MARX'S PHILOSOPHY
edited by Michael Wayne
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A FILOSOFIA DE MARX
editado por Michael Wayne
e Sérgio Dias Branco

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EDITORIAL:

FILM THROUGH MARX, OUR CONTEMPORARY

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The encounter in the 1960s and 70s between Marxism and film studies, as an institutionally recognised academic field, was a radically incomplete and perhaps even a rather superficial and unsatisfactory affair. The work of cross-fertilisation between Marxism and film and their critical sifting of concepts and perspectives had hardly begun when for the same reason that the encounter had started — the pressure of wider historical forces for social revolution — it ended. That first encounter risks being institutionalised in histories of the subject as a primitive stage that a linear history of progress has now irrevocably left behind. Yet that history productively ghosts much of the work in this volume, one which seeks to demonstrate that the dialogue between Marxist thought and film studies can only be assumed to have stopped to the detriment of film (and arguably to Marxism itself). That dialogue needs to be taken up again in a deeper and lasting form and in a more committed relationship.

At a time when the capitalist mode of production has never been as *extensively* present and interconnected in every nook and cranny of the globe, and has never been as *intensively* organised and operationalised as today, it seems bizarre that any discipline or body of thought could be relevant if it did not make this system a key part of its problematic. And yet the urgency of making *capitalism* the self-conscious object of enquiry seems to be recognised by only a small minority of actors in all walks of life. It is a paradox that itself needs to be explained, at a moment when the threat posed by private competitive accumulation to the ecosystem, is now a clear and present danger to the future of life on the planet. What are the political responsibilities of educators such as cultural workers and academics in such a context? Can they, can we, be satisfied to contract into the monadic subjectivity whose implicit and explicit violence Se Young Kim criticises in this issue of *Cinema*? The class struggle has not gone away. The problem is that it is largely being prosecuted by only one side, that of the exploiters. Capital (its structures, its imperatives, its institutions and agents across society) bestrides the globe

while its antithesis has exploded into so many fragmented forms as to make both agency and images of the subjects as collective agents complex and difficult to realise.

The financial crisis of 2007-8 has been embedded into a sickly system struggling to overcome the insurmountable contradictions that Karl Marx was the first to brilliantly synthesise. For example, capital expels labour power from the site of production and yet relies on it to measure its *rate* (but not mass) of profit. Capital depends on scarcity and yet its own gargantuan productivity abolishes scarcity. Marx probed such destructive dynamics in a variety of discursive registers, from the polemical agitational pamphlet (*The Communist Manifesto*, with Friedrich Engels), to the analysis of concrete historical conjunctures (*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*) and to the foundation of critical political economy (*Capital*). There was usually a philosophical dimension to all this work, especially the imprint of his engagement with the German philosophical tradition, but also the influence of Greek philosophy on his thought. The concept of *potentiality* is an example. There is a divergence between how things are in their dominant empirical reality, and how things could be, not as a result of utopian scheming, but because buried within the deeper social relations on which the empirical "facts" depend, lie explosive negations of our historical situation, alternate lines of historical possibilities that those tasked with managing the capitalist system constantly work to close down. Philosophy in general, and Marx's and Marxist philosophy in particular, is above all the source of all those conceptual resources that *denaturalise* the extensive and intensive totality that is this system. Here philosophy touches on the question of the imagination, on the essential ability to imagine other possibilities, other ways of engaging with and shaping the world. This in turn brings us to the art of film.

Evident in the following essays is the tension and debate between film as a form of critique and emancipation and film as a form of domination in a cultural mode. Both pertain to film's relationship with historical and social reality. Both are in play in various ways and to varying degrees. Certainly Marxist filmmakers or filmmakers influenced by Marxism have made self-conscious contributions to developing the critical, we may say *pedagogic*, possibilities of film (see Koutsourakis, Spencer and O'Regan). But these potentialities are part of the medium itself and are realised in many films with less politically conscious motivations behind them. The Hollywood film is one of the few territories in American public life where the realities of corporate power can be readily acknowledged in a popular idiom (see Cobb and Greig) — although in some instances

whether this has become a narrative cliché, robbed of its political efficacy and social relevance, is a real question. Likewise, in post-Stalinist free-market capitalist Russia, it is film that has recently been able to speak what has been unsaid in the mainstream public sphere: that deep and savage socioeconomic cleavages have re-appeared with so-called freedom (see Bozovic). If the statues of Marx, Lenin and other classical revolutionaries that once populated the denominated Eastern Bloc as ironic witnesses to a system they would not have called socialism, now that all the statues have been abolished, their critique of capitalism is as relevant as ever. We certainly do not need idols in cultural theory, with their inevitable rigidifying of complex bodies of thought into state dogma. Marxism is no cure for human error. We need creative and critical developments in Marxism that have absorbed Marx's original insights and advance the understanding and explanation of the world we live in, including the contribution of film to that world. The point, of course, is to change it.

ABSTRACTS

CINEMA VIOLENCE AND THE ONTOLOGY OF CAPITALISM

Se Young Kim (Vanderbilt University)

Cinema, in its most massively produced and widely disseminated format in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, is violent. In dialogue with both the public discourse and scholarship regarding the cinematic representation of violence, this paper approaches film violence through a Marxist framework. It does so to propose that the philosophy of Karl Marx reveals critical insight regarding the relationship between cinema, violence, and capital. In particular, this essay scrutinizes commercial narrative cinema and thus approaches cinema as hegemony. The violence of cinema is considered to have a role in reproducing the social organization of capitalism, namely the hierarchical relationship between the ruling and ruled classes. Cinema has historically used violence in narrative and spectacle to propagate these relations of production, the ontology of capitalism that consists of Cartesian subjectivity and its vertical orientation towards the Other. In other words, violent cinema is crucial for the subject in capitalism, for it shares the pivotal function of perpetuating class antagonism. But because cinema must constantly mediate the violence of capital, simultaneously obfuscating it while also maintaining it, violent cinema — like the proletariat — also holds the emancipatory potential of its own critique and eventual dismantling.

Keywords: Marxist film theory; Marxist philosophy; Cinematic violence; Media violence; Capitalist ideology; Class antagonism.

FROM BINARY TO RICH DIALECTICS: *THE REVOLT OF THE FISHERMEN* AND *MAUSER*

Angelos Koutsourakis (University of Leeds)

Dialectics constitutes one of Marx's key theoretical formulations. For Marx, the dialectic stands for a method of negation that reveals the mediated aspect of what appears to be evident and immediate. While Marx's view of the dialectic goes beyond Hegelian binaries, the prototype of dialectical cinema as typified in the films of Eisenstein relies on the employment of binaries, whose collision produces a synthesis that offers a concrete hermeneutical schemata. Although such a paradigm offers an elementary introduction to the Marxist approach to history, it ignores the richness of Marxist dialectics and offers a somehow mechanistic understanding both of the historical process as well as of cinema's ability to employ the dialectical method productively. This article explores the shift from a binary to a rich dialectic by focusing on two case studies: Erwin Piscator's *The Revolt of the Fishermen* (1934) and Philippe Vincent's adaptation of Heiner Müller's Mauser (1999). Though both films are grounded in a dialectical staging reliant on fragmented sequences that generate associations in place of diegetic linearity, they differ in their employment of the dialectical method. In offering a comparative reading of these two films, the article intends to open up different ways of thinking about cinema and dialectics so as to redeem the dialectical method as a valid means of addressing political questions in the present.

Keywords: Dialectics; Political Cinema; Erwin Piscator; Heiner Müller; Karl Marx.

FROM *BARTON FINK* TO *HAIL, CAESAR!*: HOLLYWOOD'S GHOSTS OF MARXIST PAST

Cam Cobb (University of Windsor)
Christopher J. Greig (University of Windsor)

Barton Fink and *Hail, Caesar!* take place in the distant past, the former in 1942 and the latter in 1951. In both films, Hollywood is portrayed not as a breezy dream factory, but as a toxic environment where filmmakers are locked into a perpetual battle with studio tycoons — and capitalism itself. It is a space where art is molded and even censored by the interests of marketization and profiteering. In short, these films depict the tumultuous marriage between art and business. They are cautionary tales about ghosts — or nightmares rather — of Hollywood's Marxist past. To discuss Marxist dimensions of this unique pair of films in the Coen brothers' oeuvre we explore four questions, including: (1)

What is the social condition (depicted in these films)? (2) What is an alternative (to this condition)? (3) How do people struggle to challenge this system? And (4) What is the outcome (of their actions)?

MAKING FILMS NEGATIVELY: GODARD'S POLITICAL AESTHETICS

Jeremy Spencer (Camberwell College of Arts - University of Arts London)

This essay seeks to reconstruct conflicting positions within materialist theories of art and culture as they relate to and help explain the "counter-cinema" of Jean-Luc Godard. The essay discusses a number of the films Godard made collaboratively in the late 1960s and early 1970s which were informed by Maoism. The focus is on the critique of Clark and Rancière made of political modernism that the Dziga-Vertov Group's documentary films embodied. The essay reconsiders Wollen's and Clark's theories of modern art and culture as kinds of semiotic dislocation or negativity to situate Godard's techniques aesthetically and historically. The discussion of Marxist aesthetics aims to clarify the nature of Godard's practice but the essay leaves the contrasting positions of Rancière and Brechtian political modernism and those of Clark and Wollen in tension.

THE VIEW FROM BELOW: FILM AND CLASS REPRESENTATION IN BRECHT AND LOACH

Keith O'Regan (York University)

This article examines the depiction of unemployment in Brecht's *Kuhle Wampe* and Loach's *Raining Stones*. The paper argues that these films operate in a tradition of committed filmic representation of class that rejects a narrow definition of class as merely the exploitative practices of capitalism (extraction of surplus value at work), and includes those who are denied access to employment, in particular at moments of historical

capitalist crisis. My argument begins with a discussion of class from both cultural theorists and political philosophers in order to situate the films theoretically into a non-reductive class analysis. Drawing on the work of Mike Wayne, Teresa Ebert, Raymond Williams and Ellen Wood (inter alia) I argue that the representation and analysis of class must be understanding of longer term political economic structuring of capitalism, while attentive to the particular historical transitions within that structuring. We see this attentiveness in both films as Loach and Brecht develop technical strategies that forestall a judging perspective of the characters under view so as to highlight the world from their perspective. In this regard we are invited to see the working class worldviews as both determined by the world they inhabit, but also as agents in the struggles of their own lives. As such, issues of dignity, gender construction and relations are never outside the sphere of the domination of class. Ultimately, I argue that what these films do regarding class and the social perspectives of workers is to consider the subjectivity of working class people within an historical context.

Keywords: Historical materialism; Oppositional aesthetics; Working-class; Unemployment; Bertolt Brecht; Ken Loach.

FOR MARX: THE NEW LEFT RUSSIAN CINEMA
    Marijeta Bozovic (Yale University)

What can politically engaged aesthetic productions from the former Soviet Union tell us about socialism? As recently as ten years ago, popular audiences and scholars alike might have answered this question by invoking the dissidents who fled the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War. Throughout the twentieth century, dissidents provided popular and critical "Western" discourses with vivid tales of both the treachery of leftist utopianism and the courage of individual resistance. Today, the outdated imperialist ideologies that undergird this approach have become readily apparent, while a vital strand of post-socialist leftism has surfaced once more across the former Second World.

    The emerging Russian filmmakers I discuss in this article offer visions of radical politics and aesthetics that learn and diverge from the state socialism that shaped their parents' and grandparents' generations. Russia offers a stage for intellectual and artistic

upheavals exceptional both for the political traditions they juxtapose, and for the foregrounded awareness of the ambivalent legacies of these traditions. Tackling a range of contentious subjects from sexuality to police brutality, these films met with controversy in Russia while securing the reputation of their directors on the international festival circuit. I examine three recent films — Svetlana Baskova's *For Marx…* (2012), Angelina Nikonova's *Twilight Portrait* (2011), and Lyubov Lvova and Sergei Taramayev's *Winter Journey* (2013) — all by female directors or co-directors, and all seeking to imagine and image social alterity after state socialism.

All three films were made between 2011 and 2013, barely missing the notorious legislation against homosexual propaganda passed in Russia in the summer of 2013. *For Marx…* offers an explicit engagement with Louis Althusser and lost legacies of Marxist thought, as well as with Sergei Eisenstein's cinema viewed from the other side of the twentieth century. The new Russian left announces its presence forcefully in this darkly comic parable of class struggle in post-Soviet Russia, rediscovering the thematic and formal markers of Soviet cinema as if from a position of (impossible) innocence. *Twilight Portrait* opens with an act of police brutality and sexual violence but defies genre at every turn, sampling the revenge fantasy, erotic thriller, and parable of political eros with equal conviction. In *Winter Journey*, a classical singer falls in love with a street thug in a tale that frames same-sex love as less complicated than class difference in post-Soviet Russia.

In unexpected ways, all three films interrogate the perils and possibilities of "going to the people" in the twenty-first century. Baskova spent months conducting field research with independent labor union organizers across provincial Russia and cast activists alongside professional actors recognized as People's Artists of the Soviet Union. The other two films use erotic/romantic fabulae to interrogate post-Soviet class struggle through lenses of gender and sexuality. An unspoken motto emerges through my comparison — lines that have appeared in Cyrillic and Latin graffiti alike across the former Second World: *If the revolution is not feminist, it will not be.*

Keywords: Class conflict; Contemporary Russia; Gender and sexuality; The New Left; Post-socialism; Political cinema.

ARTICLES | ARTIGOS

CINEMA VIOLENCE AND THE ONTOLOGY OF CAPITALISM

Se Young Kim (Vanderbilt University)

Cinema is violent. That is not to claim that the medium has always been violent, nor is that to suggest that it must remain this way. However, for the majority of its history, cinema has been and continues to be violent. To be more precise, I refer to cinema as it has been in its most widely disseminated and most massively consumed format, namely mainstream commercial narrative cinema produced in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In other words, this essay understands cinema as hegemony. To approach cinema as hegemony is to see how overwhelmingly violent the history of cinema has been. From its infancy in *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) to its most grandiose iterations such as *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015); from the action of *The Mark of Zorro* (1940) to the horror of *Black Christmas* (1974) to the comedy of *There's Something about Mary* (1998) and even to the drama of *Gone Girl* (2014); from the British *Zulu* (1964) to the Iranian *Mashq-e Shab* (*Homework*, 1990) to the Chilean *Post Mortem* (2010); cinema is violent across history, genre, and national context.

Cinema is violent because it emerged, developed, and has continued to be practiced in capitalism. And capitalism at its core, is violent. The role of capitalism in regard to violence in cinema has yet to be fully explored, which is why a framework informed by the thinking of Karl Marx is of such critical use. Cinema cannot be extricated from the world that produced it and because the world in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is determined by capitalism, an analytical approach that focuses on that determination can reveal the key way in which cinema, capitalism, and violence are inextricably entwined. What I am also proposing in this essay then is that cinematic violence has a structural function in the broader context of capital, a function that affects those who inhabit capitalism.

Ultimately, I argue that one of the key functions of cinema is to legitimize the violence of capitalism which is in practice, a problematic of how its subjects orient themselves to one another. The violence of cinema, produced through narrative and spectacle, serves to valorize Western Cartesian subjectivity and its violent interpersonal ethics. To the credit of violent cinema, it itself lays bare its own ethics and politics. The understanding of how

cinematic violence is capitalist ideology can be akin to a realization, which can activate a network that perhaps lead to new possibilities — alternative modes of interpersonal relations, and most importantly, ways in which to recover the dignity of the worker. Cinema can and already has allowed for such moments. However, for now, hegemony remains. As such, it is our task to scrutinize it and challenge it — ruthlessly and responsibly — at every turn.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS VIOLENCE

Film Scholarship and Cinematic Violence, Violence in the Media

Despite its undeniable ubiquity, violence in the cinema has yet to be studied to a sufficient and satisfactory degree. Referring to the new interest in media violence in the US during the 1990s, J. David Slocum writes, "While 'quantitative' studies by social science researchers have accompanied such popular attention and concern, humanities and film scholars have undertaken the 'serious' study of film violence haltingly. Some scholars have provided sophisticated accounts of cinematic forms of violence while others have attempted to provide broad accounts of film violence."[1] But for the most part, fifteen years since Slocum's 2001 edited collection *Violence and American Cinema*, cinematic violence still remains a "secondary concern."[2] However, the caveat is that this is only the case for film scholars. The interest of violence in the media in the 1990s that Slocum mentions on the other hand is observable throughout the 2000s and 2010s. Violence continues to occupy both social science researchers and the general public.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the discourse surrounding a number of violent incidents across the US. Following the Columbine High School Massacre on April 20 of 1999, when Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold shot and killed thirteen people, news outlets attempted to make sense of the act by emphasizing how the two young men played first-person-shooter (FPS) video games, listened to certain genres of "aggressive" music, and espoused interest in Oliver Stone's 1994 film *Natural Born Killers*. On April 16, 2007, twenty-three-year-old Korean national Cho Seung-Hui killed thirty-two people at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute in what was at the time the largest mass killing in US history. The *Washington Post* and *Time* magazine suggested that the ultraviolent Korean film *Oldboy* (2003)[3] may have had some sort of relation to the massacre. On July 12, 2012,

James Holmes killed twelve people during a screening of Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012). Much was made of a possible connection between Holmes's motives and the *Batman* character, the Joker. The discourse surrounding the above incidents reveal a tacit assumption regarding media violence and the viewer — the fairly straightforward notion that the consumption of violent content leads directly to aggressive behavior. Much of the research in turn, proceeds with that idea in mind and either seeks to confirm or disprove the claim.[4]

The Question of Legitimacy

Part of that, I would argue, is related to the way in which violence is constantly compartmentalized. Consider for a moment the descriptor of "action." Action is merely an alternative term for violence. When considering the prevalence of action, as a requirement either narratively or in regard to spectacle, it becomes evident how universal violence is in cinema. What then separates action from violence? It is the respective statuses of the two categories: the former is tacitly legitimate while the latter is not. Along these lines, whether it is separating "ultraviolence" from "normal" violence, or the violence of the FPS *Doom* (1993) from other, more supposedly benign video games, the public discourse constantly produces a taxonomy, localizing illegitimate forms of violence until they become easily identifiable and subsequently manageable problems. According to these critics, such horrific events listed above can be avoided as long as violent media is no longer produced.

Even film scholarship is not completely exempt from such an approach. The edited collection *Screening Violence* is another one of the few projects dedicated to the topic of film violence. And yet, the book maintains similar attitudes. *Screening Violence* consists of three sections titled, "The Historical Context of Ultraviolence," "The Aesthetics of Ultraviolence," and "The Effects of Ultraviolence." To begin, *Screening Violence* aligns with the dominant attitudes towards media violence mentioned above, where the effects on the spectator can be observed. Along these lines, what the sections immediately makes evident is the way in which the book separates "ultraviolence" from violence as such, cohering to the idea of the "new violence"[5] that was stronger, meaner, and thus, more problematic than its predecessor. Along these lines, the book makes an implicit value judgment in its differentiation between the valuable work of violent filmmaker Sam

Peckinpah from the frivolous violence of Quentin Tarantino.[6] Such distinctions maintain the notion that certain forms of violence are legitimate while others are not.

The study of cinema violence requires a more critical and broad understanding to what is without a doubt, a complex symbolic field. As J. David Slocum writes, "Violence is a notoriously expansive notion."[7] This is precisely why critics, pundits, and scholars are constantly debating the question of violence with specific attention to what constitutes an acceptable degree. To mention an example from outside of the cinema, the question of the application of excessive force by law enforcement amounts exactly to this issue. That the proper degree of violence used — or represented, as in the cinema — is constantly questioned suggests that the very character of violence is volatile. This is also to say that violence must constantly be mediated. The attitudes and corresponding terminology (whether it be force, action, or violence) must be continuously shifted. And the real function of this adjustment is to separate the legitimate forms of violence from the illegitimate ones, an act that keeps certain exercises of violence open while closing off other possibilities. In the end, violence is repeatedly being defined so that it may remain the exclusive claim of whomever is designated as the correct owners. The quandary of violence is the question of its legitimacy, and the question of legitimacy is ultimately one of access.

A seminal rumination on the character of violence, Walter Benjamin's "Critique of Violence" reveals these critical dimensions: violence is ultimately a question of legitimacy, inasmuch as it is a matter of means and ends,[8] which is also the goal-oriented logic of capital. Furthermore, Benjamin reveals how that legitimacy is tied to the state's ownership of violence, as he opens the piece by stating, "The task of a critique of violence can be summarized as that of expounding its relation to law and justice."[9] While the English translation of the essay uses "violence," Benjamin's term is *die Gewalt*, which in addition to violence, also includes power. In turn, the term cannot be extricated from law and justice. Hannah Arendt approaches violence with similar concerns, noting how violence is characterized by its instrumental character (as a means to an ends).[10] She goes further by differentiating violence from power, strength, force, and authority, although all are entirely imbricated within one another.[11] Michel Foucault's theorization of epistemic violence, an extension of the idea of knowledge-power, further expands the concept of violence, as does Gayarti Chakravorty Spivak's refinement.[12] Epistemic violence emphasizes both the non-coercive, disciplinary power in modernity, moving it beyond the

purely physical, while also expanding capitalist relations within a broader international context that emphasizes the specifically geopolitical power of capitalist hegemony.

