, the results are never more than nice cover stories: the traumatic core, the Real thing, just like Myers's body at the end of *Halloween,* ultimately always escapes.

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Arts and Advertising: Aesthetics of Early Commercial Television in Finland

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Abstract. Finnish television was launched by a commercial company in 1956. TES-TV, the first television station, was later followed by a programming company called Tesvisio and joined by the television channel of YLE, the Finnish Broadcasting Company. The TES-TV/Tesvisio years are a unique period in television history, since they witnessed the creation of a connection between commercial television and the arts. In this article I aim to study early Finnish television aesthetics by analyzing television as art and also the relations between television and other art forms. My focus is on the representations of high and low culture and the search for a television style. TES-TV aired both popular programmes and high culture, like ballet, while on Tesvisio, these cultural extremities were gradually replaced by a middle-brow culture. The early programming included both filmed and live material, which had a contribution to the evolution of Finnish television aesthetics. The television style was further developed by Tesvisio's first professional set designer and his experimental work. Therefore I claim that in these commercial companies television was seen as an art form in its own right, not only as a mediator of art.

Keywords: history and aesthetics of Finnish television, advertising style in television, set design in TV.

Television broadcasting began in Finland in 1956 as radio engineers and other enthusiasts were keen to experiment with the new technology. The first television station was managed by the Foundation for Technology Promotion and funded by advertising, programme sponsors and donations. In 1960, a company called Tesvisio started to provide programming for the channel which developed into a network of three stations. Only four years later Tesvisio was sold to YLE, the Finnish Broadcasting Company. YLE had also launched television in 1958 together with another commercial company, Mainos-TV (now MTV3), which was leasing air time from the YLE channel. With the merger, the

TES-TV/Tesvisio channel became the second public service television channel in Finland and the duopoly of YLE and Mainos-TV was established.[1]

The presence of commercial television and two competing channels makes early Finnish television history a deviant case among other Nordic (and even European) television histories. The TES-TV/Tesvisio period (1956–1964) also provides an interesting case for the research of television aesthetics. As a small, experimental and flexible television station, TES-TV (and later Tesvisio) was able to search for the limits of a new medium, in terms of both form and content. During these years, the television pioneers created a versatile connection between commercial television and popular culture but also between commercial television and the arts. While popular culture and entertainment remain essential categories in the programming of Finnish commercial television, the connection between commercial television and high culture was irrevocably severed by the Tesvisio/YLE merger. While YLE adopted the Tesvisio network along with many of the programme titles and members of programming staff, it also established itself as the main mediator of arts and high culture. The remaining commercial television company, Mainos-TV, was to assist by providing entertaining content for the two YLE channels.

As Sarah Cardwell states, television has been studied primarily in terms of its communicative, not artistic, functions. But as an art form, television has a specific history and particular and unique forms (Cardwell 2006, 76). In this article I aim to study the early Finnish television as art but also the relations between television and other art forms. My analysis will cover the thematic, formal and stylistic qualities of the programming as a whole. Since most of the domestic programming was broadcast live, I am unable to analyse individual programmes. Instead, my empirical material includes programming data, interviews, documents and a television documentary on TES-TV and Tesvisio (*Täällä Tesvisio*, YLE 2004).

As my analysis suggests, the aesthetics of early commercial television was characterised by several parallel or contradictory features: live vs. filmed material, domestic vs. foreign programming, high vs. popular culture and lack of resources vs. professional ambition. The domestic programming was mainly live, stressing the immediacy of the new medium, whereas foreign programming, shot on film, represented quality in terms of production values. The genres of early commercial television draw both on popular culture and high culture, thus engaging the on-going discussion on cultural definitions. The aesthetic ambitions of the production personnel, for their part, would collide

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1   See Keinonen 2012 (about the beginning of Finnish television in the political context of Cold War); Salokangas 1996; Hellman 1994.

with the lack of technical and financial resources. These characteristics represented different, even competing, values thereby drawing attention on two, more theoretical points of inquiry: that of the relationship between television and other, established art forms and, secondly, the conditions behind the emergence of television as an art form. I will answer these questions by focusing on the representations of high and popular culture and the search for a television style. But first, I will outline the production practices and programming policy surrounding the first programmes.