Indebted to these foundational works on the character of violence, this essay conceptualizes violence in two ways. First is the more immediate idea of violence, of the direct physical harm inflicted on the Other. This perhaps is the form violence takes the most, or at least is the most visible, especially in regard to the representation of violence in cinema. More accurately then, we are discussing the *simulated* representation of violence. In addition, there is the broader movement of violence, a general dialectic of suffering and release, the subjugation and exploitation of the disenfranchised, the world over. In Benjamin, Arendt, Foucault, and Spivak's iterations, this is the biopolitical relationship of the state to its subjects, where entry into the political is ultimately the relinquishing of agency that becomes the power over life. Another way to say this is to say that the biopolitical subject tacitly submits his or her access to belligerency (except for certain situations such as the military, law enforcement, self-defense, or business) so that the state may have exclusive access to it. What both conceptions of violence have in common is that in the end, the Other is always diminished for the sake of capital.

A MARXIST FILM STUDIES APPROACH TO CINEMATIC VIOLENCE

It is in this concern for the Other that this study refers to Marx. More specifically, the essay draws on Marx's illustration of how the capitalist social organization requires the suffering of the Other. The primary philosophical and intellectual tenet that undergirds this study is Marx's assertion that the production of surplus value determines capitalism.[13] In turn, that determination creates a fundamentally exploitative society. Surplus value is the product of the general formula of capital, or M-C-M' (money to commodity to money with surplus). In this form of circulation, money is used to purchase a commodity, which is in turn, sold for profit. The goal is thus money with surplus value.[14] For Marx, this is a crucial distinction from the circulation of commodities, or C-M-C (commodity to money to commodity). In this formula, commodities are sold for money, which is then used to purchase different commodities. While the general formula of capital is unlimited, commodity circulation has a concrete endpoint in the purchase of the

second commodity. As opposed to surplus value, exchange-value determines the circulation of commodities and emphasizes its horizontal character.[15]

In capitalist circulation, surplus value originates in the commodity, or more precisely, it begins in the production of the commodity. After all, surplus value can only be generated if the money introduced into the commodity is less than what is extracted (in the final sale). In other words, while the capitalist pays the laborer to produce the commodity, he sells the final product at a higher price than the cost of production.[16] The added value of the commodity is the worker's labor-power, which has not been fully compensated for. The capitalist purchases the worker's labor-power and in justification of the investment (for it would seem that the laborer would be unable to work without the capitalist's wages), the worker takes a deficit. That deficit in turn is what imbues the commodity with its magical qualities and results in excess value.[17] Because surplus value can only occur at the expense of the laborer, the arrangement between the worker and the capitalist — or the relations of production in capitalism — is thus fundamentally exploitative.[18] And if surplus value drives capitalism, then it follows that capitalism is fundamentally exploitative. Somehow, the unevenness of this arrangement goes unseen, or perhaps more accurately, neglected. And it is the reproduction of this unequal relationship that is crucial to understanding the persistence of the capitalist social organization.

For the purposes of this essay, ideology is considered the primary way in which capitalist production is secured, guaranteeing not necessarily that a specific group of people will maintain power, but rather that a relationship of power will always be maintained. As Louis Althusser asserts, capitalist production is predicated on the "reproduction of the conditions of production" which includes the "productive forces" in addition to the "existing relations of production."[19] Cinema is approached in a way that aligns with Althusser's theorization of the Ideological State Apparatus and more specifically the Cultural State Apparatus, a complex structure that executes the transmission of dominant ideology across all areas of the social organization. Moreover, Althusser's work is essential in theorizing how ideology produces the subject as a subject within capital. At the same time, it is crucial to understand that neither capitalism nor capitalist ideology is coercive in nature. Uneven distribution is not forced upon capitalist subjects. As Antonio Gramsci demonstrated, capitalist subjects come into capitalist

ideology "spontaneously" on their own accord.[20] This is also to say that the relations of production are reproduced because both parties within those relations agree to the arrangement on some level. Upholding capitalist ideology, commercial narrative cinema perpetuates these relations. As a result, it is an iteration of Gramscian cultural hegemony. It is a concrete instance where a fundamentally violent social arrangement is internalized by those within that arrangement, on their own accord.

It is here that we reach the core of this essay, the ethical and intellectual imperative to interrogate the violence of cinema. The deep contention with the relations of production is the foundational ground to Marx's work, articulated in his lament for the lack of dignity of the proletariat.[21] As with Marx and Friedrich Engels, this essay is informed by the desire to restore the lost dignity of the subject in capital. At stake is the enormous amount of suffering that has continued to persist in the last two centuries, the dynamic where someone must be sacrificed. One cannot profit without someone else being exploited. Surplus value cannot be produced without labor at a deficit. Capitalism cannot exist without a lower class. In the same way, on the individual level, which is also how cinema operates, one's sense of Self requires the diminishing of the Other.

THE ONTOLOGICAL VIOLENCE OF THE CINEMA AND THE CAPITALIST SUBJECT

Fundamentally, cinematic violence is a matter of ontological difference. If as Benjamin asserts, state violence has a lawmaking and law-preserving function,[22] then violent cinema produces and reaffirms the ontology of capital. Furthermore, violence and capitalism must be repeatedly legitimated in the same way that the relations of production must be reproduced, as does the subjectivity of those who inhabit those relations. Alongside violence and capital, Western logocentric Cartesian sovereign selfhood must also be affirmed. As Jean-Louis Baudry,[23] Ella Shohat, and Robert Stam[24] note, cinema has inherited the tradition of Western art, adapting the Renaissance perspective and the solipsistic, narcissistic, and avowing function alongside it. In addition to Baudry, Donald R. Lowe demonstrates even more pointedly how this perspective and the very perception that it enables is tied to the history of capitalism.[25] This is a crucial dimension as it is incessantly disavowed in normative cinema-going experiences. The world before the spectator — both in and past the cinematic frame — exists in as much as

it extends beyond the spectator's selfhood. The world can only exist in relation to him. That relationship simultaneously produces and reinforces the spectator's subjectivity; the world legitimizes the spectator just as he gives meaning to the world.

The medium specificity of hegemonic cinema in its historical practice has been used to affirm the ego-building enterprise of the viewing subject. Alone in the theater, or even in the hypermedial, ever-mutating world of the twentieth century, the incessantly fraying contours of the subject are constantly shored up by the project of visual culture. But a crucial dimension to Cartesian subjectivity, evident in its relationship to the world before him, is that it is relational. Contrary to liberal humanist ideology, the subject is not self-actualized. In order for selfhood to have meaning, it must be posited against the Other. And that relationship is both inherently and historically hierarchical. When the serial killing monstrosity Michael Meyers dies at the hands of the final girl in *Halloween* (1978),[26] this is another instance where the cinematic Other is quelled in the service of the spectator's lack.

While the history of Western subjectivity did not entirely coincide with the emergence of capitalism, today the two are inextricably linked. This is also to say that Western metaphysics are capitalist metaphysics, and thus, the subject is violence as he is Western, and he is Western as he is capitalist. In her treatise for a new practice of "feminist objectivity," Donna Haraway emphasizes this connection as well. Her object of critique is the "technological, late industrial, militarized, racist, and male dominated societies." Such a society was the US in 1980s during the time in which she was writing.[27] The contention with sexism cannot be separated from the critique of capitalism in the same way that cinematic violence cannot be extricated from industrial cinema. Furthermore, Haraway's practice of feminist objectivity stands in opposition to the science of the post-Enlightenment world, the allegedly "objective" logic that the feminist reminds us, is the very same omniscience that so happens to be male and white, a position that is assumed and normalized, as is the case in Classical Hollywood Cinema.[28] That position is unmarked and takes up the vantage of the God's Eye.[29] The very same omniscience and omnipotence is given to the spectator of violent cinema. One is never merely an objective viewer or a distant observer; the spectator is always embodied within a particular matrix of violence and capitalism.

Against the argument that modern subjectivity is fundamentally violent, some may assert that violence against the Other is an aberration as opposed to the norm. One could

suggest that Cartesian subjectivity is not violent, but merely self-absorbed. It is not that one actively or consciously seeks to harm the Other, it is only that one's own self is more often than not, the active priority. I would in fact argue that this form of passive devaluation is perhaps the most prevalent way in which our subjectivity exercises violence — through the erasure and disavowal of the Other and her suffering. Whether one is simply ignored such as the titular protagonist of *Carrie* (1976), insulted in the way that Walter Burns (Cary Grant) and Hildy Johnson (Rosalind Russell) constantly degrade one another in *His Girl Friday* (1940), tormented as with the unassuming high schooler in *Bang-gwa-hoo-ock-sang* (*See You After School*, 2006), struck with the same force that Rocky Balboa (Sylvester Stallone) applies to Clubber Lang (Mr. T) in *Rocky III* (1983), or killed with the extreme prejudice that Tom Powers (James Cagney) shows his rivals in *The Public Enemy* (1931), in the end, the underlying logic is the same.

And yet, violence is separated from subjectivity in the same way that violence is detached from both action and power. More importantly, violence is often understood as having no fundamental relationship to capitalism. After all, if one were to seek success in one's respective sector, how could that be seen as an act of violence? In reality this is a problem of cognitive mapping,[30] or more precisely, the lack thereof. If one were to rigorously chart the flow of one's labor, one would find that at some point my work is directly connected to someone else's exploitation, just as I myself am being exploited. The acquisition of surplus value that benefits me economically and also affirms my selfhood is identical to the mission of capital, and as such, both result in the same deficit. The desire for social mobility — whether it is economical or egotistical — is a vertical movement and not a horizontal one. To be socially mobile is to "get ahead" as it were and this is to move in relation to someone else. The desire for social mobility is in reality the desire for entry into the upper class. Ultimately, that which simultaneously marks and determines that movement is the accumulation of wealth. And my wealth can only have meaning – as with my subjectivity – in a comparative fashion. The desire for success is at once the desire to elevate oneself over the Other and to do so through the acquisition of private property. An example from *The Ten* (2007) demonstrates this truth of capitalist ideology, where suburban neighbors enter into competition when one man purchases an MRI scanner, which prompts the other to follow suit. The ordeal devolves until both men's properties are strewn with MRI scanners. While the film may suggest that this is

competition gone awry, it is rather the articulation of the entirely logical conclusion of the logic of competition.

The myth of competition informs capitalism.[31] Capitalism is competitive because competition is necessary to the relations of production. To maintain class antagonism, the uneven configuration that behooves the ruling class, the systemic disenfranchisement must be justified. It is valorized through the ideology of competition, an ideology that simultaneously disavows its fundamental violence while keeping its potentiality available by configuring it as the engine of meritocracy. Competitive ideology ultimately validates violence and allows for the systemic exploitation of the working class to be rationally explained. It is not structural disenfranchisement; it is rather that they did not work hard enough. Cinema, as culture industry, as cultural state apparatus, takes up this mission of disseminating capital's violent ideology. It coaxes us and aids us in reconciling the aporia within capitalism, where everyone is simultaneously equal but also not.

THE VIOLENCE OF CINEMA: SPECTACLE AND THE TYRANNY OF NARRATIVE

While this essay attempts to attend to a gap in film studies scholarship, it is also not entirely accurate to claim that film scholars have been uninterested in cinematic violence. Instead, it may be more precise to say that there has been a great deal of interest in cinematic violence, only in an indirect fashion. As opposed to violence, film scholars have attended to spectacle. Violence and spectacle share an intimate and vital relationship to one another, just as they do with the medium of film. Spectacle, as violence, is that which grips the spectator. It is the compelling visual and aural stimulation of the titular bank robbers being riddled with gunfire in *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) or the mass of colliding bodies in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Spectacular violence engages the spectator as one of the primary anchor points with which the spectator is sutured into the cinematic experience, as theorized by Kaja Silverman.[32]

Spectacular violence is not always the set-piece of a film, but the set-piece is almost invariably a sequence of spectacular violence, the "money shot"[33] [34] as it were, so crucial to the development of high concept cinema.[35] In the same way that spectacle demands payment by way of price of admission, so too it requires financial investment. As is the case with the aforementioned *Bonnie and Clyde* and the seminal *Jaws* (1975), violence

maintains a reciprocal relationship to the development of special effects. The invention of squibs (small exploding pockets of synthetic blood) were critical to the shocking brutality of *Bonnie and Clyde*, which was part and parcel of a generation of American and Italian films that introduced a new degree of cruel verisimilitude. A more recent, comparable example of this relationship between screen violence and special effects would be the much-lauded and appropriately-named "Bullet time" camera technology used on *The Matrix* (1999) which enabled 360-degree filming. The relationship between film and technology has long occupied scholars, but in the intersection between cinema, violence, special effects, and economics, we find a parallel with Paul Virilio's illustration of how cinema was indebted to the development of military technology.[36] His is another instance where we observe how cinema cannot escape violence.

Spectacle understood as violence is what commercial films share. Spectacular violence is also what, for the most parts, separates commercial films from art cinema.[37] At the same time, because art cinema too hinges on a dialectic of conflict and resolution, it cannot completely evade the fundamental violence of cinema in capitalism. In a similar fashion, spectacular violence extends beyond commercial narrative cinema and bridges it with its predecessor, the early cinema practice identified by Tom Gunning as the cinema of attractions.[38] To this day, spectacle attracts (and as Adorno and Horkheimer would remind us, distracts[39]) — and yet, unlike the films of the Lumiere Brothers, Thomas Edison, and Georges Méliès, spectacle is not in the service of attraction. Spectacle is no longer a self-sustaining organ of the cinema. As cinema moves away from the potentiality of the time-image,[40] so too can we observe that which guides violence. The master of spectacle today is narrative.

By and large, the cinema that is discussed here fits the model of what David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson have named Classical Hollywood Cinema. Classical Hollywood Cinema can best be characterized as a character and character psychology motivated teleological, narrative-based mode of filmmaking.[41] Considered in that regard, it becomes evident that as a mode, Classical Hollywood Cinema is not limited to the US. The majority of commercial narrative cinema internationally aligns with Classical Hollywood Cinema. This is of course not to suggest that neither narrative as a mode, US cinema as an industry, nor cinema as a medium is inherently and essentially violent. However, in historical practice, the dominant mode of filmmaking preferred both US and internationally is indeed violent. To reiterate an earlier point, this is all the more

case considering that the *telos* of Classical Hollywood Cinema is that of conflict and resolution, cinema is violent due to this movement even in the absence of representation of direct physical harm. In regard to the structural requirement of narrative, Linda Williams's theorization of melodrama offers further evidence regarding the violent character of narrative cinema. Williams writes, "Melodrama is the fundamental mode of popular American moving pictures." She continues, "It is the foundation of the classical Hollywood movie."[42] Melodrama thus overlaps with Classical Hollywood Cinema as a description of the most hegemonic form of film, but for Williams the specificity of melodrama is its desire to begin and return to a "space of innocence."[43] This is not to suggest however that films open and close in an identical space. Instead, cinema reflects the general formula of capital, where the endpoint has added surplus value that is produced in the movement through conflict. The pleasure of melodrama is the promise of excess value — similar to the vulgar excess of "body genres"[44] — that can only come as the result of violent acquisition.

Consider the 2006 crime film *Lucky Number Slevin*. A film that details one young man's personal vendetta against the mob following the murder of his father, the scheme of Slevin Kelevra (Josh Hartnett) is extraordinarily convoluted, with hidden identities stockpiled and new revelations for both the characters and the spectators with every scene. The incredibly elaborate plot of *Lucky Number Slevin* makes one wonder if it is worth the effort of both the filmmakers and the audience. In reality, the convolution of *Lucky Number Slevin* is due to the untenability of violence: violence is volatile and must be legitimated. The film achieves this through the logical backflips and loopholes of reason. This is noteworthy considering how instrumentalized and common sense the logic of violence is, which is also to say that the film goes to great lengths to legitimate violence, even though violence is already commonly understood as legitimate. But moreover, *Lucky Number Slevin* is complicated because the complication is goal-oriented. In other words, the serpentine plot of the film serves a legitimizing function as well as a narrative function. The narrative and its numerous twists elicit the promise of a "payoff," as it were; the reward to the spectator for following and making sense of the film. Incidentally, that payoff happens to be the spectacular discharge of explosive violence – a bullet to the head of a vile character. In that sense, the violence of *Lucky Number Slevin* requires narrative, just as narrative requires violence. The question remains as to which of the two motivates the other. Regardless, it is undeniable that the two are inseparable.

In John Boorman's 1967 *Point Blank,* the humor is in how little motivation it takes for Walker (Lee Marvin) to wreak mayhem in the search of an incredibly thin, and thus unreasonable goal. The joke carries over into the 1999 remake *Payback* (Brian Helgeland). While the illogic of the protagonists of *Point Blank* and *Payback* is central to the films, I would identify a similar thread in recently emerging national cinemas, albeit in a less immediately self-aware fashion. Take the related and contemporaneous development of Thai and Indonesian action cinema in the 2000s and 2010s. The two movements, spearheaded by *Ong Bak* (2003) and *The Raid: Redemption* (2011), anchored by stars Tony Jaa and Iko Uwais, mirror the global emergence of Hong Kong cinema in the 1970s through the bodies of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. What all three national cinema movements demonstrate is how international film can only compete globally through the masterful display of physical violence. Moreover, Jaa's *The Protector* (2006) and Iwais's *The Raid* demonstrate how very little is needed to serve as character motivation and narrative legitimation for the actors' violence. The minimal plot of *The Protector* has the protagonist searching for his stolen elephant.[45] The 120-minute running time of *The Raid* on the other hand, sees its protagonist ascend an apartment building against wave after wave of deadly assailants. And yet, even though spectacle is the life force of *The Protector* and *The Raid* and despite the fact that their narratives are sparse, the films *still have narratives.* While the films certainly operate as opportunities to showcase the talents of Jaa and Iwais, that virtuosic demonstration of violence must be framed by narrative. Similarly, even though the bodily ability of stars such as Jaa, Iwais, Lee, and Chan are crucial to these films and their respective national cinemas, the actors do not simply appear as themselves. In the same way that these films must have narratives, the actors must perform as characters.

As Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson note, "Character drives classical Hollywood narration."[46] As opposed to modes, movements, and genres where external forces, whether it be the destitution of post-World War II Europe or the crippling domination of colonial forces — films that also often resist and/or critique the capitalist mode of production — characters are the agents of change in commercial cinema. Moreover, in the same way that narrative cinema structurally requires conflict, its characters are of a particular type, not figures of a text[47] but rather characters substantiated by clear psychology[48] and even clearer motives. It is these psychologies and motives that enable the characters to singlehandedly see the narrative to its only logical conclusion. From the

lone assassin [*Le Samouraï* (1967)] to a farmer rescuing the galaxy from imperial tyranny [*Star Wars* (1977)] to an Army Captain preserving the dignity of the samurai [*The Last Samurai* (2011)], the protagonists of cinema have forced change. In this entanglement of character and change, we observe how narrative cinema is enamored with causality in the same way that it is preoccupied with Cartesian subjectivity, in as much as the latter is the agent of the former. If cinema has substantiated any claim, it is that the only change is made possible through force.[49] What hegemonic cinema asserts is that an individual can alter the order of things, but this is an act that elevates oneself at a high cost. In doing so, an ideology that constantly favors the Self but writes off the Other as a necessary expense, is incessantly reproduced.

The pleasure of narrative cinema so eloquently articulated by Laura Mulvey[50] is the indulgence of having one's subjectivity fortified and one's ego assuaged; it is the corporeal experience of viewing simulated violence, as long as it is within a tasteful, acceptable, and ultimately *legitimate* range alongside the reassurance that the world is still such where a single individual can affect history. If Foucault and Gramsci have demonstrated how power is no longer coercive in modernity, then narrative cinema provides an explanation as to why correspondingly, the socialist revolution has not yet occurred. Simply put, the need has yet to be sufficiently felt. As opposed to a fascist exercise of power that is coercive and closes off the horizon of possibilities, capitalist culture keeps those potentialities seemingly opened. Our world has not been saved because as opposed to the world of *Avatar* (2009), it does not yet need to be. At the same time, films such as *Avatar* serve as potential visions into what such a situation would resemble: this is to say that it assures us that if the state of things were to deteriorate enough that it would warrant intervention, then any single individual would be able to decisively bring the crisis to conclusion.[51] In other words, I am suggesting the following as effects of commercial cinema: the world has yet to be recovered because unlike its fictive worlds, our world is not yet in such a dire state to require such a drastic act; one does not exercise one's agency because one has yet to feel that agency being threatened. Narrative cinema has assured its audiences time and time again, that if they needed to be an agent of change that they too — like Luke Skywalker or Frodo Baggins or John Connor or James Bond — could fulfill that role.

Cinema must constantly assure its audience, coddle it even, because it must do its utmost to silence the dread that is constantly bubbling beneath its surface. In the same

way that the theater serves as shelter from the reality that work awaits the laborer the next day (the great irony being that that shelter is precisely what enables them to return to work),[52] cinema quells any lingering misgivings regarding the structural disenfranchisement of capital that are always already evident. It is only with the promise that I may profit from that same subjugation — the accumulation of surplus value in regard to my subjectivity or my private property — that that process can be disavowed and/or tolerated. The relations of production must be upheld, and what better way to ensure them than to convince those within those relations to sustain them on their own backs? That is after all, the lesson of hegemony by consent. At the conclusion of *The Usual Suspects* (1995), Verbal (Kevin Spacey) remarks "The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist." The greatest achievement of capitalist cinema is to convince its spectator that he too could benefit from the violence he is subjected to.

CONCLUSION

Capitalism is the accumulation of surplus value through the production and exchange of commodities. In turn, the production of surplus value is neither magical nor natural — it requires a deficit on the part of the actual producer of the commodity, the worker. As such, surplus value structurally requires the active devaluation of an entire segment of the global population, which as the last two hundred years of world history have demonstrated, is the majority of that population. This entirely irrational social structure, where the majority of its inhabitants are disenfranchised, must be rationalized and legitimated. Which is why it is necessary to assure members of the social organization that entry into the ruling class is of such great boon that they would overlook the fact that so many will be barred access. Furthermore, this uneven distribution of wealth is constantly obfuscated; capitalism asserts that it consists of a free market where everyone begins on an even plane. On occasion, the vertical movement from working class to upper class does occur, which gives credence to such ideas. Such instances are however, far and few between. And even if they were not the exception but rather the norm, there would still remain a lower class, which is unacceptable. By and large, the ruling class has continued to occupy one space in capitalism while the working class has inhabited another. This

organization is precisely the relations of production. And those who determine the relations of production also control the means of production. Conversely, those who are subjected to the relations of production also submit themselves to those relations, selling their labor-power at a deficit in the hopes that they too can transcend their current position. But of course, this is not to say that the ruled class will always remain so, or that the only possibility of flight is to join the ruling class.

The structure of capitalism is violent both actively and passively. In the first sense, it physically harms the corporeal bodies of the workers. In the second, it subdues them and limits the potentiality of their labor. Because the structure of capitalism is violent, so too its culture, including the multi-billion-dollar culture industry that is global commercial cinema. In both capitalism and cinema, violence is a fundamental component, which is why it cannot be completely erased. Instead, it can only be mediated through partial concealment, disavowal, deferral, or partition. This process of mediation in turn, where violence remains on the surface, is also part and parcel of its process of valorization. The violence of capitalism is legitimated through the violence of cinema, and cinema achieves this through the production and dissemination of ideology which is in turn achieved through narrative and spectacle.

Through its tools of film form, cinema prolongs the project of asserting that violence is legitimate and unavoidable. According to capitalist cinema, the only possible configuration of its subjects is hierarchical — there can be no horizontal plane of interrelations and coterminous subjectivities are an impossibility. In capitalism, this is the relationship between capitalist and worker, in cinema the relationship is mapped onto the classical protagonist and the diegetic world. In both of these configurations, capitalism and cinema repeatedly sacrifices the Other in order to serve the Western ego of the capitalist subject. One constantly relates oneself to others as Self and Other, which is why the Other can only exist in relation to oneself. In turn, one is *always already capitalizing* on the Other, an act that only enables further capitalization. The Other exists to be exploited and the capitalist subject has already resigned himself to this configuration. One is and continually becomes the subject in capital — produced in the cinema just as one continually actualizes one's own subjectivity.

While this essay has remained theoretical and abstract in its concerns, I also argue that the violence of capitalism and its relationship to cinema is evident in the material reality of historical domination. While critics unsophisticatedly tie the horrible acts of the

Columbine High School shooting with *Natural Born Killers* and the 1997 North Hollywood Shootout with *Heat* (1995) in a rather direct fashion, it would be dubious to suggest that there is absolutely no connection whatsoever. Indeed, the violence of *Battle Royale* (2000) is related to the troubling number of youth incidents in Japan in the late 1990s and 2000s,[53] just as the violence of *Banlieue 13* (*District B13*, 2004) can be understood in relation to the 2005 French riots. All of the above examples are more direct instances where film is in dialogue with its historical context, the familiar assertion that cinema reflects reality. But this essay has further argued that it is not only that films reveal insight regarding the immediate historical context of their production and distribution, but also that cinema speaks to the context of its entire history, which also happens to be the modern history of capitalism.

It is precisely here, both in the unavoidability of violence in capitalism and in cinema, that we find its emancipatory potentiality. Because violence is ever present, it also generates infinite opportunities for its own critique and dismantling. As Marx himself demonstrated, the hope of an alternative sphere was produced by capitalism itself, because capitalism structurally required that which would also be the key to its own undoing: the proletariat. This is also to say that the critique can only emanate from within. The majority of the films discussed thus far have been used as examples to demonstrate the violence of capitalism. I have also thus argued that these films have played a substantial role in the propagation of the violence of capital. In analyzing the role of cinema in the reproduction of capitalist ideology, Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni suggest films can be organized according to their orientation to ideology. Comolli and Narboni present a spectrum of five categories that are distinguished by the degree with which a film either submits to or critiques ideology.[54] At the same time, the two provide grounds for a mode of reading where films can belong to all five of the categories: this is also to say that a film can simultaneously contribute to dominant ideology while also subverting it. I would suggest that in that sense, film mirrors the potentiality of the proletariat.

The foundation for destruction and rebuilding and the potential for an alternative are already present. They must only be actualized. The cinema I have discussed thus far serves for the most part the agenda of the capitalists, but that is not to say that it cannot or does not have a place in dismantling that agenda. I would even suggest their inclusion in this discussion would attest differently. These are films where the emancipatory potential

is perhaps less evident, as the fundamental violence of capitalism is far more obfuscated, transformed into cinematic spectacle. Let us end this conversation with a consideration of cinema where contingency reveals itself more readily. Historical practices of Marxist cinema, whether it be the familiar movements in Russian film or Third Cinema are immediate examples and for good reason. I would like to add that Marxist cinema — or cinema that invokes the spirit of Marx and Engels and their ethical disdain for the way that capitalism grinds humans within its cogs — does not always take an explicit Marxian tendency. The work of South Korean filmmaker Kim Ki-duk for example is a Marxist cinema of a different sense. An explicit evocation of Marxist philosophy or theory is absent in Kim's films. However, nearly all of his films are fundamentally and deeply critical of the social organization, which is in turn characterized by class antagonism. The class antagonism for example of *Nabbeun namja* (*Bad Guy*, 2001) is one that produces violence on real bodies, a circular violence that affects everyone in the filmic world, for the filmic world is also one of capitalism.[55] Through that universal process of victimization, *Bad Guy* produces a coalition of victims that creates new potentialities that resist classical Western interrelations and produces new horizons of being.

Moreover, the violence of Kim Ki-duk returns us to another crucial dimension of film violence — the particularly cinematic dimension. The violence of Kim Ki-duk and other politically-conscious yet violent filmmakers is challenging. This is a crucial dimension that *Screening Violence* touches on but does not fully explore. The controversial violence of Kim Ki-duk — exemplified in the widely circulated reports that viewers vomited during the Venice Film Festival screening of *Seom* (*The Isle*, 2000)[56] — begs the question, why does this violence cause such *violent* reactions? Is this corporeal discomfort, this disgust, repulsion, and abjection the reason why the violence of Kim Ki-duk is referred to as excessive or gratuitous? Does this not imply that the normalized spectacle of violence in commercial cinema that does not (for most viewers) disgust but rather titillate and engage, is both acceptable and meaningful?

What this means is that as long as cinematic violence is directed outward toward the Other and not towards the viewing subject, that it is not excessive. In affecting the viewer corporeally and destabilizing normalized cognitive processes in the viewing of violence, excessive violence *assaults* the viewer. In turn, that violence implicates the viewer, placing them in the position of harm, a position that has been historically displaced but is in reality the viewer's very position, that of the subject affected by capitalism. What films

such as *Seom* and *Nabbeun namja* among others, presents then, is a mode of cinematic violence that can affect us in defamiliarizing manners, a process which both lays bares the dominant intersubjective relationships in capital and prompts the spectator to imagine the possibility of new configurations. Every violent image is another reminder of the fundamental violence of capital. In turn, each image confesses to us that capitalism itself maintains both the possibility and the conditions of its own undoing. Capitalism is violent. Cinema is violent. I am violent. But that does not mean that this must always be so.

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1. *Violence and American Cinema* was a crucial contribution while other scholars have also recently advanced the study of cinematic violence. See for example, Steve Choe *Sovereign Violence* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), or James Kendrick, *Film Violence: History, Ideology, Genre* (London: Wallflower Press, 2009), or Alison Young, *The Scene of Violence: Cinema, Crime, Affect* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

2. J. David Slocum, "Introduction: Violence and American Cinema: Notes for an Investigation," in *Violence and American Cinema*, ed. Slocum (London: Routledge, 2000), 2.

3. East Asian names will be written in the traditional fashion with the family name first and the given name last.

4. I would suggest that this approach to the representation of violence could be referred to as "media violence" or "violence in the media," which are often the terms that the public discourse deploys. This study on the other hand, includes media violence within the problematic of cinematic violence. Indeed, many of the texts that were invoked in relation to the incidents mentioned above are part and parcel of the phenomenon described here.

5. Slocum, "Introduction," 1.

6. Stephen Prince, "Graphic Violence in the Cinema: Origins, Aesthetic Design, and Social Effects," in *Screening Violence*, ed. Prince (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 25-33.

7. Slocum, "Introduction," 2.

8. Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 1, 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2004), 236.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Books, 1970), 46.

11. *Ibid.*, 44-47.

12. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

13. Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume One: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin, 1992), 293.

14. *Ibid.*, 250.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, 254-256.

17. *Ibid.*, 165.

18. *Ibid.*, 270-272.

19. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127-128.

20. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 12.

21. Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1972), 62-65.

22. Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," 243.

23. Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Apparatus," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 289.

24. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "Introduction," in *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, ed. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (New York: Routledge, 1994), 2.

25. Donald M. Lowe, *History of Bourgeois Perception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

26. I reference *Halloween* in order to invoke Carol J. Clover's seminal *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) to note that the points of reference are of course, not stable and fixed. But the key point in transferring identification is that the viewing subject and his ego, is always in control.

27. Donna Haraway. "Situated Knowledges," *Feminist Studies* 14:3 (Autumn 1988), 581.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. Fredric Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

31. Karl Marx, "The Illusion Created by Competition, *Capital: Volume Three: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin, 1992), 293.

32. Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

33. Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible,"* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 93-95.

34. See Joshua Gunn, "Maranatha," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98 (2012): 359–385 for further consideration of the relationship between the money shot and violence in his analysis of *The Passion of the Christ* (2004).

35. Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

36. Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (London: Verso, 1989).

37. David Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice," *Film Criticism* 4:1 (Fall 1979): 56–64.

38. Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8:3-4 (Fall 1986): 63-70.

39. Max W. Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Guzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

40. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

41. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 2003), 12-13.

42. Linda Williams, "Melodrama Revised," in *Refiguring American Genres: Theory and History*, ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 65.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44:4 (Summer 1991): 2-13.

45. The majority of Jaa's dialogue had him demanding, "Where is my elephant?" The lack of diversity was to the point that the English-language dubbing added new dialogue.

46. Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood*, 12-13.

47. Roland Barthes, "XXVIII. Character and Figure," in *S/Z: An Essay* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974).

48. Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood*, 20.

49. I would also propose that mainstream criticisms of representation in cinema oriented around empowerment and the female-driven cinema of *Game of Thrones* (2011-ongoing) and *Haywire* (2011) are merely inversions of the practices of capitalist cinema. To propose empowerment is to still insist on a relationship of power, which is ultimately violent.

50. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16:3 (Autumn 1975): 6-18.

51. Joshua Clover makes a related comparative approach in analyzing *Avatar* and *The Potentiality of Storming Heaven* (2009). While both films intersect in their anti-imperialist sentimentalities, Clover points out how the politics and purposes of the films diverge. In Joshua Clover, "The Struggle for Space," *Film Quarterly* 63:3 (March 2010): 6-7.

52. Horkheimer and Adorno, "The Culture Industry," 109.

53. Andrea G. Arai, "Killing Kids: Recession and Survival in Twenty-First Century Japan," *Postcolonial Studies* 6.3 (2003): 367-379.

54. Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

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FROM BINARY TO RICH DIALECTICS:

THE REVOLT OF THE FISHERMEN AND *MAUSER*

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In memory of Mark Fisher

DIALECTICS: SOME INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Dialectical analysis appears to be a fringe concern in film studies. The intellectual landscape of the discipline is dominated by discussions of production practices, star studies, market analyses, and scientific neo-positivisms, which are hardly embedded in questions of social and political relevance. While these theoretical approaches take pride on their apolitical disposition — often disguised as objectivism — the situation is hardly different when it comes to scholarship concerned with political questions. For instance, although cultural studies have addressed important political issues with respect to identity politics, much of the work done in the field proceeds quite un-dialectically as if concepts of race, gender and sexuality operate independently of the logic of capital. This is not far from what Wendy Brown calls the liberal "culturalization of politics",[1] which under the rubric of liberal "tolerance" provides explanations for diverse group realities and communities without acknowledging broader structural and historical factors, thus reducing complex issues to moralist platitudes. Obviously, there are still discussions of cinema and politics, but although much ink has been spilled on criticizing the so-called Grand Theory of the 1970s, symptomatic reading still dominates the political analyses of films and as David N. Rodowick suggests, Althusserian concepts are still ubiquitous "in almost every instance of contemporary theory."[2] But for the most part, symptomatic reading sees films as illustrative and not as dynamic objects, since they are simply reduced to reflecting the historical, political, social contradictions of their times. Dialectical analysis was not in vogue even in the 1970s when discussions of cinema went hand in hand with politics. Criticism focused on films made "politically", but rarely on films made "dialectically." There were of course exceptions to the rule, and Roland

Barthes' scattered film writings are good examples of dialectical criticism. Nonetheless, Barthes — whose influence was significant in the late 1960s-early 1970s *Cahiers du cinéma* — was mainly concerned with demystifying the seemingly progressive content of popular films, so as to expose their conservative nature and ideological obviousness.[3] He rarely employed dialectical readings of films — his writings on Eisenstein are notable exceptions — to uncover the richness and complexity of objects whose politics he approved of.

It is the crux of my argument that any discussion of cinema and politics cannot evade the question of dialectics. Dialectical analysis provides a means of considering whether films address political questions/issues as unities of contradictory opposites whose acknowledgement can lead to a change in our perception of reality; or whether they simply muse on political issues as a platform to propagate moralist assertions that see social phenomena as isolated objects divorced from their social/historical context. Identifying the conflicting theses and antitheses within a film can also enable us to read seemingly innocuous films against the grain, as evidenced in Mark Fischer's work.[4] Moreover, it can enable a shift in the approach of film studies, from studying politically laden films under the rubric of ethics to studying their contradictions in ways that can reveal their complex social and political implications.[5] Fredric Jameson has convincingly clarified the difference between dialectical and ethical thinking: whereas the former invites us to see reality as the unity of positives and negatives and think constructively so as to imagine alternatives, the latter is keen on having "the luxury" to criticize reality without bothering to imagine ways to overcome its impasses.[6] In a way, Max Horkheimer's distinction between critical and traditional theory is relevant in clarifying Jameson's point. For Horkheimer traditional theory even in its critique of reality cannot go beyond the pragmatic acceptance of the broader reality principle, such as the division of labor, whereas critical theory is interested in imagining alternative possibilities.[7] In this context, ethical criticism is grounded in the belief that small-scale changes can make a difference, whereas the dialectical one sees the ethical problems as a small part of a wider web of social interconnections.

Partly, one of the reasons why dialectical criticism is not fashionable has to do both with historical reasons, namely the defeat of socialism in the East, and of the labor movement in the West; it also relates to the present celebration of the commodity on the part of the academy that seems to be content with offering empirical verifications of the existing reality rather than critical interventions. Thus, to posit the significance of

dialectical analysis one needs to demonstrate the pertinence of dialectical criticism in the present circumstances. But such a task requires an acknowledgment of the different historical contexts and usages of the dialectic. Thus, the aim of this article is archaeological in the sense that I detect the shift from a binary dialectic as typified in the classic films of the Soviet era, to a rich one that remains committed to the view of the dialectic as negation and counter-perception without offering explicit interpretative schemata. I use as case studies Erwin Piscator's undeservedly overlooked film *The Revolt of the Fishermen* (1934) and Philippe Vincent's adaptation of Heiner Müller's *Mauser* (1999). Before moving to the case studies a series of definitions of dialectics are underway.

Etymologically, the noun dialectics derives from the Greek verb διαλέγομαι, which literally means "enter into conversation." Hegel, a key philosopher of the dialectic, defines the dialectic as a "negative activity" which intends to destabilize what seems fixed and unchangeable.[8] This is founded on the proviso that one understands everything that seems concrete, as the outcome of a chain of contradictions that clash with each other. Contradiction is not to be confused as something exceptional and unique; contradiction is the precondition of life, since objects and concepts include in themselves antithetical forces, whose clash produces a "negative unity."[9] In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel suggests that this concept of contradiction is an essential part of life; life can only be understood as a process, that is, as something that is not static and permanent, but as changeable reality "a living thing."[10] Negation is, thus, an inherent quality of the dialectic. Dialectic is "a negative movement" that destabilizes certainties and ideas that one takes for granted.

Dialectics as negation is also the foundation of Marxist thinking. Unlike Hegel, Marx postulated that instead of starting with ideas to explain humans' practical activity, one needs to start with the study of social and material reality so as to understand ideas, ethics, and religion that appear to be independent from the social processes in which they develop. The core of Marxist dialectics is that by understanding the world as a unity of contradictory opposites one encounters its negation, the forces that oppose it.[11] As such, negation in Marxist dialectics is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one as well, since it does not simply make the subjects of history see the world anew and think about it in a speculative, philosophical way, but enables them to understand that they can change it. Marx, therefore, proposes a non-evolutionary understanding of reality and considers the world to be the product of a collision of theses and anti-theses. This in turn

implies that reality is historically particular and not fixed, but ephemeral. In other words, social beings can change the social and economic conditions of their time. Thus, theoretical activity devoted to the critique of the present social conditions goes hand in hand with social praxis devoted to overcoming the existing reality principle.

BINARY DIALECTICS: *THE REVOLT OF THE FISHERMEN*

Sergei Eisenstein is undoubtedly the godfather of dialectical cinema because he theoretically formulated the principles of dialectical cinematography and put them into practice. Eisenstein understood the function of the dialectic as a negative and constructive principle. The task of representation was to reveal the social causality behind the characters' actions. Reflecting on the use of mise-en-scène, he makes a distinction between the "representational" and the "figurational" plane. Both are necessary parts of any expressive mise-en-scène: the former refers to the characters' specific actions and the logic of their activities in particular situations. The representational plane is thus the "superficial level."[12] The figurational plane on the other hand, must, "communicate the inner dynamic of the characters' relationships."[13] Simply stated, the representational plane stresses the relationships between the characters, whereas the figurational calls attention to the ways that the characters' relationships are not private ones but directly linked with social situations. This choice doubtlessly serves to shift the focus of attention from the abstract, universal individual, to a historical and social view of subjectivity that understands conflict to be located not within private, but within social and collective contexts. The collision created between the representational and the figurational plane has thus both aesthetic and political effects. The aesthetic contradiction produces pathos, which in turn generates knowledge effects. As Frank Kessler eloquently explains, the Soviet filmmaker intended to produce realism out of the collision of two extremes, that is, "formless naturalism" and "a graphically expressed idea",[14] and I would like to add here that for Eisenstein realism refers to a practice that reveals the mass/collective aspect of social phenomena.