Production Practices and Programming Policy in TES-TV and Tesvisio

As the first television station was launched by volunteers instead of an established broadcasting institution, the production practices and programming policy had to be created from scratch. The Foundation for Technology Promotion had to apply regularly for a broadcasting licence, but the licences did not at this point determine the programming in any way.[2] Thus, the television pioneers were free to create the policy they wanted. The state authority continued along these lines with Tesvisio until 1963, when the new licence included instructions on Tesvisio programming. The programmes were to be diverse in content and dignified, accurate and balanced in form. Appropriate entertaining was not supposed to be forgotten, although the main aim was to educate and inform.[3] These definitions refer to the public service ethos, and were actually used word for word in the first contract between YLE and the state of Finland as early as in 1927 (Suomi 1951, 57, 90).

During the first years, the definitions of policy were not documented. Most decisions concerning programme planning were made *ad hoc* by individual employees, mainly the head of programming. According to the second manager

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2   The National Archive Service of Finland, Television alku Suomessa [The Beginning of Television in Finland Collection], documents, 340 Tekniikan edistämissäätiön aineistoa – MU Muuta, TES:n 1. toimilupa [Materials from the Foundation for Technology Promotion – the 1st licence of TES]; The National Archive Service of Finland, Television alku Suomessa [The Beginning of Television in Finland Collection], documents, 340 Tekniikan edistämissäätiön aineistoa – MU Muuta, TES:n 2. toimilupa [Materials from the Foundation for the Technology Promotion – the 2nd licence of TES].

3   The National Archive Service of Finland, Television alku Suomessa [The Beginning of Television in Finland Collection], documents, 340 Tekniikan edistämissäätiön aineistoa – MU Muuta, TES:n 4. toimilupa (jäljennös) [Materials from the Foundation for Technology Promotion – the 4th license of TES (copy)].

of TES-TV, the main strategy was to broadcast whatever was available.[4] Although the programming was financed by advertising revenues, the production budgets were minimal and free films and live performances were warmly welcomed. There were, however, some guidelines on programme planning. The first manager of TES-TV mentioned, when interviewed, that the programming had to be attractive, innovative and varied. Light and entertaining programmes attracted viewers and consequently, advertisers. The innovative nature of the programming referred to piloting in terms of technology and content, like school television. Additionally, the television pioneers aimed at generically diverse programming.[5]

As the foregoing shows, the television pioneers were professionally ambitious in creating Finnish television, although the lack of technical and financial resources imposed constraints on the programme production and programming policy. Tesvisio continued by following the programming policy created in TES-TV, only with a bigger volume. As the number of personnel and programming hours rapidly increased, the amateurism was replaced by more professional and more business-like production practices. In 1960, the company even created official programming principles. These included stipulations about providing information, education and entertainment, serving different age groups as well as Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking viewers and addressing party political questions only if all the parties represented in the Parliament of Finland were represented in the studio.[6]

As the broadcasting licence and Tesvisio's programming principles for programming indicate, the main guideline in programme planning was not profitability (see also Keinonen 2011, 49–57). TES-TV had aired non-commercial content, such as religious and scientific programmes and school television programmes along with more commercial genres like US tele-films.[7] Tesvisio adopted the unwritten programming policy from TES-TV and created programming very similar to the YLE output. One striking feature in the early programming of Finnish commercial television was the combination of the arts and entertainment, high and popular culture.

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4   Mikkelä, interview, 2007.
5   Särkkä, interview, 2007.
6   YLE, the Tesvisio archives, mappi 1, Oy Tesvisio Ab:n toimintaperiaatteet [file 1, The principles of Tesvisio] [1960].
7   The National Archive Service of Finland, Television alku Suomessa [The Beginning of Television in Finland Collection], ledger, attachment no. 2: Radioinsinööriseuran Televisiokerhon ja TES-TV:n ohjelmat [Programming of the Television Club and TES-TV].