In this sense, Eisenstein's major intervention was the theorization of a dialectical cinema, which radically challenged the individualistic dramaturgy motivated by the nineteenth century theatrical traditions; he introduced a collective dramaturgy whose aim

was to reveal the ways characters were the product of processes taking place on a mass scale. Consequently, Eisenstein's starting point was reality and by this I do not imply the production of reality effects, but the view of reality as the conflict between individuals representing concrete material interests. All the same, Erwin Piscator, one of the fathers of political theater, proceeded to challenge the boundaries between art and life, by using multiple media in his theater productions, such as revolving stages, puppets, cartoons, and film projections. Like Eisenstein, Piscator's aim was the creation of a collective dramaturgy that placed emphasis on social phenomena rather than private conflicts/ affairs. He named his theatre epic, and his understanding of the term corresponds with Hegel's definition of epic poetry. For Hegel, in epic poetry character does not occupy a central role; epic poetry is not based upon dramatic action, but on external "events" and circumstances that reveal something about the reality of the nation and not about the characters (he saw epic poetry as a national art form dealing with the historical complexities of the nation). In this sense, epic poetry privileges the presentation of circumstances rather than individualistic stories. As he says,

> For, in epic, character and external necessity stand alongside one another with equal strength, and for this reason the epic individual can seem to yield to external circumstances without detriment to his poetic individuality. His action may seem to be the result of circumstances and these therefore appear as dominant, whereas in drama it is exclusively the individual character who produces results.[15]

Along similar lines, Piscator aimed for grandiose theatrical productions that privileged external historical/social events, typicality and collectivity at the expense of canonical dramatic action. His ultimate motto was "less art, more politics."[16] He used giant screens and blackboards as a means of reportage that connected the stage reality with the social one and all this was put to use to foreground a materialist understanding of social phenomena. Commenting on the experimental aspect of his work he stated that his aim was not the mere production of formalist trickeries, but the uncovering of "the link between events on the stage and active forces in history."[17] Piscator's politicized dramaturgy was a product of his disillusionment with the brutality he experienced as a World War I soldier, as well as his politicization following the German revolution of 1918-19. He reacted towards the dominant expressionist dramatic tendencies of the time,

which he dismissively called "the *O-Mensch* (oh-man) dramatists".[18] This expressionist drama emphasized individualism and reduced complex social phenomena to questions of fate. He criticized dramatists such as Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller arguing that they preached an abstract call for universal brotherhood, and reacted to the war and the ensuing social uncertainty in an idealist way that failed to identify the causes behind the historical events. Yet, Piscator was not a de facto critic of Expressionism. He acknowledged many of the revolutionary stylistic developments brought about by the movement, but disagreed with its abstract individualism.

Piscator wanted to supply a remedy to this dramatic individualism by introducing a collective dramaturgy that did not present social reality as a matter of fate, but as the outcome of forces to be located outside the realms of the drama. His employment of film on stage served precisely this role, that is, to create a visible dialectic between the drama and the forces of history located in society. Commenting on his theatre production of *Hoppla wir Leben*, the renowned film critic/theorist, Béla Balázs, explained that the film images projected on stage aimed not to reproduce dramatic actions that could be presented via theatrical ways, but to capture segments of reality that urge the audience to identify its "meaning."[19] The dialectical conflict between stage and screen allows one to identify the deeper collective causes that can account for the social complexity of the dramatic events. Film for Piscator was a means of persuasion that could magnify situations so as to reveal their collective character. He further clarifies this in an essay written in 1929, where he defends film's transition to sound. As he states,

> The more universal a medium is, the more fantastical (in a film, a fly can be portrayed to be as large as an elephant, and similar effects are possible with sound). So much more can be said in a way that is more powerful, simple, illustrative, persuasive, and varied in terms of movement, color, magnification, and reduction.[20]

While the industry used film to further its profits, a materialist employment of the medium could lead to the simultaneous production of agitative and knowledge effects: pathos and enlightenment. In line with the other key features of his collective dramaturgy, such as the *Sprechchöre* (the speaking chorus), and the elevation of the mass as the central character of the drama, his deployment of film aimed to overcome the dualism between inner (dramatic) and outer (social) reality.

Film Theory has not really identified the ways Piscator's theatre influenced cinema. One key exception is the major German film historian, Lotte H. Eisner, who has succinctly showed Piscator's influence on German Expressionist filmmakers including Fritz Lang. Eisner goes at great lengths to show how Piscator's collective dramaturgy, and his mass choruses were influential on Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), especially in its representation of the mass of workers and their stylized movements/gestures, which underlined industrial capitalism's production of a sense of impersonality that challenges the view of the individual as a private and self-determined persona. For Eisner, one of Piscator's major innovations, visualized in *Metropolis*, was the transformation of "the extras into architectural elements, which he then projected forward again in swift, preferably wedge-shaped movements, either singly or in groups."[21] It is, thus, legitimate to argue that Piscator (like Eisenstein who moved from theater to film) was a multi-media theorist and practitioner whose materialist understanding of the world was the foundation of his artistic innovations.

Yet Piscator's privileging of collective dramaturgy and typicality is grounded upon a binary dialectic that reduces all social conflict to a class war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie of the time, something that might seem a bit oversimplistic in the present times, where, as according to Guy Standing, the class structure is much more fragmented.[22] Standing, who is not a Marxist scholar, convincingly suggests that the class divisions go beyond the familiar binary bourgeoisie and proletariat. He identifies five class groups: the elite: a rich global minority that has a strong political influence; the salariat: a managerial class enjoying high salaries and benefits; the proficians: a well-paid group that tends to be on highly paid flexible contracts — e.g., accountants. Flexibility is something desired by the proficians, since it allows them to make use of their skills in various enterprises; the traditional working class, whose social networks of solidarity tend to disappear due to aggressive anti-union policies; and the precariat which works on zero-hour contracts and does not even enjoy the remaining forms of social protection. Standing's description makes plain that class antagonisms are still existent and is useful in making us understand the reasons why class fragmentations prohibit viable social solidarities and alliances that can productively counteract the existing social order. Contemporary cinema is not immune to this historical particularity as evidenced in numerous films (for instance the New Extremism in global cinema) whose political critique is restricted to the negation of the existing order.[23]

Things were much different in the first decades of the twentieth century where the class structure allowed one to perceive class divisions in binary ways. A closer look at Piscator's sole filmmaking effort, *Vosstaniye Rybakov* (*The Revolt of the Fishermen*, 1934) can indicate this binary employment of the dialectic. Based on Anna Seghers' novel, the film tells the story of a group of fishermen working in Bredel's ships. They react against their exploitative working conditions and go on strike to ask for higher wages. The film registers the pressure faced by the workers during the strike, such as the collisions between strikers and strike-breakers; when Kedennek, the leader of the fishermen, is shot by the army, which sides with Bredel, a revolt erupts. The story concludes with the fishermen convincing other workers to join their struggle, and interestingly these workers' garments make them look more like members of the bourgeoisie. The film was made during Piscator's self-exile in the USSR following Hitler's ascension to power and one can interpret this alleged alliance between workers and the bourgeoisie as a call for a broader coalition against fascism.

Piscator's visual rhetoric follows his principles of epic dramaturgy and generalization. Indicative from this point of view is that 1200 extras were employed to perform, while the majority of the scenes were exterior ones and minimum work was done in the studio.[24] To this one should mention the addition of an invisible chorus commenting on the action, as well as the emphasis on the mass as the film's central character. Even the death of Kedennek, acts as a pretext for revealing the potential of a politically conscious collectivity. In other words, Piscator uses all these elements to increase the intensity of the political tensions and invite the audience to understand the historical contradictions of the time in terms of class-relations.

But to comprehend class relations, one needed to perceive the collective aspect of modern reality and this was articulated by Piscator in 1929 when he wrote that, "it is no longer the private, personal fate of the individual, but the times and the fate of the masses that are the heroic factors in the new drama."[25] The film's opening is a good example of a dialectical introduction to conflicting collectivities. Following a brief self-reflexive introduction to the actors and the characters, we get to see a series of visuals of recently caught fishes being skinned and cleaned. The succession of images is frenetic, accompanied by extra-diegetic music that adds a sense of pathos and intensifies the visual impact of the sequence. For the first minute we do not get to see any of the fishermen's faces and their labor appears impersonal and mechanized. The voice of an off-screen

supervisor urges them to work faster. Eventually, the camera captures close-ups of faces of various fishermen and crosscuts between them and the faces of their supervisors, who keep on commanding them to work harder. When one of the workers complains he is immediately rebuked and told that "we pay for hands not tongues." In the visual that comes immediately after this one, a worker is shown cutting his hands while trying to follow the imposed working pace. Cut to another worker who asks: "Captain, what do you pay for an injured hand?." The Captain responds: "we only pay for healthy hands." This sequence introduces in an economical way the audience to the major dramatic conflict that preoccupies the film's narrative. It sets in direct opposition antithetical social interests so as to question the timelessness of the particular social structure and show its potential for change. The mechanized and alienated labor presented in the film's opening is immediately shown to be the unity of antithetical opposites, that is, the product of conflicting interests whose clash can initiate change.

Piscator's employment of the dialectic here is in service of denaturalizing the social order and revealing its impermanence. To evoke the major Marxist theorist, Karl Korsch, we shift from what appears to be normal, "a static connection", to a "dynamic" one. This in turn implies that there is a move from what initially appears to be a social contract, "a harmonious consensus" to "a dissensus."[26] This is intricately achieved within four minutes of screen time. Notably, the mise-en-scène has an expressionist edge that aims to render the dialectical conflicts comprehensible but also to impart a thrilling atmosphere that creates a sense of urgency and intensifies the binary contradictions.

This occurs throughout the film. Picture for example, a sequence focusing on the tensions between the striking fishermen of Santa Barbara and the strike-breakers coming from the village of Saint Sebastian. During the annual St Sebastian festival, the fishermen from Santa Barbara enter the festivities to persuade the strike-breakers to join them. The camera continuously crosscuts between the festivities and the oppositions amongst the strikers and the strike-breakers. Prominent in the sequence is a carousel accompanied by fairground music, which creates uncanny effects à la Hitchcock. Piscator privileges these visual materials that allude to the origins of cinema in public spectacles, such as fairgrounds and amusement parks, and when he crosscuts to the workers' disputes this montage arrangement produces both sensual and pedagogical effects. The rapid montage sequences present segments from the workers' interactions, a sex-worker's attempts to

solicit clients, apolitical fishermen getting drunk in the pub and the fragmented dialogues that communicate the mistrust between the strikers and the strike-breakers.

These segments serve simultaneously a narrative and commentative function and the constant intercutting between the stimulating visuals of the fairground and the workers' conflicts creates a sense of cinematic excess, which produces hyperbolic visuals that skip dramatic verisimilitude. Here one can see clearly Piscator's dalliance with Expressionism and the ways he prioritizes mood and "atmospheric tension"[27] – a fundamental element in Expressionist theatre and cinema. This excess produces pathos and adds a thrilling dimension to the narrative rendering it enjoyable and suspenseful. But this emphasis on mood and atmosphere acts as a dialectical commentary and corresponds with what Jacques Aumont calls "*film de montage*", that is "a film, or a piece of film made up of shots which are not linked by narrative logic, but whose aim is to suggest, describe or comment upon".[28] For Aumont, this use of montage is applicable to numerous narrative films devoted to commenting on ideas that exceed the film's diegesis. Aumont mainly refers to French filmmakers such as Alain Resnais, but he makes a crucial distinction between montage used simply to serve narrative continuity (as in Hollywood) and one that creates constructive discontinuities to generate ideas. Certainly, Eisenstein is an obvious example given his famous distinction between montage used mainly for rhythmic purposes and montage devoted to the production of ideas.[29]

Eventually, this passage from the film culminates in a sequence in which the arguments of the strikers are counteracted by the ones of the strikebreakers. Again the group formations throughout the sequence are evocative of experiments initiated by Piscator in the theatre — the Piscatorian "*Ballung* (agglomeration of the human figures)" and the speaking choruses (*Sprechchöre*) that make the mass appear as a solid collective subject —, which had a tremendous influence on German Expressionist cinema.[30] Similar formal devices originating from the theatre were also standard in Soviet cinema, which drew on Vsevolod Meyerhold's stylized anti-naturalism and experimented with group formations and gestural acting concerned with the production of rhythmical associations, which aimed to produce concrete dialectical conflicts. Picture for instance this sequence in *The Revolt of the Fishermen*. One of the ringleaders of the strikers begs the other fishermen to join the strike. Cut to a strike-breaker who explains that they need to feed their families. Another cut to a striker who accuses them of treason. These cuts to and forth continue and every time an argument is pitted against a counterargument, the camera captures a

different member of each group that voices their collective concerns. Here the binary dialectic is used to demonstrate the frictions within the workers. We encounter an analogous situation later on, when Kedennek challenges the strike-breakers and is ultimately shot by the army. Kedennek's death becomes the narrative ploy that makes the workers overcome their divisions. In the long run, the workers become one collective body opposed against the army and the employers. Class divisions become the key categories that exceed individuality and this aspect of Piscator's work is symptomatic of the historical contradictions of his time that demanded the flattening of other complex differences and contradictions in light of his commitment to anti-fascist activism.[31]

It is therefore not much of a stress to say that Piscator's dialectical approach to filming is structured around the formation of cohesive collectives that counteract each other. The first collision within the film's narrative is between fishermen and employers; followed by the conflict amongst the fishermen themselves. Finally, Kedennek's death leads to the unification of the workers and their coalition against the employers and the army. Not unlike Eisenstein's *Potemkin*, it is an emotional situation in the narrative that enables the workers to unify. This occurs during Kedennek's funeral when a priest accuses the dead rebel of having fought against the established order of God and the state. While the priest continues his speech praising the virtues of the army, an associative montage parallels another scene showing a group of soldiers raping a woman for refusing to reveal the whereabouts of a striker. Ultimately, the priest's speech is violently interrupted by a woman who grabs the Bible from his hands and tears it apart. This signals the beginning of the fishermen's rebellion captured via a series of high angle shots coupled with rapid close-ups showing the two collectives fighting against each other. As one East-German critic commented, these mass sequences rely on symbolic visuals that create an expressionist atmosphere, which becomes meaningful rather than abstract. He attributes this to Piscator's commitment to "the technique of illumination" according to which formal experimentation is not an end in itself but a method committed to the communication of knowledge. [32]

Then again, Piscator's dialectical methodology offers a somehow mechanistic understanding both of the historical process as well as of cinema's ability to employ the dialectical method productively. The reduction of history to a binary conflict between cohesive collectives does not take into account numerous contradictions that create fractions within what one would initially consider allying groups and interests. For all its

oversimplifications, the power of Piscator's dialectical cinematography derives from its ability to be comprehensible by combining stimulating mise-en-scène with clarity of information. Thus, the fundamental advantage of this method is the capacity to use cinema as a means of creating a political public sphere something that dismally sounds far too remote from the present.

RICH DIALECTICS: *MAUSER*

Culture comes only from the losers and from defeat. That produces culture.
The victors have never produced culture.
　　— Heiner Müller

David Harvey has famously suggested that "contradictions have the nasty habit of not being resolved but merely moved around."[33] This is precisely the problem with a mechanistic employment of the dialectic, as it is the case in Piscator's film, in the sense that it does not acknowledge the historically complex issues that defy facile determinisms. Hindsight allows us to understand this by looking at the contradictions between capital and labor in the twentieth and early twenty-first century that can be schematically described as follows: the social crisis following World War I leads to a growing dissatisfaction with the established system. Capitalism is challenged by the growing popularity of Socialism and the organized labor movement; these are in turn counteracted by the rise of fascism and Word War II. Far from resolving any structural contradictions, the end of the war deepens them leading to the Cold War and the division of the world in two opposing camps. The collapse of the socialist alternative in 1989 puts an end to the Cold War but the unrivalled establishment of market capitalism produces policies that both increase world debt and social divisions leading to the economic crisis of 2007. The structural readjustments and bank bail-outs avert temporarily economic collapse but increase social inequality and dissatisfaction manifested in the rise of the extreme right and nationalism across the globe. Thus, the central contradiction between capital and labor persists and keeps on generating other dialectical relationships and contradictions that resist any sense of historical teleology and closure.

As Alexander Kluge and Oscar Negt have aptly explained, history does not advance horizontally, but in curves. When looking at historical relations, the dialectic is not linear, but "damaged" and makes the task of resolving the contradictions impossible.[34] Kluge and Negt emphasize how historical relations point to collectives rather than individual subjects, but even so these collectives are far from being unified and it is this aspect of history that challenges the reduction of the dialectic to clear-cut binaries. Philippe Vincent's adaptation of Heiner Müller's *Mauser* is a good example of a film pointing to rich dialectics that go beyond the paradigm of the Soviet dialectical cinema. Before moving to the film itself a brief discussion of the play and Müller's aesthetic strategy is necessary.

Written in 1970, *Mauser* is a critique of Brecht's *Lehrstück*, *Die Maßnahme* (*Measures Taken*); Brecht's play contended that the individual should subordinate itself to the mass so as to facilitate the Communist revolutionary project that would lead to a new society. In the play, a group of communist agitators represent in front of a Party chorus the killing of their young comrade, an agitator committed to the revolutionary project whose emotional responses to critical situations prevented him from promoting the Party's practical interests. Having become a liability to the Party, his comrades decide to execute him and he acquiesces to his death; the implication is that any revolutionary change presupposes the renunciation of individuality in aid of the collective project of Communism. Brecht's play radically departs from the dramatic traditions of individualism and the collective is at the center of the action. The contradictions between individual consciousness and the collective project of Communism are presented dialectically placing argument against counterargument; in the end the dialectical complexity seems to be resolved through the elimination of individuality by the organized mass. Müller's play takes the *Lehrstück* model as its starting point and similarly subscribes to a collective dramaturgy. The difference is that he deploys this model to explore how alienation and reification have become the norm in the post-revolutionary society. The contradiction between individual and collective consciousness is staged again and the play focuses on the liquidation of two communists, A and B, on account of their inability to promote the Party's interests. Character A becomes consumed by his revolutionary labor and turns into a killing machine. His "labor" consumes him and turns him into an enemy of the revolution, while character B is liquidated for having refused to kill counter-revolutionary peasants.

Müller questions Brecht's rationalized justification of killing as a means of facilitating the Communist project and presents the pressing contradictions within a post-revolutionary society in which violence is not a means to changing the world, but has become routine and an end in itself serving an estranged Party structure. It is this reality that makes the contradiction between individual and collective consciousness resurface. As Benton Jay Komins explains, the play's emphasis on murder as alienated labor indicates "the revolutionary project's reification"[35] implied also by Müller in his notes to the text:

Here, death is a function of life understood as production, a job among others,

organized by the collective and organizing the collective. SO THAT SOMETHING CAN COME SOMETHING MUST GO THE FIRST SHAPE OF HOPE IS FEAR THE FIRST MANIFESTATION OF THE NEW IS TERROR.[36]

The play attends to the historical complexities of the GDR and the State Socialism of the time and ruminates on the conflict between the promises of the Communist project and its practical materialization. In this context, Müller's dialectic does not produce synthesis but shows how the socialist alternative has failed to harness the contradictions of history. Yet for all its productive critique, Müller's approach is decidedly dialectical as evidenced by his radical departure from dramatic individualism generated by his recourse to anonymous characters who stand for broader collective forces. Robert Buch has brilliantly captured the play's dialectical complexity and relevance to the present arguing that, it functions as "as an experiment and a sort of training for those committed to the socialist utopia, an opportunity to "work through," to embrace, and to brace themselves against, the inevitable fallout of violence."[37] I would also add that the Marxist understanding of history as the collision of collective interests is retained, but following Kluge's and Negt's abovementioned comment, the dialectic is "damaged" because it does not subscribe to historical linearity. As David Barnett explains, Müller was part of a post-Brechtian theater tradition in the GDR that embraced Brecht's critique of dramatic individualism and naïve representationalism, but was cautious at the same time of any facile deductions deriving from the canonical application of the Brechtian dialectic.[38] Instead, Müller's commitment to a rich dialectics that reveals how the nightmare of history has multiplied its contradictions without harnessing them is encapsulated in his following statement: "Marx

didn't devise a system, on the contrary, he worked on negation, on a critique of the existing state of affairs. Consequently, he was open to new realities in principle."[39] The binary conflict between capital and labor has given rise to various other conflicts within the very society that purports to have solved them. Yet labor relations figure importantly in the play given that A and B are both executed for not being able to successfully conduct the Party labor; the first one is consumed by his task and, as the Chorus tells him, "your hand became one with the revolver and you became one with the work", and B refuses to conduct the labor (read murder) ordered by the Party officials. Alienated labor is therefore not the sole "privilege" of capitalism and Müller's dialectical negation serves precisely the purpose of opening the dialectic to new possibilities.