From High and Popular Culture to the Aesthetics of *Culture Moyenne*

In Finland, for some scholars, the 1950s was a decade characterized by struggles over cultural definitions. The questions of defining high and popular culture, art and entertainment, were both aesthetic and political. The juxtaposition of "good" and "bad" art first appeared in the film culture (Koivunen 2004, 396), where discussions on quality revolved around a national phenomenon called "rillumarei." The term refers to four or five comedy films written by Reino Helismaa as well as a certain music style connected to these films (Peltonen 1996, 7). "Rillumarei" draw on the rakish life-style of lumberjacks, popular songs, folk culture and the Finnish tradition of stand-up comedy and sketches. As such, "rillumarei" became an aesthetic f-word – it represented bad taste and low culture, everything that was commercial and vulgar. (Heikkinen 1996, 311–313.)

Finnish television was launched in the context of these highly segregating discussions on high and popular culture. In turn, discussions evolved around the development of television in other countries. The Finnish press had carefully monitored the development of British and American television cultures even before domestic broadcasting started. As the press published articles on the declining quality of programmes and the amount of violence shown on US television, they established a permanent connection between television, commercialism and popular culture (Salmi 1997, 270; Keinonen 2011, 173–174.) Although these discussions did not include Finnish television programming in the late 1950s, TES-TV was positioning itself in the fields of cultural definitions by certain politically charged programming decisions. Many of the "rillumarei" characters, like anti-heroes and happy-go-lucky tramps, were transferred from films and theatre stages to television (Heinonen 2003, 123; Pesola 1996, 119). Reino Helismaa, for example, drew on his earlier works for film, radio and revue theatre as he wrote sketches, programme manuscripts and song lyrics for television (Pennanen and Mutkala 1994, 261–262). These factors naturally confirmed the existing connections between popular culture and television.

A contrasting policy perspective was represented by programmes introducing classical music, visual arts and theatre to the television audience. One of the very first series on the TES-TV channel was *The Voice of Firestone* (1956).[8] The series

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8   The National Archive Service of Finland, Television alku Suomessa [The Beginning of Television in Finland Collection], ledger, attachment no. 2: Radioinsinööriseuran Televisiokerhon ja TES-TV:n ohjelmat [Programming of the Television Club and TES-TV].

was imported by the United States Information Service and it offered classical and semi-classical concerts featuring well-known singers and musicians (The Museum of Broadcast Communications 2011). As John Caldwell states, *The Voice of Firestone* delivered high culture in reduced and user-friendly form to the homeowner. Unlike other programmes, which pushed the populace up and toward culture, *The Voice of Firestone* "dragged culture on stage for the masses" by presenting the artists as "plain folks" and directly addressing the television viewers. (Caldwell 1995, 35.) Thus, in the programming of Finnish commercial television, the series was equivalent to programmes presenting music and ballet numbers and plays performed by Finnish theatre companies, all in the television studio. Other programmes, like the lectures on visual arts, aimed at educating the audience and inducing them to appreciate high culture. These also included one of the landmark events in the early television history, a live broadcast from the Finnish National Opera. *Swan Lake* was shown to celebrate the first 100 broadcasts by TES-TV. It offered viewers a live experience of a complete ballet performance in their own living rooms.[9]

These efforts to bring the arts into Finnish homes through the television receiver stemmed from various specific cultural and political conditions. First, as post-war Finnish society remained volatile, cultural stimulus was seen as a means of reaffirming national stability (Hurri 1993, 67). Second, the Finnish broadcasting pioneers were driven by a remit to inform and educate (as well as entertain) the viewers. Third, as commercial television was seen as a poor relation to the public broadcasting company YLE, the TES-TV staff wanted to raise the status of commercial television and prove that they were able to avoid any American-style excess. When television was launched, the Finnish press published news on the excessive amount of advertising and the declining quality of programming in US television. This was something the Finns did not want. (Keinonen 2011, 173–174.) Thus, the first art programmes in Finnish television did not only aim to educate the viewers but also to raise the cultural status of the new medium. By showing art, early commercial television presented itself as positively disposed to the arts.