Mauser is a convoluted text whose collective dramaturgy and dramatic openness make its staging a challenge. In the remainder of this section, I want to explore the ways Philippe Vincent has visualized the text's dialectical openness on screen. To begin with, it is important to note that the play itself has a cinematic quality and indeed scholars have paralleled the non-linear structure of Müller's writing, its problematization of individuality, and its employment of cinematic cutting, to audio-visual objects, such as films, advertisements and video-clips.[40] The film originates from a performance given by the Scènes Company in Vénissieux. The performance of the play was filmed in the spirit of live television broadcast so as to enable the audience to have a sort of participation analogous to the *Lehrstück* format of suspending the division between actors and spectators. Vincent explains that the principle of the film's shooting resembles that of a television broadcast where the viewers are in the viewpoint of the camera. To this one should add that the unity of the theatrical space and the black and white cinematography add a claustrophobic tension that influences the audience's reactions as captured within the film.[41] Yet despite its origins in a theater production, the final result relies very much on a montage cinematic aesthetic. The camera fragments the diegetic space by a series of Dreyeresque close-ups that capture members of the Chorus and character A while delivering the lines. Furthermore, expressionistic shot transitions are created through the constant alteration between light and darkness, whereas different shots are superimposed upon each other placing the collective Chorus in opposition to character A. One of the film's most radical solutions is the representation of character B using the device of a film within a film, through a video-wall stage backdrop. A group of musicians are also part of the visible Chorus playing the organ, piano and saxophone and the combination of

images and sounds creates uncanny montage effects and adds a monotonic dimension both to the auditory track, but also to the performance of the actors reducing them to text-deliverers.

The film's fragmented narrative configurations along with Müller's convoluted text, which is devoid of dramaturgical coherence, radically question the notion of individuality and force us to think in terms of collectives. Yet unlike *The Revolt of the Fishermen*, the visualized collectives are far from being cohesive and this is made manifest through the film's formal complexity and style. The core Party Chorus consists of three women dressed uniformly, who take turns in enunciating/reading the Party lines, and seven female students, who at times repeat those Party lines as a song, while they also double or repeat A's lines and thus fragment the character. The mise-en-scéne intentionally resembles a court and the audience's seats are circularly arranged making the spectators look as part of the broader Party apparatus. This choice transmits a sense of Orwellian surveillance.

In the film's opening we get to see the Chorus of the seven students entering and positioning themselves on the right side of the stage as if they are the court's jury. Then, each of the women that form the main Party Chorus enter, face A, and charge him with insubordination. This is repeated until each one of them is seated at the center of the stage. As A faces the Party functionaries the following stichomythia ensues:

A: I killed for the revolution.
CHORUS: Die for it.
A: I made a mistake.
CHORUS: You are the mistake.
A: I am human.
CHORUS: What is that?

In the course of this exchange, the camera cuts back and forth between the central *locus dramaticus* focusing on A and the Party functionaries, and the Chorus of the seven students who sing the charges pressed upon A. This is followed by a series of close-ups of each of the Chorus members while singing "knowing the daily bread of the revolution, in the city Vitebsk as in other cities, is the death of its enemies, knowing we must yet tear out the grass to keep it green."

These close-ups and the song interrupt the stichomythic exchange between A and the three core Party members. Interestingly, unlike the epic shots of the Soviet dialectical cinema that privilege a group cinematography of the heroic masses prefiguring optimistically the emergence of Socialism, here the fragmentation of the Chorus points to the very unresolved contradictions within the existing socialist states of the time. Thus, this resort to the close-up is not to be confused as a return to the narrative categories of individuality, given that the succession of the close-ups coupled with the recited texts/songs forcefully undermine the idea of subjectivity outside the collective. It is rather a fragmented visualization of the collective that points to its lack of cohesion, or to use a Marxist term its alienation, since the collective is merely reduced to the rigid repetition of Party dogmas.

Vincent's formal solutions to the screen adaptation of the play are in line with Müller's vision for a collective dramaturgy that confounds the individuality of the performers. As he says, "experiences can only be passed on collectively; training the (individual) faculty to gain experiences is one function of enactment."[42] The film's formal features draw on the closed, or chamber drama aesthetic with the difference being that this spatial restriction does not operate as a means of emphasizing the reactions of the individuals within a historical backdrop; instead history takes center stage, since this restricted space develops into a site in which the actors become the mouthpieces of historical memory staging the collective experience of the failure of Socialism to turn into a tangible alternative that can overcome the contradictions between labor and capital. The reification of revolutionary labor is forcefully visualized in a passage when A faces B, the Party rebel who withdraws from his labor and reacts to the Party's command to murder some counter-revolutionary peasants. Through a combination of choreographic camera movements and stylized performances on the part of the Chorus, A is encircled by the Party members who urge him compellingly to kill the enemy of the Revolution. In the shot that comes immediately after this one, a video projection within the film captures B who explains his political disobedience. He refuses to kill the peasants because they are enemies of the revolution out of ignorance. Suddenly, a male Party member enters the stage, orders A to complete the task of killing B, the traitor of the revolutionary cause, and hands him a gun. A points the gun to the video-wall which screened B's disobedience; B offers a counterargument wondering what is the point of the Revolution when one has to kill those who are supposed to benefit from it. In the following sequence, A recollects on

how he went on a killing frenzy against the enemies of the Revolution. Importantly, the actor impersonating him points his gun towards the video-wall which screens his lines that are ultimately read mechanically by him:

> One morning in the city Vitebsk
>
> With the voice of the Party in the sound of battle
>
> To dispense death to its enemies
>
> So that killing will cease,
>
> and I spoke the command
>
> On this morning as on the first morning
>
> DEATH TO THE ENEMIES OF THE REVOLUTION
>
> And dispensed death, but my voice
>
> Spoke the command like not my voice and my hand

The motif of reading the lines from the screen underlines the reification of revolutionary labor and the transformation of the Party "worker" to a killing appendage. Killing becomes production for the sake of production and the reified revolutionary project alienates those who were supposed to benefit from the Communism. The paradox of production as an end in itself recalls Marx's critique of capitalism in *Grundrisse*, where he argues that one of the causes of alienation is that production exists for its own sake without being in service of the social beings from which it emanates.[43] *Mauser*'s parallel of revolutionary murder as alienated labor astutely evokes Socialism's failure to overcome the contradictions of capitalism.

The dialectic here does not proceed linearly — as in *The Revolt of the Fishermen* — aiming to complete the Enlightenment project; it is rather a rich dialectic that forces us to rethink past, present, and future at once and seek solutions to the present historical impasse. Müller has repeatedly explained that his aim is to use metaphors that bring the historical past, present, and future together so as to produce a conversation between different historical periods and the ways they relate to each other.[44] This Benjaminian, or "damaged" dialectic as per Kluge and Negt is heightened by Müller's radical diminishing of individuality. As mentioned earlier, for Kluge and Negt, historical relations cannot be understood in terms of subjects but as collective experiences. Whereas the ancient Greek model of the dialectic was the outcome of dialogic exchanges, "grammatical dialectic", the

dialectics of history is much more complex. Kluge's and Negt's application of the term grammatical dialectic suggests that the dialectical method's origins in ancient Greece had the form of dialogical exchanges that produced a sense of linearity that is hard to apply to complex historical relations, whose chief characteristic is non-linearity and the production of multifaceted rather than binary relationships.

Its application to historical relations, which are not based on two individuals talking,

renders it ungrammatical. Like celestial bodies, dialectical gravitational relations reciprocally warp one another. This is how dents and "damaged" dialectics develop. It is particularly difficult to straighten out.[45]

It merits to be noted that for Kluge and Negt, this form of damaged/multidimensional dialectics is not at odds with the spirit of Marxism. Unlike Hegel's binary dialectics e.g. master/servant, Kluge and Negt suggest that Marxist dialectics is intricate and "multipolar" given that it relies on "unsymmetrical" opposites (e.g., relations of production, distribution and consumption) that do not necessarily form an organic whole; at times they run incessantly counter to each other, "blocking points of contact without ever thereby arresting the dialectical movement between them."[46]

In Müller's work, who was also a regular interlocutor of Kluge, this "damaged" dialectics differentiates his collective dramaturgy from the epic dramaturgy of Piscator and the Soviets. For as I discussed in the previous section, Piscator's dramaturgical recourse to cohesive collectives setting argument against counter-argument is still in line with the dialogic principle of the dialectic, the difference being that the masses have replaced the private subjects. In Müller's post-apocalyptic landscape, where the dream of Socialism has not managed to complete its historical mission, the dialectic proceeds in such a way that dramatic dialogue (grammatical dialectic) is almost impossible as made manifest in Vincent's adaptation, in which the characters are turned to mouthpieces of collective experiences. This is precisely the reason why characters are nameless trying to make sense of the historical processes that have thrown past certainties into doubt.

Mauser is an exemplar of a hybrid film or as André Bazin would call it "impure cinema", namely a type of cinema that consciously foregrounds its borrowings from other artistic media such as literature and film.[47] Contra notions of cinematic "purity", Bazin

suggested that cinema's maturity as an institution leads it to a more self-conscious borrowing from other art forms and numerous cinematic innovations are to be attributed to this intermedial conversation. Commenting on Bazin's point, Philip Rosen appositely remarks that the upshot of this point is that "the non-cinematic" is an important part of film history and aesthetics.[48] Yet this hybridization as evidenced in such a politically loaded film as *Mauser*, forces us also to address questions of cinema and politics. In a historical period that cinema has migrated to mobile phone devices, laptops, tablets, and private home theaters, the question that arises is whether the medium has still the capacity to build an oppositional public sphere given that it has stopped being considered a collective event, that is, a group of people sharing an experience in a dark theatre.[49] Film experience has turned to a privatized one, since the past spectator of the darkened theatre, who was part of an anonymous collective, has been replaced by the screen user, who streams or downloads films, shifting continually from screens that produce different types of stimuli and prohibit spectatorial concentration. This privatization of experience runs the risk of de-radicalizing even the most radical objects, given that political aesthetics seems eminently pointless without a collective (rather than an atomized) public sphere that can initiate collective responses, arguments and most importantly social conflicts. In Eisenstein's years, even the attempts to distribute *Potemkin* in Western Europe were already political events that managed to establish oppositional communities, something entirely irrelevant in the present media landscape. Vincent's solution is to consciously incorporate the public (the theatre spectators) in his screen adaptation of *Mauser* and obviously a great hindrance is the fact that the film spectator witnesses a collective experience from which she is absent. For all its contradictions, Vincent's choice is a testament to the need to explore new ways, not only of thinking about the world dialectically, but also of engaging a public in these dialectical meditations. It is thus not surprising that *Mauser*'s aesthetic has curious echoes of the early cinematic experience not only in terms of its undramatic montage aesthetic, which aligns a series of independent tableaux that have the form of early cinema attractions, but also as regards its attempt to redeem the theatrical origins of the medium, its capacity to develop a space where the collectives merge and debate. What an ironic reversal: Piscator thought that theater could be politicized and rejuvenated by resorting to the spectacular effects of the cinema, while presently cinema's re-politicization is contingent on its reclaiming of the theatrical, and by

the theatrical, I mean the foundational aspect of the theatre, which is its capacity to actualize a community.

The metaphor of the theater as a locus where unexpected and non-unitary formations are being established is a productive way of clarifying this. Alain Badiou, for instance, in his *Inaesthetics* muses on the theater's capacity to produce a collective experience, whose character can be political so long as it does not address a homogeneous public. The core of his argument is that the theater public can only have a connection to society when it replicates the divisions, inconsistencies and, chances, which characterize the social sphere. As he says, "Only a generic public. a chance public. is worth anything at all."[50] The "chance public" defended by Badiou is a public whose divisions and potential clashes can produce a threat to the established reality principle. Yet the public, is a sine-qua-non of any aesthetic desire to address issues on a collective scale. After all, cinema in its early days was considered a threat to the social order, precisely because of its ability to bring people from antithetical social strata, who would rarely encounter each other in a closed space.

By way of conclusion, Piscator's employment of the binary dialectics, which draws on the Soviet cinema tradition, was a historically relevant way of identifying the collective and mass aspect of complex social phenomena. Yet it has very little connection with the present, precisely because its core interest was the formation of a homogeneous public, whose ability to learn to think dialectically would allow it to construct a concrete community that would hopefully counteract the existing order. Yet, in the present globalized environment where the fragmentation of social experience has taken center stage and the formation of coherent social collectives is hindered by complex class subdivisions, and labor insecurity, the ability to think dialectically is a necessary step in cinema's attempt to address the political. Then again, following Vincent's, adaptation of Müller's text, this requires an emphasis on the multidimensional aspects of the dialectic and the historical and social relations that fail to produce harmonious wholes. This is precisely what Vincent's film aspires to achieve by focusing on all these historical contradictions that have obfuscated past historical certainties and utopias. The question that remains is whether this type of dialectical cinema can have practical utility, that is, tangible political effects. I would venture to assert that the use value of such a cinema lies in its ability to instigate debate, a type of debate that might help us expose the

contradictions of the present and prohibit the reduction of the cinematic experience to another harmless, individualized visual consumption.

1. Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 17.

2. D. N. Rodowick, *Elegy for Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 2014), 245.

3. See for example Barthes' review of Elia Kazan's *On The Waterfront*, Philip Watts, Roland Barthes' Cinema (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 14-5. Even Alain Badiou in his early attempts on film criticism upheld a similar method in his outright panning of what he called "revisionist films" like Costas Gavras' *Z* (1969). See Alain Badiou, *Cinema* trans. Susan Spitzer (Cambridge: Polity: 2013), 10-11.

4. See Mark Fischer's astute discussion of Mike Judge's *Office Space* (1999) in his book *Capitalist Realism: Is There no Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009), 39-40.

5. See for example Lúcia Nagib's book *World Cinema and the Ethics of Realism* (New York: Continuum, 2011). A fascinating book in some respects that is sadly apolitical in its discussion of some key films from the World Cinema canon, downplaying questions of politics, and history in favour of ethics.

6. Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2009), 421.

7. See Tyrus Miller, *Modernism and the Frankfurt School* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 7-9.

8. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. and ed. by George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 35.

9. *Ibid.*, 384.

10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 107.

11. Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, trans. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 458.

12. Sergei Eisenstein, *Mise en Jeu and Mise en Geste* (Montréal: Caboose, 2014), 27.

13. *Ibid.*, 27.

14. Frank Kessler, *Mise en Scène* (Montréal: Caboose, 2014), 41.

15. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Notes on Fine Art Vol. 2*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1935] 1975), 1081.

16. Erwin Piscator, *The Political Theatre* trans. Hugh Rorrison (London: Methuen, 1980), 25.

17. *Ibid.*, 93.

18. *Ibid.*, 22.

19. Béla Balázs, *Early Film Theory*, ed. Erica Carter, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 144.

20. Erwin Piscator, "Sound Film Friend and Foe", in *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory 1907-1933*, ed. Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan (Oakland: California University Press, 2016), 567-9, here 569.

21. Lotte H. Eisner, *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), 224.

22. Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 7-8.

23. *Ibid.*, 8.

24. See John Willett, *The Theatre of Erwin Piscator: Half a Century of Politics in the Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1978), 129.

25. Cited in Judith Malina, *The Piscator Notebook* (London, New York: Routledge, 1012), 9.

26. Karl Korsch, *Karl Marx* (Boston, Leiden: Brill, 2016), 135.

27. Eisner, *The Haunted Screen*, 51.

28. Jacques Aumont, *Montage* (Montréal: Caboose, 2013), 44.

29. See Eisenstein, *Film Form Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, 1977), 49. It needs to be stressed that Piscator was heavily influenced by Eisenstein. John Willett reports that between 1926-7 he was involved in getting a German distribution of *Bronenosets Potyomkin* (*Battleship Potemkin*, 1925). All the same, C.D. Innes identifies Potemkin's impact in many of Piscator's theater productions. Both scholars, however, acknowledge that he had numerous reservations against Eisenstein. He thought that he was more committed to enthusing the audience rather than to clarity. See *The Theatre of Erwin Piscator*, 57, 186; see Piscator, *Political Theatre: The Development of Modern German Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 30, 187.

30. Eisner, *The Haunted Screen*, 223.

31. In an illuminating passage, Fredric Jameson explains how class relations are "binary ones" and tend to understand other social relationships in binary terms. See, Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*, 395.

32. Anon, "Der Aufstand der Fischer", *Film-Blätter* 63, Stattliches Filmarchiv der DDR, 36. Accessed through the Brecht Archiv, Berlin.

33. David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (London: Profile Books, 2014), 19-20.

34. Alexander Kluge and Oscar Negt, *History and Obstinacy*, trans. Richard Langston et al. (New York: Zone Books, 2014), 431.

35. Benton Jay Komins, "Rewriting, Violence , and Theater: Bertolt Brecht's The Measures Taken and Heiner Müller's Mauser", *The Comparatist* 26 (2002), 99-119, here 112.

36. Heiner Müller, *Mauser*, trans. Helen Fehervary and Marc D. Silberman, *Ne German Critique* 8 (1976), 122-149, here 149. Capitals in the original.

37. Robert Buch, *The Pathos of the Real: On the Aesthetics of Violence in the Twentieth Century* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), 137.

38. David Barnett, "Dialectics and the Brechtian Tradition", *Performance Research* 21:3 (2016), 6-15, here 14.

39. *Ibid.*, 14.

40. Joachim Fiebach, "Resisting Simulation: Heiner Müller's Paradoxical Approach to Theater and Audiovisual Media since the 1970s", *New German Critique* 73 (1998), 81-94, here 86.

41. Philippe Vincent, "Über Mauser", *Brecht Plus Minus Film* ed. Thomas Martin and Erdmut Wizisla (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2003), 156-158, here 157.

42. Müller, *Mauser*, 149.

43. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 149.

44. See Alexander Kluge and Heiner Müller, "Heiner Müller on Legal Questions", https://kluge.library.cornell.edu/conversations/mueller/film/111/transcript, last accessed 12 Oct. 2016.

45. Kluge and Negt, *History and Obstinacy*, 431.

46. *Ibid.*, 260.

47. See André Bazin, "In Defence of Mixed Cinema", in *What is Cinema? I*, ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: California University Press, 1971), 53-75.

48. Philip Rosen, "From Impurity to Historicity", in *Impure Cinema: Intermedial and Intercultural Approaches to Film* ed. Anne Jerslev and Lucia Nagib (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 3-20, here 11.

49. For more on this see Francesco Casetti's brilliant book, *The Lumière Galaxy Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

50. Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, trans. Alberto Toscano (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 74.

FROM *BARTON FINK* TO *HAIL, CAESAR!*:
HOLLYWOOD'S GHOSTS OF MARXIST PAST

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Barton Fink and *Hail, Caesar!* take place in the distant past, the former in 1942 and the latter in 1951. In both films, Hollywood is portrayed not as a breezy dream factory, but as a toxic environment where filmmakers are locked into a perpetual battle with studio tycoons — and capitalism itself. It is a space where art is molded and even censored by the interests of marketization and profiteering. In short, these films depict the tumultuous marriage between art and business. They are cautionary tales about ghosts — or nightmares rather — of Hollywood's Marxist past. To discuss Marxist dimensions of this unique pair of films in the Coen brothers' oeuvre we explore four questions, including: (1) What is the social condition (depicted in these films)? (2) What is an alternative (to this condition)? (3) How do people struggle to challenge this system? And (4) What is the outcome (of their actions)? While the two films may be enjoyed as comedies they may also be enjoyed as sharp social criticism — and their critique is not only relevant for understanding the Hollywood of yesteryear, it is also relevant for today.

WHAT IS THE SOCIAL CONDITION?

Barton Fink and *Hail, Caesar!* depict Hollywood as an unhealthy capitalist landscape. It is a studio system dominated by elitism, where artists are seen and treated as chattel. It is a marketplace where profiteering runs rampant, the image of stars is one of illusion and artists are commodified and dehumanized. In short, it is a community fueled by capitalism.

Within this Hollywood, power rests in the hands of a select few wealthy men who own the major studios — and they see films as a product. Jack Lipnik, the head of Capital Pictures (where Barton is hired as a salaried writer) has all the power of a king and the temperament of a spoiled child. He issues commands and barks out threats at a breakneck

speed to instill fear and humiliation in those around him. When studio gofer Lou annoys Lipnik by questioning Barton, Lipnik explodes: "Get down on your knees, you sonofabitch! Get down on your knees and kiss this man's feet!"[1] Terrified of losing his job, Lou complies. After all, Lipnik hires and fires people with the casual care of picking lint off one's jacket. In the penultimate scene of the film, the tycoon takes to wearing an elaborate colonel's uniform — which only makes him look like a dictator. Dismissing Barton from his office, he chides "Now get lost. We've got a war on."[2]

Hail, Caesar! depicts a similar system of capitalist despotism. Throughout the film, studio owner Mr. Schenk exists as a mysterious God-like voice on the telephone, persistently conveying orders from his office in New York to his prince regent — the ever loyal yet overworked fixer Eddie Mannix. Like Lipnik, Schenk makes all the big decisions, and commands complete obedience. The conversation between Schenk and Mannix on the idea of casting ex-rodeo star Hobie Doyle in a "serious" drama illustrates Schenk's power. Initially, Mannix asks his superior: "Do you really think so? After all he's – he's a dust actor!"[3] Although we only hear Mannix's side of the conversation it is quite clear that Schenk persists with his idea. When Mannix realizes that he cannot sway his boss he soon shifts from mild disagreement to full support. In closing the conversation, he assures his boss: "Hobie is a very promising idea."[4] In a system where power is held by elite studio tycoons, employees are like royal subjects who dare not challenge their king.