Although individual programmes did not mix markers of high and low culture, the simultaneous presence of popular and niche output in the TES-TV programming suggests that the issue of cultural hierarchies did not present a problem in terms of programming policy. In Tesvisio, however, the cultural extremities of TES-TV were soon modified as representatives of *culture*

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9   The National Archive Service of Finland, Television alku Suomessa [The Beginning of Television in Finland Collection], ledger, attachment no. 2: Radioinsinööriseuran Televisiokerhon ja TES-TV:n ohjelmat [Programming of the Television Club and TES-TV].

moyenne. In Pierre Bourdieu's established theory of taste and class, taste is distinguished in terms of three zones: legitimate taste, middle-brow taste and popular taste. Middle-brow culture or *culture moyenne*, according to Bourdieu, imitates more legitimate forms of culture and, in turn, encourages the blending of legitimate and popular culture. (Bourdieu 1984, 16, 323.) In Tesvisio, most of the works of high culture were introduced in popularised forms, like short plays and other more easily digestible types of programmes. The connection between television and folk culture also loosened as the "rillumarei" phenomenon was abandoned. Thus, the programming of commercial television only gradually adjusted itself to the definitions of middle-brow culture.

Telefilms and Live Broadcasts

As indicated above, the programming suggests that there were certain principles guiding the choice of programmes. More practical matters, like availability, also left their mark on programming and made a contribution to the development of television aesthetics. Many of the very first programmes were provided by information services (like the United States Information Service).[10] During the first months, the programming included Russian, Indian, French, British and US films. The USIS films usually presented US states and cities (like *Wyoming* 22 March 1956, *Arizona* 1 April 1956, *California* 15 April 1956, *New Hampshire* 22 April 1956 and *Chicago* 29 May 1956). Other films were produced to show off technological and cultural achievements (like *Atomin aakkoset* [Atomic ABC] 3 April 1956, *Atomi ja biologia* [Atom and Biology] 24 April 1956, *Atomi ja tekniikka* [Atom and Technology] 29 May 1956 and *Arkkitehtuurinäyttely* [Architectural Exhibition] 27 March 1956.[11] Together with the domestic feature films and documentaries they introduced film aesthetics into Finnish television.

This trend was further enhanced by the import of the "quality control tele-films". Produced by the Hollywood studios, these episodic 30-minute series capitalized on classical cinematic styles, like film-noir in *Father Knows Best.* (Caldwell 1995, 49–50.) The years 1961–1962 saw a dramatic increase in the global trade of American tele-films (Tunstall 1977, 144). This influx immediately affected the programming of commercial television in Finland: since tele-films

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10   Särkkä, interview, 2007.
11   The National Archive Service of Finland, Television alku Suomessa (The Beginning of Television in Finland Collection), ledger, appendix no. 2: Radioinsinööriseuran Televisiokerhon ja TES-TV:n ohjelmat (Programming of the Television Club and TES-TV).

represented a high quality of television production (compared to domestic live productions) and could be bought at a reasonable price, they offered the newly established television companies a profitable way to fill the schedule. *Jungle Jim* was the first to be shown on TES-TV in 1959.[12] In the autumn season of 1961, Tesvisio showed at least eight tele-films, including family sit-coms (*Lucy and I*)*,* crime series (*Scotland Yard* and *Naked City*)*,* adventure films (*Robin Hood*) and westerns (*Wagon Train*).[13] While other tele-film genres introduced various cinematic features, westerns opened up the television image with their epic grandeur and expansive landscapes (Caldwell 1995, 51).

Feature films and tele-films were important for the early television aesthetics in two ways. First, they created a connection between commercial television and film art and second, they made film aesthetics an integral part of television flow, thus transforming television aesthetics. Domestic live transmissions, on the other hand, were far from spectacular, but they represent the original television style. The set for the first public broadcast on 24 May 1955 consisted of a pair of curtains, a few plants and cardboard walls with mere holes for windows. These offered a background for separate numbers including singing, dancing and talking. To maintain a tolerable image quality the visual style was based on simple close-ups and contrasts of light and shadow.[14] These stylistic choices created a sense of intimacy suitable for the small screen (Newcomb 1974, 246). Even later, the sets were very modest: usually a corner of the studio with a stage, a chair and a desk (in *Tupla tai kuitti*, the Finnish version of *The $64,000 Question*) or a refrigerator, a table and a couple of kitchen cabinets in housekeeping programmes (like *TES-keittiö* [TES Kitchen], 1957). [Fig. 1.]

As the live programming suffered from a constant lack of financial and technical resources, it appeared homemade and clumsy. In older television countries live drama had given way to pre-recorded performances in order to establish the kind of "control and precision" that was already familiar in film (Hartley 2008, 164). However, in Finland these two modes of expression determined the style of the television programming at the same time. There was no recording technology in either TES-TV or Tesvisio, and the contrast between film and live programming remained until 1964 and the merger of Tesvisio and YLE.

Despite the lack of resources, there was a certain attempt at a truly televisual expression. This aim was clearly indicated in 1960, when TES-TV was replaced

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12   The National Archive Service of Finland, Television alku Suomessa (The Beginning of Television in Finland Collection), ledger, appendix no. 2: Radioinsinööriseuran Televisiokerhon ja TES-TV:n ohjelmat (Programming of the Television Club and TES-TV); *Radiokuuntelija* [Radio Listener] 10/1960, 11/1960.

13   *Radiokuuntelija* [Radio Listener] 40/1961, 41/1961.

14   Särkkä, interview, 2007.

by the programme company Tesvisio and a professional set designer was employed. Ensio Suominen had previously worked in film and theatre and that is where he drew from also in television. Suominen's aim was to create a light and airy television image. He replaced the black sets with white backgrounds and introduced a staircase that seemed to be floating in the air and a mirror floor which he used repeatedly in his theatrical productions.[15] [Fig. 2.] Thus, he quite literally opened up the picture of Tesvisio and created a new look.

Suominen's works actually enhanced the connection of television and the arts at least in two ways: first, by bringing theatrical style to television in designs he had used in the theatre and second, by contributing to the development of a genuinely televisual style. This period could even be regarded as the beginning of the aesthetics or at least aesthetic consideration in Finnish television. For the first time, a serious amount of time and effort was put on the elaboration of how the television looked. These examples indicate that as soon as the television personnel became familiar with the new technology, there was an intention to explore the aesthetic possibilities of the medium. The unique mixture of coincidence, international trends and national aspirations created in early Finnish commercial television a style that made a significant contribution to the evolution of a national television culture.

The Art of Commercial Television

The first years of Finnish television witnessed the creation of a connection between commercial television and popular culture but also with commercial television and the arts. When Tesvisio was sold to YLE, the situation changed. A commercial television company, Mainos-TV, was still leasing air time from YLE and broadcasting on the public television channels.[16] However, the contract with YLE profiled Mainos-TV as a broadcaster of popular programming. Although Mainos-TV established a permanent theatre department for broadcasting live plays from the studio, programming policy clearly favoured American tele-films. This bias generated criticism both in YLE and in public during the late 1960s.[17] It even contributed to the establishment of two opposing paradigms of Finnish television: commercial television, popular culture and entertainment *v* public service television, high culture and information (e.g. Ruoho 2001, 223). These two paradigms have characterized the debate on Finnish television ever since.

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15   *Täällä Tesvisio*, episode 7.
16   Salokangas 1996; Hellman 1994.
17   Salokangas 1996, 157–8.

What is forgotten in these discussions is that during the TES-TV/Tesvisio period, a commercial television company was profoundly committed to airing arts programmes and educating the audience. Broadcasting both arts programmes and advertising was not an issue. Thus the early years of Finnish television give us an alternative model for combining the arts and television. As a medium, television was taken seriously – it provided a channel through which arts could reach everyone (or at least those who could afford a receiver). But the benefits were mutual. By broadcasting arts programmes, the Finnish commercial television companies were able to avoid the accusations directed at commercial television in the United States. These programmes helped TES-TV and Tesvisio in accumulating value for their programming and thus, to legitimize commercial television.

TES-TV and Tesvisio also served as a "laboratory" for the aesthetics of Finnish television. As I have described above, the promotion of television aesthetics was highly rated especially in Tesvisio. As soon as the company could afford a set designer, one was employed to create experimental props, which changed the picture in the tube. Television was seen as an art in its own right, not only as a mediator of the arts.

Empirical Material:

Mikkelä, Otto, manager in TES-TV 1957, interviewed on 11 September 2007 in Helsinki.

Radiokuuntelija [Radio Listener] magazine 1957–1964.

Särkkä, Arto, manager in TES-TV 1956, interviewed on 11 September 2007 in Helsinki.

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List of Figures

Figure 2. Ensio Suominen's set design introduced white, airy backgrounds and a mirror floor which he used repeatedly in his theatrical productions. (Picture reproduced with the permission of YLE.)

Notes

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