In the studio system portrayed in the Coen brothers' two films, workers are seen and treated as chattel to be owned, traded, or even loaned out from one studio to another. From members of a crew to writers to directors to actors, these artists are kept like property, and they are told *what* to create, *when* to create, and sometimes even *how* to create. When tasking Barton to write a wrestling picture, Lipnik says: "OK, the hell with the story. Wallace Beery is a wrestler. I wanna know his hopes, his dreams. Naturally, he'll have to get mixed up with a bad element. And a romantic interest. You know the drill."[5] For Lipnik filmmaking is exactly that — a drill. And Audrey — who shadow writes for the burned-out novelist, W. P. Mayhew — concurs. When offering advice, she tells Barton: "Look it's really just a formula. You don't have to type your soul into it. We'll invent some names and a new setting. I'll help you and it won't take any time at all."[6]

Yet filmmaking in the studio system is also a matter of product, supply, and demand — and the films that artists collectively create, the fruits of their labor, belong to the studio. As Herman — the spokesperson for the Communist "study group" in *Hail, Caesar!*

— tells Baird Whitlock (the hunky yet naïve abducted star): "All of us here are writers. The pictures originated with us, they're our ideas, but they're owned by the studio. I'm not saying only writers are being exploited — I mean, look at yourself, Baird."[7] Summing up the unfairness of the situation, Herman informs his abductee: "just because the studio owns the means of production, why should it be able to take the money – our money, the value created by our labor — and dole out what it pleases? That's not right."[8] Ironically, Lipnik agrees with Herman's point. When chiding Lou about his treatment of Barton, Lipnik yells: "This man creates for a living! He puts the food on your table and on mine!"[9] Of course, while Lipnik may *agree* with Hermon's idea that doesn't mean he shares very much of his own wealth. In short, this is a world where great wealth is accumulated but little is shared.

Capital shapes everything across this Hollywood landscape. It makes the studio boss a powerful elite. Projected profit margins dictate which scripts get commissioned, which get filmed, and which languish on the shelf. Potential profitability prompts studios to create, prop up, and maintain the images of stars. In fact, a star's image forms a key part of a studio's money-making efforts. After all, a film's ability to attract and sustain a box office audience week-in and week-out depends on the image of its stars.

Because image is so crucial in this landscape, studio fixer Eddie Mannix spends the bulk of this time and energy *not* on solving artistic challenges but rather on quashing potential scandals. At the crack of dawn, he begins his busy day by bribing two police officers who raid a studio where a famous (and rather naïve) actress is posing for illicit photographs. Later in the day he convinces an unwed expecting actress to engage in one of two possible cover up schemes: (1) marry a "temporary" husband, have the child and then divorce the "temporary" husband, or (2) go "into hiding" for a while, have the baby, give the baby up for adoption, then adopt the baby. When soothing the actress, Mannix reasons: "The marriage doesn't have to last forever. But DeeAnna, having a child without a father would present a public relations problem for the studio. The aquatic pictures do very nicely for us … And it's a tribute to you: the public loves you because they know how innocent you are."[10] Of course, DeeAnna isn't innocent at all. Later in the film, Hobie Doyle is told *who* to date as well as *when* and *where* to date. Within this system Hollywood stars become objects to be owned, molded, polished, and ordered around. For an actor, it is a dehumanizing and perhaps depressing proposition.

In the Hollywood of *Barton Fink* and *Hail, Caesar!* people are objectified and commodified — as though they are valuable "tools" to be manipulated. The studio is a sort of factory and the films produced in this system are not the personal vision of an artist, but rather the hodgepodge product of an assembly line. Of course, such a system subdues the artist's voice. It is a mechanical process where stories are written and rewritten by a long line of writers — and each task is broken down into precise steps. A film script may well be developed by multiple "specialist" writers who (re)write specific scenes — as though Frederick Winslow Taylor's principles of scientific management were applied to creative writing.[11]

Studio boss Lipnik eludes to this mechanized creative process numerous times in his brief conversations with Barton. When the young writer first enters Lipnik's lavish office, the mogul tells the writer: "The important thing is we all want it [your script] to have that Barton Fink feeling … Seriously, Bart, I like you. We're off to a good start. Dammit, if all our writers were like you I wouldn't have to get so godamn involved. I'd like to see something by the end of the week."[12] Unfortunately for Barton, the script he later submits displeases Lipnik, and the studio boss peppers his response with expletives, and homophobic slurs: "We don't put Wallace Beery in some fruity movie about suffering."[13] When Barton informs his boss that he was trying to show something about the human condition, Lipnik explodes: "You arrogant sonofabitch! You think you're the only writer who can give me that Barton Fink feeling?! I got twenty writers under contract that I can ask for a Fink-type thing from."[14] In effect, Lipnik is telling Barton that (1) he failed as an artist and employee because he didn't follow orders, and (2) he is replaceable.

Barton does not have a voice as an artist. His voice is muffled by the more powerful interests of his employer, and Lipnik's interests are based on profitability, not artistic quality. It is a Hollywood where control over artists is tight. And although *Hail, Caesar!* is set nearly a decade later, the "study group" of writers live in the same world. The clique of writers would love to address social issues of classism, poverty, and oppression in their film scripts — but such direct "Marxist" messaging would never get past the censorship and surveillance of Hollywood's lengthy, top-down creative process. So, they must limit themselves to increasingly obscure social messages.

In the Hollywood portrayed in *Barton Fink* and *Hail, Caesar!* workers are treated unfairly and are overpowered — even those who are obedient. Studio fixer Eddie Mannix is content with his pay, his position as a middle manager, and the status his role affords

him. He has a nice home. Yet Mannix's never-ending work of solving crisis after crisis takes him out of his home at all hours. He is a caring but absent father. Mannix clearly *tries* to be a part of the lives of his wife and children but his constant work takes him away — in body *and* mind. After promising to call his son's baseball coach, for instance, Mannix completely forgets. Chastising himself for forgetting, he later says to his wife: "Gosh, I never called the coach! Eddie played shortstop?"[15] It is ironic that a man with a job and tremendous skills in "fixing" things at the studio does not have the time or energy to fix things for his own family. Although Mannix is happy to continue his tiring work for studio boss, Mr. Schenk, he and his family are paying a great personal price.

In Boal's view, "Capitalism is fundamentally immoral because the search for profit, which is its essence, is incompatible with its official morality, which preaches superior human values, justice, etc."[16] The Hollywood we see in *Barton Fink* and *Hail, Caesar!* demonstrates this sort of unhealthy capitalist social condition. Clearly, the controlling, hyper-competitive system that dominates the landscape of these films is a toxic one. Yet the question remains: What is the alternative?

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE?

In the previous segment, we surveyed the Hollywood landscape presented in *Barton Fink* and *Hail, Caesar!* As we have seen, it is a market economy where capital is power and power is held by an elite few. Moreover, the few who hold power base their decisions on economics rather than artistic quality or social good. Exhibiting an extreme case of Orwellian doublethink, mogul Lipnik tells Barton Fink to write a wrestling story then assures him: "Now people're gonna tell you, wrestling, Wallace Beery, it's a B picture. You tell them, bullshit. We don't make B pictures at Capital."[17] Somehow, Lipnik believes (or perhaps *wants* to believe) that every film venture of his studio has artistic value.

Yet this is a Hollywood of image and profit over substance. It is the sort of place would ex-rodeo star Hobie Doyle gets thrown into a "serious" drama directed by the Laurence Laurentz. The sole reason for this is the actor's potential at the box office. When Laurentz finds out he is saddled with Hobie he pleads: "But this is drama, Mannix — real drama, an adaption of a Broadway smash! It requires the skills of a skilled thespian, not a rodeo clown. I begged you for Lunt."[18] What Laurentz doesn't realize is that Mannix

agrees with him but has strict orders from the head of the studio. In this social landscape, artists are not free to create what they want, and they are treated as chattel by their employers (or "owners"). It is not the sort of dynamic that is conductive to art.

Art, in a Marxist dynamic, is designed to serve a social purpose. As Freedland summarizes: "One of the classic conceptions attributed to Marx was that it's not only important to understand the world, you must also change it."[19] In the capitalist system — like the one that dominates *Barton Fink* and *Hail, Caesar!* — art is designed for profit. Consequently, the message of the films produced by Capital Pictures is immaterial — providing there even is one. In a capitalist system films are produced to make money. This line of thinking prompts Lipnik to recruit Barton to write a wrestling picture.[20] After the star Baird Whitlock is converted to Marxism, he tells Mannix: "I mean, we might tell ourselves we're 'creating' something of artistic value, that there's some kina spiritual dimension to the picture business, but what it is, is this fat cat Nick Schenk out in New York running a factory that makes these lollypops."[21]

In Marx' view, consciousness is key, and we need to wake "it from its dream about itself, in explaining to it the meaning of its own actions"[22] From such a perspective, people would create art to serve a larger social purpose. Here, stories would depict the human condition without offering any sense of resolution at their conclusion. So, unlike Aristotelian drama — which offers audiences a spectacle and cathartic experience (where emotions are always purged) — Marxists films would end without any sense of resolving the larger issues that hound the setting and characters of the story. As Boal notes: "Aristotle formulated a very powerful purgative system, the objective of which is to eliminate all that is not commonly accepted, including the revolution, before it takes place. His system appears in disguised form on television, in the movies, in the circus, in the theaters. It appears in many and varied shapes and media. But it's essence does not change: it is designed to bridle the individual, to adjust him to what pre-exists."[23]

When artists take a Marxist approach, their art strives to foster a deeper sense of awareness of the social landscape. After all, in an oppressive world there is no happy purging of emotions. There is only (1) oppression, (2) the need to raise awareness, and (3) the need to foster change. And consciousness is key. Those who *are* aware of the social condition, in Marx's view, have a responsibility "to bring [wider] consciousness to full clarity."[24] As such, within a Marxist dynamic, to use the words of Baird Whitlock, films should not be "lollypops" for the masses.

While Barton Fink never describes himself as a Marxist, he could be described as a "fellow traveler." In America, a "fellow traveler" was someone who upheld the values of Marxism and acted as such — without labeling him/herself as a Marxist.[25] As Barton proudly informs Charlie: "Strange as it may seem, Charlie, I guess I write about people like you. The average working stiff. The common man."[26] He later elaborates: "There's a few people in New York — hopefully our numbers are growing — who feel we have an opportunity now to forge something real out of everyday experience, create a theater for the masses that's based on a few simple truths."[27] Criticizing "high theater," Barton asks: "Who cares about the Fifth Earl of Bastrop and Lady Higginbottom and — and — and who killed Nigel Grinch-Gibbons?"[28] Instead of "high theater," he writes about the everyday struggles of working class people, such as Lil and Maury, the fishmonger protagonists of his hit play *'Bare Ruined Choirs*. When in Hollywood Barton takes residence in a cheap hotel rather than a lavish one, and he endeavors to write a humane story about a wrestler who is fighting to survive.

Unlike Barton, the writers in *Hail, Caesar!* identify themselves as Marxists and they believe that they have a responsibility to not only raise awareness about oppression — but to communicate Marxist messages in their scripts. Some of the writers speak directly about this when conversing with their abducted star. As Herman tells Baird: "Now, until quite recently … We concentrated on getting Communist content into motion pictures."[29] These writers hold that films should be designed to (1) depict issues classism and oppression, and (2) shed light on the system that fosters those social ills. While one might argue that these writers that are constricting themselves by focusing on social messaging, they might counter that capitalist art itself is constricted by the drive to create something that is profitable.[30]

From a Marxist perspective, artists should be free to bring social meaning into their work — and that includes critiquing the economic system (and oppressive nature) of society. Yet in the Hollywood that Barton and the "study group" inhabit, screenwriters are not free to do so. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Dias Committee investigated possible Marxist content in film and theater. Tim Robbins explores this period in depicting the demise of the Federal Theater Project in his 1999 film, *Cradle Will Rock*.[31] Although Barton was not involved in the Federal Theater Project he was linked to another movement. In the words of Ethan Coen, he was: "a serious playwright, honest, politically engaged, and rather naïve. It seemed natural that he came from Group Theater and the

thirties."[32] While Marxism was not an issue during the US-Soviet alliance of WWII, by the late 1940s and early 1950s — after the Soviet Union had once again become an enemy — being a Communist became blemish, something to be ferreted out and eradicated.[33] And it was at that point that the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) formed and sent out its infamous "pink slips," calling on suspected Marxists to testify at their hearings. Ironically, being a Marxist or Communist was never illegal in the US — it just *felt* illegal.[34]

Marxism is presented as an alternative to the unhealthy social condition that permeates *Barton Fink* and *Hail, Caesar!* In this alternative (1) art would *not* be created for profit but rather to say something about social justice, (2) artists would be free to speak about oppression in their art, (3) theatre would democratize rather than perpetuate social inequities, and (4) artists would be freed from their status as chattel.

HOW DO PEOPLE STRUGGLE TO CHALLENGE THE SYSTEM?

How can the writers in *Barton Fink* and *Hail, Caesar!* challenge the system that fuels Hollywood's oppressive landscape? To address the problematic social condition that pervades the two films, a dramatist needs to do three things, namely: (1) understand the condition, (2) take action, and (3) foster change. After all, as Boal notes: "The theater is a weapon, and it is the people who should wield it."[35]

Yet to use the theater as a weapon, the writer needs to be aware of the social condition, and "see" the larger system for what it is. Oppression is not a phenomenon of nature — it is a system, and both Barton and the "study group" understand this. As Barton cuttingly tells one of his New York investors after the success of his play's opening: "I'm glad it'll do well for you, Derek."[36] In *Hail, Caesar!* Professor Marcuse explains to Baird: "Our understanding of the true workings of history gives us access to the levers of power. Your studio, for instance, is a pure instrument of capitalism."[37] Of course, for one to develop a deep understanding of the social condition, one needs to dialogue with others.

Dialogue, in Freire's view, "is the encounter between men, mediated by the world in order to name the world […] [it] is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized."[38] Time and time again, Barton fails to dialogue with others. Overwhelmed

by Lipnik's brusque demeanor Barton barely speaks whenever the two meet. At his hotel Barton leads a solitary life, typing and daydreaming. Although he meets his neighbor — door to door salesman, Charlie Meadows (later revealed to be the murderer Karl Mundt) — their conversations are one-sided. Simply put, Barton prefers to spout his own ideas about trailblazing a new "theatre of the common man" to conversation. When Charlie offers to share some of his own life stories, Barton cuts him off, lecturing: "And that's the point, that we all have stories. The hopes and dreams of the common man are as noble as those of any king. It's the stuff of life — why shouldn't it be the stuff of theater? Goddamnit, why should that be a hard pill to swallow? Don't call it *new* theater, Charlie; call it *real* theater."[39]

The writers in *Hail, Caesar!* fare better than Barton in this regard. They form a group and have regular conversations. Because of the threatening nature of the Red Scare, they meet in secret — but they *do* meet and they *do* dialogue. They have their regular meetings and fiercely stick together. Of course, in the hostile climate of McCarthyism, (where the FBI surveil real and suspected Communists), these Marxist writers are prudent to meet in secret. While the "study group" dialogues in a rather insular way they are open to change. When the group is joined by the grandfatherly Professor Marcuse (a de facto leader of sorts), they shift their tactics from pure subversion (through their writing), to direct action. As Herman tells Baird: "Dr. Marcuse came down from Stanford, joined the study group. And started teaching us about direct action. Praxis. Action."[40] Following Marcuse's advice, the group kidnaps and ransoms studio star Baird Whitlock for $100 000.

As a "fellow traveler," Barton takes action through his art — without directly speaking to Marxist principles. His writing aims to raise his audience's awareness of the oppressive social conditions within which they are immersed. From what we see of his play, *'Bare Ruined Choirs*, Barton depicts oppression but does not offer a solution. Reading a pompous *Herald* review of the play, investor Derek proudly notes: "The find of the evening was the author of this drama about simple folk — fishmongers, in fact — whose brute struggle for existence cannot quite quell their longing for something higher. The playwright finds nobility in the most squalid corners and poetry in the most calloused speech."[41] In short, Barton writes plays and scripts that (1) push beyond an elitist style and subject matter (because they deal with regular folks struggling with their day to day lives), and (2) move beyond catharsis (because they depict social oppression without offering resolution).

Like Barton, the "study group" uses its art as a way of taking action. Yet unlike the playwright, they live under the threat of the revamped HUAC. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, the USSR had become the enemy of the US — and with the witch-hunting of McCarthyism, where Hollywood was prominently on the radar, messaging could not be direct. So, it went underground. Struggling with this dilemma, the "study group" is far more aware of their situation than the blissfully ignorant and self-important Barton Fink. When conversing with their abductee Baird Whitlock, the writers proudly brag about the small ways in which they have smuggled Marxist messages into their scripts. While the Coen brothers play this for comedy — and, as comedy it works — the task of smuggling Marxist messages into films during the Red Scare was not an easy one. Yet to affect change, clarity is key. On the topic of subversion, Marx and Engels wrote: "The Communists distain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions."[42] (500). In this regard, the "study group" fails as their hidden messages seem to be indecipherable. Perhaps the group's frustration with their obscure messaging leads them to embrace direction action, or praxis.

Engaging in direct action, the writers drug and abduct movie star Baird Whitlock, and ransom him for $100 000 in an elaborate scheme carried out by some nervous film extras. When studio fixer Eddie Mannix easily procures the money from petty cash and pays the kidnappers, they promptly lose the money while meeting with a Soviet sub off the coast of California. While both Barton and the "study group" persistently attempt to disrupt the capitalist system, they fail to do so. Although the screenwriters temporarily recruit Baird (winning him over to Marxist ideas), this is fleeting. After Baird returns to Mannix and excitedly tells him about the glories of Marxism, the middle manager violently smacks the actor in the face, reducing the star to tears — and through this act of violence, the impressionable Baird returns to his previous lull of political despondence.

WHAT IS THE OUTCOME?

Barton Fink and *Hail, Caesar!* present 1940s-1950s Hollywood as a corrupt, oppressive system firmly grounded in capitalism — and they depict Marxism as a *possible* alternative

to this condition. Along with the bickering writers in the "study group," Barton strives to foster a greater sense of awareness and inspire social change.

Yet Barton fails to challenge the dominant system he inhabits. Although he understands that working people (i.e., the protagonists of his writing) are oppressed in capitalist America, he does not seem to grasp the pervasive capitalist nature of Hollywood. Simply put, despite the warnings of people like Lipnik, Audrey, and (studio executive) Geisler, Barton expects to write the stories he wants, and present in the way he wants. As a contract writer at Capital Pictures he attempts to challenge capitalism from within the system, but is unsuccessful. While he writes a story that acts as a window into the social condition (*Hell Ten Feet Square*), studio boss Lipnik dismisses Barton's work and condemns it to languish in storage. By the end of the film he is given a harsh sentence by Lipnik. As the angry studio boss shouts: "No, you're under contract and you're gonna stay that way. Anything you write will be the property of Capital Pictures. And Capital Pictures will not produce anything you write."[43] Barking orders at Lou, Lipnik dismisses Barton as follows: "Get him out of my sight, Lou. Make sure he stays in town, though; he's still under contract. I want you in town, Fink, and out of my sight."[44]

At the end of the film, Barton Fink is a failed, silenced writer. His dream of a new theatre of the common man is finished (or at least paused) as Lipnik will keep him living in Hollywood, toiling over scripts that will go unproduced. Yet Barton's future is unknown. As a "fellow traveler" he is in danger. Although the Dias Committee will close in 1944 (two years after the events in *Barton Fink*), like a phoenix it will be reborn in 1947 — and at that point Barton may receive a dreaded "pink slip" to appear before the committee. We can only wonder what the future holds for poor self-important Barton.[45]

Like Barton, the Communist "study group" is silenced. Living in the Red Scare of the early 1950s, the group smuggles highly obscure Marxist messages into its film scripts. One expects that if these writers are to continue with their strategy of subversion, their messages will get more and more obscure over time. Yet, as previously mentioned, subversion is not their only strategy. Under the guidance of Professor Marcuse, the group embraces direct action and drugs, kidnaps, and ransoms popular star, Baird Whitlock. By this point, the "study group" has become a Communist cell — one that is in communication and collaboration with the Soviet Union. Yet it seems unlikely that this bickering and disorganized group of writers — who snack on finger sandwiches while discussing Marxist ideas — can engage in any sort of fifth column espionage. Rather than

using their ransom money to expand their own work in the US, the group plans to donate the $100 000 to the USSR — as a gesture of good will (and perhaps also an attempt to impress the Soviets, whom they greatly admire). Of course, the group's process of getting the money to the Soviets involves a complicated cloak and dagger ploy, involving a rowboat and a submarine. When a writer's lapdog almost leaps into the water, however, the briefcase filled with cash breaks open and is dropped — and the bills spill into the ocean.

If this "study group" of Marxist writers doesn't get caught (for their kidnapping of Baird Whitlock), and if they don't get called before the HUAC, one wonders what will happen to them. Given the capers of their kidnapping ploy one wonders if they will give up on direct action and return to their previous focus on subversive tactics. One can imagine them continuing to meet on a regular basis to talk about Marxism and social oppression. One can also imagine them continuing to insert obscure Marxist messages into their films. The "study group" is bitter, fractured, disorganized, and ineffective collective. While their concerns with the social condition are well founded and their criticisms of oppression are justified, their self-importance and pettiness is comical. They are just too ridiculous to threaten the system.

DISCUSSION

Barton Fink and *Hail, Caesar!* may be enjoyed on multiple levels. While they are both entertaining comedies, they are also stories that pose important questions about art, freedom, and oppression. On the level of comedy, Barton Fink is a self-important, officious "man on a mission." As he boasts to Charlie: "You know, in a way, I envy you, Charlie. Your daily routine — you know what's expected. You know the drill. My job is to plumb the depths, so to speak, dredge something up from inside, something honest. There's no road map for that territory."[46] Barton is so wrapped up in his personal artistic and political vision, he fails to listen to everyone he encounters — including those who give him advice. Lipnik, a successful studio tycoon, offers advice on writing films. While Lipnik is far too controlling, the advice he puts forward falls on deaf ears. Charlie Meadows, a door-to-door salesman, offers to share his stories as a working man. Later,

Audrey Taylor, who ghost writes for literary legend W. P. Mayhew, tries to give Barton writing and survival tips for life in Hollywood. Yet Barton doesn't listen.

When Charlie goes on a killing spree at the end of the film and Barton asks him: "But, Charlie — why me?" Charlie replies: "Because you DON'T LISTEN."[47] As Charlie points out, Barton could be described as a "Cadillac liberal": "Take a look around this dump. You're a tourist with a typewriter, Barton. I live here."[48] Like a character in a Kafka novel, Barton is given tasks with minimal details and whenever he seeks clear answers to his questions, he comes up empty handed.[49] He is at once a self-important braggart and a helpless fool, overwhelmed by his surroundings — both at the cheap hotel where he lives and the studio where he works.

The luckless writers of *Hail, Caesar!* are angry, desperate, and frustrated — and while they all share the same concerns about social oppression they cannot get along with one another. They live their lives in comfort (eating finger sandwiches and drinking tea at their "meetings") yet they are tremendously unhappy with the social system they inhabit. Like Barton, they live a financially comfortable life and are angry about the poverty of others. In short, they are "Cadillac Liberals."[50] Decades before Cadillacs, Marx and Engels cuttingly described the idea of "Cadillac Liberals" as follows: "Christian Socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat."[51]

The Marxist "study group" is thoroughly unsuccessful, as their attempts at subversive messaging seem comical. Proudly explaining their strategy to Baird, Herman says: "until quite recently our study group had a narrow focus. We concentrated on getting Communist content into motion pictures — always in a sub rosa way, of course. And we've been pretty darn successful. You remember, in *Kerner's Corner* — the Town Hall scene, where the aldermen overturn the rotten election and make Gus the mayor?" After Baird absently replies: "Uh-huh", Herman pompously says: "I like to think we've changed a few minds."[52] Watching these angry, nervous writers and their cloak and dagger antics is funny — but their concerns with the Hollywood system are genuine. While Hollywood's capitalist system — and the Marxist pushback it fueled — is great fodder for the Coen brothers' astute comedy, there is another dimension to these films.

On a more serious level, *Barton Fink* and *Hail, Caesar!* may be enjoyed as philosophical comedies. In depicting the "Golden Age" of Hollywood, the Coen brothers raise pesky questions about art, marketization, and freedom. First, the two films portray a world that is firmly rooted in capitalism, where films are produced based on their perceived earning

potential. In this system, art is created for profit, and those who make money are rewarded and perceived to be successful. Here, art is a product to be commissioned, bought, and sold — and an artist's ability to produce box office success is a commodity. In this system, artists are rewarded/punished on a monetary level and they are manipulated by the select few who hold power. It is a system where one's very image is a part of her/his commodity. In a world dominated by illusions, fixers (who work for the studio tycoons) conspire with corrupt police officers and prickly journalists to manage the image for the public to consume. Because profits are barely shared and artists are tightly controlled, it is an unfair system, which is well-equipped to overpower those who oppose it.

In both films the Coen brothers raise important questions about Hollywood's history of Marxism. And while both stories are set in the distant past, the challenges that artists face, because of capitalist forces, have not disappeared. Three key questions that are raised by the Coen brothers have great relevance for filmmakers today, namely: (1) What happens when profit is the root motivator behind art? (2) How does a capitalist system constrain the voice and work of artists — and what can be done about this? (3) What happens when artists challenge the system that constrains them? The questions raised in these films could very easily be applied to numerous Hollywood filmmakers. Pause for a moment and think about the ongoing struggles of such mavericks as Orson Welles, Francis Ford Coppola, and Spike Lee.

Barton Fink and *Hail, Caesar!* are a part of a long tradition of films that depict Hollywood as an unhealthy place for artists. In this tradition are indictments produced by a variety of frustrated auteurs, such as *Stardust Memories* (1980), *The Player* (1992), and *Mulholland Drive* (2001). The unique aspect of the Coen brothers' films, however, is their backdrop of capitalism versus Marxism. Sure, *Barton Fink* and *Hail, Caesar!* are Hollywood parodies set in the past — but they also show us something unsavory about artistic freedom and dehumanization.

Reflecting on loneliness and Hollywood, Martin Scorsese says: "But those … those weeks where there was no one around, it was really, really awful. You could see it in *Barton Fink* when he says, "You can't leave me in Los Angeles!" The poor guy starts crying. He was new in town."[53] Hollywood can be a difficult place and it is one with a long history. While Hollywood has many ghosts of Marxist *past*, the struggle of the artist

in a capitalist system (and with the rise of "blockbuster thinking" we might say that it is now a hyper-capitalist system) is a struggle that endures.

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1. Ethan Coen and Joel Coen, *Collected Screenplays 1: Blood Simple, Raising Arizona, Miller's Crossing, Barton Fink* (New York: Faber & Faber, 2002), 484.

2. *Ibid.*, 519. Describing various inspirations for the studio mogul Lipnick, Joel Coen states: "Michael Lerner resembles [Louis B. Mayer] a little, but Lipnick is more of a composite. The incident with the uniform, for instance, came from the life of Jack Warner, who enrolled in the army and asked his wardrobe department to make up a uniform. Lipnick also has the vulgar side of Harry Cohn." See William Rodney Allen (Editor), *The Coen Brothers Interviews* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), 48. To read more about various elements of parody in *Barton Fink*, see Jeffrey Adams, *The Cinema of the Coen Brothers: Hard-Boiled Entertainers* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2015). Also, see, Ian Nathan, *Masters of Cinema: Ethan and Joel Coen* (London: Phaidon Press, 2012).

3. Coen and Coen, *Hail, Caesar!* (London: Faber & Faber, 2016), 11.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Coen and Coen, *Collected Screenplays 1*, 416.

6. *Ibid.*, 469.

7. Coen and Coen, *Hail, Caesar!*, 69.

8. *Ibid.*, 70.

9. Coen and Coen, *Collected Screenplays 1*, 483.

10. Coen and Coen, *Hail, Caesar!*, 29.

11. See Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: Cosimo, 2006).

12. Coen and Coen, *Collected Screenplays 1*, 416-417.

13. *Ibid.*, 518.

14. *Ibid.*, 519.

15. Coen and Coen, *Hail, Caesar!*, 81.

16. Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, trans. Charles A. McBride (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985), 45.

17. Coen and Coen, *Collected Screenplays 1*, 415.

18. Coen and Coen, *Hail, Caesar!*, 40.

19. Michael Freedland with Barbra Paskin, *Witch-Hunt in Hollywood: McCarthyism's War on Tinseltown* (London: JR Books, 2009), 8.

20. Having Lipnik recruit Barton to write a "wrestling picture" amused the Coen brothers greatly. Reflecting on the idea, Ethan Coen muses: "We thought it was like a joke … It kind of goes past people: 'Oh yeah, wrestling picture.' We were sort of disappointed that there actually was such a thing. It makes it a little more pedestrian that it really exists." See, Allen, *The Coen Brothers Interviews*, 61.

21. Coen and Coen, *Hail, Caesar!*, 104.

22. This passage is from Karl Marx's doctoral dissertation. See Robert C. Tucker (Editor), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd edn. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 15.

23. Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed*, 47.

24. This passage is from Karl Marx's work, *The Holy Family*. See Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 135.

25. To read about "fellow travelers" and the dynamics of ferreting out and informing on Marxists (both real and supposed), see Victor S. Navasky, *Naming Names* (New York: Viking Press, 1980).

26. Coen and Coen, *Collected Screenplays 1*, 423.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*, 424.

29. Coen and Coen, *Hail, Caesar!*, 70.

30. For an unsympathetic, conservative account of the McCarthy era and the idea of Marxist art, see Kenneth Lloyd Billingsley, *Hollywood Party: How Communism Seduced the American Film Industry in the 1930s and 1940s* (Rocklin: Forum, an Imprint of Prima Publishing, 1998).

31. In addition to the film itself, we recommend an informative book tie-in, containing the script as well as an array of supplementary material. See Tim Robbins, *Cradle Will Rock* (New York: Newmarket Press, 1999).

32. Allen, *The Coen Brothers Interviews*, 47.

33. To read a thoughtful analysis of shifting portrayal of Communism in Hollywood films, see Bernard F. Dick, *The Screen is Red: Hollywood, Communism, and the Cold War* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016).

34. See Freedland, *Witch-Hunt in Hollywood*.

35. Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed*, 122.

36. Coen and Coen, *Collected Screenplays 1*, 403.

37. Coen and Coen, *Hail, Caesar!*, 49.

38. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 88-89.

39. Coen and Coen, *Collected Screenplays 1*, 424.

40. Coen and Coen, *Hail, Caesar!*, 70.

41. Coen and Coen, *Collected Screenplays 1*, 403.

42. This passage is from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. See Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 500.

43. Coen and Coen, *Collected Screenplays 1*, 519.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Interestingly, over a decade after the events of Barton Fink, Rod Serling struggled in his attempts to explore social issues (such as racism) in television drama firmly rooted in realism. Because realism seemed to be too direct Serling cleverly developed a science fiction venue for exploring these issues — the *Twilight Zone*. See Scott Skelton and Jim Benson, *Rod Serling's Night Gallery: An After Hours Tour* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999).

46. Coen and Coen, *Collected Screenplays 1*, 441.

47. *Ibid.*, 514.

48. *Ibid.*

49. While Barton Fink's predicament *resembles* one out of a Kafka novel, the Coen brothers were not consciously influenced by Kafka when they writing the screenplay and shooting the film. On the topic, Ethan Coen reflects: "With so many journalists wanting us to be inspired by *The Castle*, I've got a newfound desire to discover it for myself." See Allen, *The Coen Brothers Interviews*, 50.

50. See Freedland, *Witch-Hunt in Hollywood* and Billingsley, *Hollywood Party*.

51. This passage is from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. See Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 492.

52. Coen and Coen, *Hail, Caesar!*, 70.

53. Roger Ebert, *Scorsese by Ebert* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 172.

MAKING FILMS NEGATIVELY:
GODARD'S POLITICAL AESTHETICS

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To break with the Hollywood System induces a radical change of aesthetics.
— JEAN-LUC GODARD, *British Sounds*

This essay discusses films Jean-Luc Godard made collaboratively with Jean-Pierre Gorin and Jean-Henri Roger as the Dziga-Vertov Group. Such films as *Vent d'est* (*East Wind*, 1969), *British Sounds* (1969), *Pravda* (1969) and *Lotte in Italia* (*Struggle in Italy*, 1971) were politically and theoretically engaged and employed modernist techniques and strategies.[1] These films exemplified a "counter-cinema" for Peter Wollen, which through their radical approaches to aesthetics and politics embodied the intellectual configuration or formation that Sylvia Harvey in her 1982 essay "Whose Brecht? Memories for the Eighties" named as "political modernism."[2] A theory of political modernism worked with and transformed the formulations of Brechtian theory and practice and assumed that the techniques and procedures developed in early modernism and the historical avant-gardes were political. The critique of realism that political modernism entailed was underpinned by an ambitious and coherent theoretical construct developed in the British film journal *Screen* that combined Althusserian Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis with the semiology of Christian Metz, Roland Barthes, and Julia Kristeva to open an intellectual space for the political analysis of film. Godard's counter-cinema was within and continued the modernism of Brecht in its emphasis upon 'a new attitude that would be distanced, thoughtful, experimental, the reverse of illusory empathy and identification'.[3] Authors such as T. J. Clark writing in *Screen,* and more contemporaneously, Jacques Rancière have challenged the political effectivity of this aesthetic practice and intellectual formation. Clark's analysis of Clement Greenberg's early essays on art and culture written for the Trotskyist journal *Partisan Review* and Clark's exploration of the unhappy discursive encounter of French art criticism and Édouard Manet's scandalous painting of a prostitute *Olympia* (1863) consider the political implications and consequences of avant-garde

negativity. Clark's writing on modernism of the early 1980s reflects upon the relation of radical aesthetics and politics to question whether the techniques and procedures of the avant-garde matter politically as well as artistically. Godard's collaborations and film-making as the Dziga Vertov Group continues the resolute negativity that Clark identifies in the avant-garde, however, the political or tactical effectivity of this practice and the wider formation of political modernism cannot be assumed given the convincing nature of Clark's critique.

Clark and Rancière raise questions of the form radical art should take, the political consequences and effectivity of those forms, and of political commitment as such. Adorno, writing in response to the German translation of Jean-Paul Sartre's 1948 manifesto *What is Literature?* reconsidered the question of commitment or engagement to affirm modernist autonomy as a politically valid alternative to the committed practices of Sartre and Brecht. For Adorno, art should "resist by its form alone the course of the world, which permanently puts a pistol to men's heads."[4] He considers divided opinions of committed and autonomous artworks: autonomous art is complacent; its rejection of political engagement is itself deeply political; it is disengaged from the struggle for socialism upon which the survival of culture as such depends. For the defenders of autonomous art, committed practices embody the death of culture which the committed warn against: committed art surrenders the specific values and duties of art as practice and object. Adorno is unconvinced by this antithesis: committed art cancels the difference between art and reality whereas autonomous art denies art's connection with reality, which is the original ground for the claim of autonomy. He qualifies these alternatives: for example, realism is equally amenable to the left and right. The conservative form of Sartre's plays and novels is acceptable to and easily appropriated by the culture industry. For Adorno, the most important artists realise that it is "in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it."[5] He writes that even radical modernism is trapped within and surrenders to an *aporia*: victims are used to create artworks which will be consumed by the world which had destroyed them: the artistic representation of suffering has the power to elicit enjoyment out of suffering: the aesthetic principle gives suffering and the violence of the oppressors meaning; in the transfiguration of suffering into the artistic, Adorno argues, "something of its horror is removed."[6] If committed art can end up affirming the society against which it protests,

Adorno writes more favourably of autonomous works of art (his example his Picasso's *Guernica* (1937)) that "firmly negate empirical reality, destroy the destroyer, that which merely exists and, by merely existing, endlessly reiterates guilt."[7]

The modernism to which the Dziga Vertov Group's practice is compared was self-reflective and "a-causal" and, for Kristeva, part of a "crisis of finitudes" of modern societies.[8] This modernism dissolves coherent or realistic narrative and in association with the rhythmic and acoustic registers of music challenges the identity or cohesion of the sign. Their films were understood in relation to modern or avant-garde art and literature that recognised creative possibilities in the dislocation of the sign and emphasised the radical implications of semiology. This entailed recognising and emphasising the differences through which a signifier is established rather than a theory of signification in which the sign is a fixed relation of signifier and signified.[9] However, the formal innovations that defined and differentiated avant-garde cinema which emphasised the signifier can seem difficult to reconcile with the essayistic and documentary film-making developed by the Dziga Vertov Group which was always concerned with social and historical meaning.[10] The Dziga Vertov Group belonged to modernism's avant-garde sector; the group's film-making demonstrated the impact of modernism on the cinema. It is a kind of practice that emphasises the material character of the sign the significance of which is determined by interrogating its own constitutive codes or by an 'internal dialogue."[11] Modernism, then, emphasises the "physical nature of the signifying material' which does not strain towards a final signified.[12] It was an evolving tradition defined by reflexivity and ontological exploration but for Wollen, it is the historical avant-garde's prolonging and deepening of the semiotic rupture of Cubism that is key to explaining political modernism and the possibilities of a counter-cinema.[13] The discoveries and innovations of Picasso's and Braque's Cubism had implications beyond the history of painting, influencing other arts, and representing a changed concept of the sign which involved the disjunction of signifier and signified within the sign. Cubism represented "a critical semiotic shift, a changed concept and practice of the sign and signification."[14] The developments of abstract painting that followed Cubism more radically suppressed the signified altogether to become "an art of pure signifiers detached from meaning as much as reference."[15] However, the avant-garde tradition to which Godard's collaborative practice belongs draws upon early Soviet cinema, which while recognising that the new

society demanded innovative formal devices, a new film language or cinematic expression, it was still a cinema of signified. However, although informed by film-makers like Vertov and Eisenstein, Godard worked with the dislocation of signifier and signified, rather than taking the signifier as a means of expression. Godard introduced conflict between different cinematic codes that becomes "an art of negativity, a splitting apart of an apparently natural unity, a disjunction of signifier and signified."[16] He challenges the naturalness of bourgeois communication but was not indifferent to the signified in that his collaborative practice was political and part of Marxist culture.

Marx and Engels did not formulate a methodology for cultural analysis or a systematic aesthetics. However, the highly literary account of French history and politics between 1848 and 1851 in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) implies an aesthetic that in its emphases evokes avant-garde negativity. Marx argues that in periods of revolutionary transformation men and women appropriate the languages and the images of the historical past. The bourgeois revolution presents itself in classical costumes to conceal the prosaic content of its own historical tasks.[17] The resurrection and imitation of the dead was necessary for the bourgeoisie — the "class of urban property-owners, with its own distinctive moral and cultural order"[18] — to establish a new but unheroic social formation absorbed in the production of wealth as its primary aim. Marx differentiates different forms or phases of resurrection and the appropriation of classical language and imagery. If the original phase is historically necessary, its repetition is glamorous, grotesque and farcical and is comparable to fascism's tendency to aestheticize politics discussed by Walter Benjamin's through his example of Marinetti's Futurism. These aesthetic repetitions, whether historically necessary or purely ideological, contrast with "the social revolution of the nineteenth century" that sloughs of any "superstitious regard of the past" to discover an imagery from the future: "without recourse to myth, and […] clear concerning its content."[19] The "antique models" of the bourgeoisie are unable to contain the excessive content of *social* revolution which therefore must abandon aesthetics. If heroic and beautiful myths or the "phrase" transcended a prosaic or mediocre content, "here the content transcends the phrase."[20]

In its abandonment of myth and in its critical nature, the social revolution echoes the "gestures of renunciation" of the avant-garde: its project was a "demonic" improvisation of new socially critical forms. Art becomes negation in the nineteenth century and "a

project of total subversion"; the "nihilistic gaiety" of Berlin Dada completely discordant with the "illusory revolts" of the post-war avant-garde.[21] Clark explores avant-garde negativity in a 1981 essay on the art critic Clement Greenberg's cultural analysis of the emergence and function of a cultural avant-garde — the defence and continuation of a valuable culture within the 'ideological confusion and violence' of bourgeois societies.[22] Greenberg's object is the tendency in art towards self-reference: the avant-garde found adequate forms for bourgeois societies without succumbing to their ideological divisions while opposing the tendencies to refuse the arts be their own justification.[23] In part, this was an opposition to the fake art produced for mass consumption in bourgeois societies; in response to the popularity of kitsch and ideological confusions and uncertainties, the avant-garde pursued purity, which for Greenberg, was the acceptance of the actual conditions and limitations of medium.

Clark recasts Greenberg's account of modernism's formal logic to include kinds of practices that it omits: practices of negation are "the very form of the practices of purity" Greenberg extols.[24] Clark identifies an active dialectical tension between aesthetic and social values, so, modernism's recovery of the literal flatness of the picture surface that Greenberg identified metaphorically signifies values derived from social life rather those of an autonomous aesthetic sphere. "Flatness" is the determining specific limit and condition of the medium of painting but it could analogise the "popular" or signify "modernity", or "truth." Avant-garde practices insisted upon a concept of medium which frequently appeared as a kind of estrangement: there is an emphasis upon its limits and conditions but its consistency was constantly negated. Greenberg is dismissive of the negativity that is actually inseparable from modernism's work of self-definition; recognising but disdaining its negative rhetoric which appears in his own descriptions of American culture, of Jackson Pollock's "emphatic surfaces" in their "violence, exasperation and stridency."[25] For Clark, modernist practice

> is extraordinary and desperate […] a work of interminable and absolute decomposition, a work which is always pushing "medium" to its limits — to its ending — to the point where it breaks or evaporates or turns back into mere unworked material. That is the form in which medium is retrieved or reinvented: the fact of art, in modernism, is the fact of negation.[26]

An unstated assumption of Greenberg's cultural analysis is that ruling classes had once possessed recognisable and distinctive cultures of their own that had clarified and enacted their experiences and values, responding to their demands and assumptions. In the later nineteenth century, the bourgeoisie began to dismantle this focussed and distinctive cultural identity for the sake of maintaining social control, revoking its claim to the absolutes of the aristocracy it had displaced. The fact or "dance of negation" begins with the loss of a social basis for art production in ruling elites; modernism's "negative cast" was determined by meanings becoming disputable, a culture in which "meanings have become muddy and stale." The profitable industrial product and "ersatz culture" of kitsch is a symptom of the abandonment of the severe cultural absolutes of the aristocracy. The bourgeoisie destroyed its own cultural forms as it entrenched and defended its power through a kind of invisibility that came from its involvement in, its celebration of, mass culture. Clark's argument follows Barthes's notion of the bourgeoisie as "a constant flickering in and out of social visibility, a permanent, endlessly inventive *société anonyme*."[27] In this context, the avant-garde found useable forms of expression: an aristocratic account of experience and its modes would be preserved through the density of avant-garde practices. An emergent and ultimately defensive avant-garde embodied and continued aristocratic cultural values in a society that had accepted kitsch as dominant cultural form.

It is arguable that Godard continued the resolute negativity of the avant-garde in art and literature. For Clark, negativity was an all-encompassing and uncontrollable form, embodied in "the black square, the hardly differentiated field of sound, the infinitely flimsy skein of spectral colour, speech stuttering and petering out into etcetera's or excuses."[28] Negation involved the deliberate avoidance or the parody of previously established skills once taken as essential to serious art making. However, the political effectivity of artistic negativity could not be taken for granted: Clark identifies another kind of 'empty negation' in modernism, another aspect or face of modernist art: "comfortably ineffable, a vacuity, a vagueness, a mere mysticism of sight."[29] Clark follows Adorno's argument that works which abandon coherent meaning risk aesthetic failure and a loss seriousness: "Such works drift to the brink of indifference, degenerate insensibly into mere hobbies, into idle repetition of formulas now abandoned in other art forms, into trivial patterns."[30]

The different opposed modes of negativity play an important part in his analysis of Manet's *Olympia*. For Clark, the painting's disruptions of different signifying systems were politically insignificant because they were not rooted in the struggles to control and position the female body politically and ideologically. There is a difference between "an allowed, arbitrary and harmless play of the signifier" and kinds of semiotic play that function to disrupt the smooth functioning of ideology.[31] The defining social function of all ideology is the constitution of concrete individuals as subjects through acts of recognition that Althusser calls "interpellation." *Olympia* did not succumb to modernity willingly or embrace it enthusiastically but although the failure to situate a woman (the naked body of a prostitute in the painting) in the fetishized space of male fantasy is admirable it was still compatible with situating her within our public and familiar world. The "ruthlessness of negation" is what Clark admires most and what he feels is still usable in modern art.[32] It is a ruthlessness that describes *Olympia's* refusal to signify "according to the established codings for the nude" so she will take her expected place in the Imaginary.[33] But the picture is not given an elliptical but readable position within "the code of classes" — in the social world which actually produces and reproduces the Imaginary. For the picture to disrupt the smooth functioning of ideologies it would actually have to be readable "within the actual conflict of images and ideologies surrounding the practice of prostitution in 1865."[34] *Olympia* finds its meanings in negation and the refusal of dominant ideologies rather than in the repressed alternative meanings or culture of the dominated.

So, for Clark, *Olympia's* unfixed texture of signs was ultimately unreadable and so "empty," unable, therefore, to do critical work. Modernism was an open, disparate, unfinished, and contradictory practice and despite the risk of vagueness he did not wish to see it displaced for the certainties — the closure and simplicity — of realism. He says this in reply to Wollen, who had accused Clark of effectively rejecting the "whole modernist movement, including its radical avant-garde sector" in his "confused" exegesis of Manet's painting.[35] Clark had attempted to "undermine the whole paradigm of modernism and, specifically, the aesthetics of its radical avant-garde sector" — which would mean Godard's cinema. Instead, Clark basically wanted an unambiguous and consistent representations of class division and class struggle whereas *Olympia* is duplicitously inconsistent. However, Clark's objection was not to formal negativity as

Wollen claims but its disconnection from political struggles and occupying therefore "an unenviable limbo."[36] Brecht's remark that "a vanguard can lead the way along a retreat or into an abyss" expresses something of what Clark means.[37] Clark argues that to distinguish "harmless formal play" from a "harmful unsettling of categories" was always integral to modernist practice: modernism "was compelled […] to exceed its normal terms of reference and sketch out others, in preliminary form."[38] For Wollen, Brecht represents an alternative to the "vacuous" modernism enshrined in Greenberg's theory of art (Clark calls this kind of modernism *Olympia's* "progeny"). However, Clark also recognises Brecht's political modernism; Clark's argument respects the search for determinacy in modernist practices that is continued by the Dziga Vertov Group. It is arguable that its films do not merely involve an insignificant semiotic play in a kind of nihilistic refusal to signify and, in their documentary form, are rooted in actual forms of social life in ways that Clark argues *Olympia* was not. Although for Wollen, Clark's target was *Screen's* commitment to the avant-garde art and culture that Godard exemplified. If Clark's argument could be reconciled with *Screen's* enthusiasm for "dis-identificatory practices" then their failure, their degeneration into a mere refusal to signify could equally describe Godard's cinema in relation to the established codes of the mainstream.

In employing strategies and techniques pioneered by or characteristic of avant-garde art, the films of the Dziga Vertov Group were separate from rather than in advance of commercial cinema, which was Godard's own background. The collective's counter-cinema re-examined and re-worked an aesthetic that respected and imitated the spatial and temporal continuities of the physical or natural world. In both its form and in its intended subjective effects, counter-cinema challenged the naturalism of orthodox commercial cinema. Godard experimented with the traditions and conventions of commercial or mainstream cinema early in his career. Borrowing from literature, Godard divided his *Vivre sa vie* (1962), scripted and directed by Godard and starring Anna Karina as Nana Kleinfrankenheim, into twelve separate titled chapters and title sequence of *Une femme mariée* (1964) tells us that we are watching "fragments of a film shot in 1964 in black and white." Godard breaks with what Wollen calls the tradition of "narrative transitivity" of commercial cinema, that is, a logically caused sequence or chain of events in which each "event" is usually psychologically motivated and follows coherently a preceding one. Godard's strategies weaken film's coherence and intelligibility and in the

collaborations of the Dziga Vertov Group narrative progression is not just weakened but entirely broken or destroyed by digressions, repetitions and kinds of reflexive modernist strategies. The strategy of interrupting or breaking of narrative is explained in voice over of *Lotte in Italia,* co-directed by Godard and Gorin and scripted by the Dziga Vertov Group. The film is intended as a dissection and analysis of the life of Paola Taviani (Cristiana Tullio-Altan), an Italian student activist and Marxist. We only learn her name through her interpellation, when it is spoken in reply to different figures who hold authority: she answers to a policeman who demands to see her identity card as she sells a Maoist newspaper in the street and to her university professor. The way the film interrupts narrative transitivity is explained politically and theoretically, the explanation drawing upon the materialist theory of ideology developed by Althusser. The film separates and analyses different reflections of her life and her experience within what Althusser named as the "ideological state apparatuses": she is a bourgeois university student and mathematics teacher to a young worker; she lives in her family home and appears as a typical teenager; she is a consumer and a political activist. These aspects of her life are divided from each other by black and red screens or monochromatic fields, her life and the film as articulated successive shots are equally fragmented — or the fragmentation is explicitly foregrounded. The voice-over addresses Paola Taviani explaining to her and the audience that we have seen reflections or imaginary fragments of her life separated by black images.

For most film makers, cinematic discourse is the simple articulation of successive shots; if two consecutive images appear as "autonomous cells" then their articulation can occur through either "an extra cinematic element" or by something common to both images. In either case, the formation of the syntagm makes the signifieds of the images redundant and therefore a substantial loss of information occurs and the opening of a fissure between this chain of articulated material images and an anchoring or determining signified. In the cinematic form of Godard's cinema mutually articulated images are independent of or they exist in relation to other "excessive elements." Its techniques and devices exasperate the instances of cinematic articulation which seems to bracket or downplay the importance of the signified and what is "above" it, the imaginary field.[39] Neither is it naively assumed that a film is simply the reproduction of an image or reflection; the reflections that are described in voiceover in *Lotte in Italia* are ideological.

An ideology is a system and practice of representation possessing relative autonomy, which means we are shown not only Paola Taviani's lived or real relation to the world or to her conditions of existence but the imaginary relation to those conditions. In ideology, and this is Godard and Gorin's object, a real and imaginary relation co-exist, there is an overdetermined unity of the real and the imaginary relation of men and women to their conditions of existence in such a way that the real relation becomes meaningful and expressive.[40] It is worth emphasising the materiality of the imaginary relation in ideology that Althusser identifies, which

> is itself real, which means not simply that the individuals live it as such (the mode of illusion, the inverted image) but that it is effectively, practically, the reality of their concrete existence, the term of their subject positions, the basis of their activity, in a given social order.[41]

The black screens interrupt the reflections and later in the film we learn that they are displaced images of capitalist relations of production. We learn that Paola Taviani understands the social roles she plays and identities she possesses when they are understood as contradictory and determined by, existing within, those relations.

Lotte in Italia, through these visual interruptions and by voiced over descriptions of a following sequence or event, destroys narrative transitivity of the flow of the narrative of orthodox cinema and which was still recognisable in Godard's films of the early 1960s. Godard employs various devices to make identification in terms of suspended belief or with the star or character practically impossible. His cinema foregrounds the processes of film production rather than producing a transparent window on the world. It employs multiple diegesis — heterogeneous worlds exist within a single film — and allusions to and direct quotations from other films, art and literature (*Lotte in Italia* begins with Paola Taviani quoting from Mao's essay 'On Contradiction' (1937)). Godard's films are characterised by kinds of pastiche and parody that Wollen describes as a "genuine polyphony" of different speaking literary, historical and political voices.[42] This multiplicity, which becomes a kind of formal conflict, a splitting part of the natural unity of sound and image and the disjunction or separation of the signifier and the signified, is an "act of negativity."[43]

In watching films made by the Dziga Vertov Group we made aware of images being chosen and used by the film-makers. For example, the footage of everyday life in socialist Czechoslovakia in *Pravda* (1969), co-directed with Paul Bourron and Jean-Henri Roger and scripted by the Dziga Vertov Group, and filmed a year after the Prague Spring, is raw and naturalistic. But the commentary that describes the footage of the impressions of the journey through the country — we are told what the camera shows us — has the effect that we see not the reality of contemporary life in Czechoslovakia but the reality of images as material signs. As spectators, we are never really allowed to confuse the signifier with the signified and we take on, therefore, a critical attitude towards these images. The voice over is a dialogue between "Vladimir" and "Rosa" — he explains to her that the images – the evidence of the nature of Czechoslovakian socialism — must be analysed through the editing of the sounds and images of the film differently. The avant-garde form of the film in the relation between images and sounds is employed for the critical analysis of the social and political situation in Czechoslovakia and the health of its socialism. There is a sense of dislocation and fragmentation — the relative health or sickness of the society is figured by a symbolic red rose shown trodden into the mud — but it is directed and political. Godard's films separate out or disjoint images and sounds, although not entirely applicable to the first two parts of *Pravda*, in the third part of the film, Rosa quotes at length from Mao's condemnation of Khrushchev's revisionism taken from "Quotations from Mao Tse Tung" (1966).

Sounds — speech and music — and kinds of writing, titles, captions, posters and Dada like collages are part of the montage, criticise, interpret, and transform sequences of images. *British Sounds* (1969) was co-directed and scripted with Jean-Henri Roger, and commissioned by London Weekend Television. In a similar way to *Pravda* it is a documentary of six sequences that analyses the images and sounds of contemporary British capitalism, social and gender relations, which via voice over are contextualised historically. The documentary begins by "rewriting" a line from the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848): "In a word, the bourgeoisie creates a world in its image. Comrades! We must destroy that image! […] Sometimes the class struggle is also the struggle of one image against another image, of one sound against another sound […] in a film, this struggle is between images and sounds." The relation between sounds and images is conflictual, ironizing, and mutually undermining. *British Sounds'* first sequence

is a long, continuous tracking shot of workers building sports cars interrupted by two hand-written placards alluding to the October Revolution and work; the deafening sound of the factory superimposed upon the image is shrill and screeching (and appears reused in the later *Lotte in Italia*). The voices of an adult and child read out and repeat altered passages from Marx's writings and moments in the history of class struggle in the country. This sequence vividly denies the unity of sound and image privileged in modern cinema and therefore the cohesion of the pro-filmic reality, undermining its necessity and assumed naturalness.

In their appropriations and references, in *Pravda*, we see shots of an opened copy of Mao's *Little Red Book* wedged in and above the camera lens, the films made as the Dziga Vertov Group demonstrate Godard's commitment to the ideology of Maoism rather than other kinds of revolutionary thought, such as Trotskyism or anarchism, which participated in May 1968. His commitment to Maoism waned after 1972. Maoism was a complex phenomenon; the split between Russia and China became a fact in the early 1960s following the crisis of Stalinism. The Chinese castigated the Soviet bureaucracy as revisionist and "bourgeois." In its support for national liberation struggles Maoism portrayed the world fundamentally divided between developed and underdeveloped countries; the Soviet doctrine of peaceful coexistence was a form of imperialism in which the Russians had connived with the United States to split the world into spheres of influence. In response to American military escalation in Vietnam, an article in the Chinese journal *Red Flag* argued that countries in the socialist camp or the base areas of world revolution should help those countries who have not yet won victory against imperialism. "The socialist countries should serve as base areas for the world revolution and as the main force in combatting imperialist aggression."[44] This analysis was supported in classical Marxism through the concept of the emergence of a "labour aristocracy" that Lenin elaborated developing Engels' recognition of a privileged and respectable minority of the British working class who identified with the bourgeoisie and benefited from its position in capitalist societies. (The cover of a French translation of Lenin's 1916 "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism" that discusses the relationship of imperialism and the opportunism of labour movement appears as part of a montage in *Pravda*.)

From the mid-1960s, Chinese Maoism had declared that degeneration in the USSR had led to a restoration of capitalism which followed the death of Stalin in 1953 and

Khrushchev's speech to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU of February 1956 that openly condemned Stalin's "self-glorification" and cult of individuality. Maoism defended Stalin's regime and branded the USSR under Khrushchev and Brezhnev as capitalist: market relations, consumerism, and material incentives were symptomatic of the restoration of capitalism; a new bourgeois stratum had crystallised which exploited Soviet workers primarily through forms of corruption. Although it could be pointed out that social differentiation and wage differentials had characterised Soviet society of the 1920s and 1930s, Maoism condemned contemporary disparities of wealth and the authoritarianism of Soviet society. The Maoists critique of existing socialist societies in terms of their degeneration was largely subjective — pointing to a moral and ideological back sliding — rather than dealing with deeper and primarily economic social processes. There was a critique of bourgeois life styles, the access to middle-class luxuries and perks, and therefore a stress on the personal and subjective. As such, a new political space emerges: the class struggle takes place in the intimate being of the individual in the form of a conflict between personal and collective interests. Mao tried to revivify Leninist politics by drawing on ideas of self-criticism; the individual was to be understood as a series of contradictions rather than as a fixed essence; this understanding of subjectivity and self-criticism informs the portrayal of Paola Taviani's lived experience and the roles she plays and the formal structure of *Lotte in Italia.* The Maoist concept and political experience of cultural revolution, for Alain Badiou, a sequence that runs from November 1965 to July 1968 which is caused by series of divisions with the Chinese Communist Party that has held power since 1949. Its target was "those within the Party who are in authority and are taking the capitalist road" and resulted from the recognition in Lenin's last writings that the political seizure of state institutions and the economic reorganisation of the relations of production were not enough to abolish class hierarchies and struggles. The emphasis on personal and ideological struggle — the "struggle of the proletariat against the old ideas, culture, customs and habits" aligned with a commitment to the Third World determined Maoism and the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" as appropriate forms or imagery for the critique of consumer society of Godard's *Weekend* (1967) and *Tout va Bien* (1972).[45]

In a 1969 interview published in the film journal *Cinéthique* with Gérard Leblanc, the editors of the literary journal *Tel Quel,* Jean Thibaudeau and Marcelin Pleynet explored

political cinema. In terms of his montage practice indebted to Soviet cinema of the 1920s Godard had confronted cinema's ideological nature but in asserting his personal "anarchist" ideology, his cinema provided only "agitational dissent."[46] For Pleynet, a political cinema did not necessarily need to represent politics as its signified. *La chinoise* (1967), written and directed by Godard and featuring Anne Wiazemsky, Jean-Pierre Léaud, and Juliet Berto, was "splashed" with the politics of Maoism. The film, which tells the story of a group of Parisian Maoist students, was generally taken to be a satire on Maoism on its release in that Godard represents the students and their revolutionary discourse ironically, as (sympathetic) caricatures, but it prefigures the events of May '68. The character of Guillaume (Léaud) lectures on the relationships between the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Vietnam understood in terms of a Maoist critique of Soviet revisionism intercut with ridiculous dramatizations of the war in Vietnam using children's toys.

Films were commodities, but they were also ideological; they were political in so far as they were ideologically determined; cinema reproduced ideology but the relationship between film and ideology was not the same in every case. Defining the field of study and theoretical methodologies of *Cahiers du cinéma*, Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni identified different categories of film based on their different relations to ideology: cinema was political because it is ideological determined and reproduces ideology; if the majority of films were the unconscious instruments of the dominant ideology, another category resisted their ideological assimilation by dealing with a "directly political subject," operating critically, therefore, on the level of the signified. This was the problem with films like *La chinoise* in the *Cinéthique* discussion: the representation of politics did not involve a thorough critique of cinematic form; there need to be a struggle on two fronts — on the levels of signifier and signified. But films which attacked ideology by the signified — films which therefore presupposed a theoretical activity *and* avant-garde cinema that emphasised the signifier both constituted what was "essential in the cinema."[47] The conclusion was that militant or revolutionary cinema had employed conservative or traditional aesthetics to reach a wide or popular audience but it was argued that it should possess a political dimension of its own as film. Raising the problems of film-making is as political as the political arguments that take place within them. Political film which adopted the language and imagery of the dominant ideology was more likely to be caught

within the system it opposed; the task of critics was to differentiate these different relations of film and ideology to consider the political effectivity of film.

Jacques Rancière takes a critical position on the Brechtian paradigm for political art focusing upon the portrayal of the spectator, questioning biases and effectivity. In its foregrounding of processes and mechanisms, Brecht's epic theatre is anti-illusionist, analytical, and self-conscious as a signifying practice. Its difference to Aristotelian theatre derive from techniques and devices of distanciation: it does not assume a spectator's passive empathy and appeals to his or reason. The spectator's experience will be neither inspiring or cathartic but educational and political; it expects a different attitude and relationship. The strategies of Epic theatre were intended to "liberate the viewer from the state of being captured by [the] illusions of art which encourage passive identification with fictional worlds."[48] In its Brechtian mode, Godard's cinema also repositions the spectator, demanding a different more active kind of viewing and foregrounds the processes through which sounds and images are produced. Rancière criticises radical practices and theories that understood the spectator to be captive — a passive and ignorant bystander to an enthralling image. And for Brecht, spectators of traditional theatre were mesmerised: "somewhat motionless figures in a peculiar condition […]. They scarcely communicate with each other; their relations are those of a lot of sleepers […] these people seem relieved of activity and like men to whom something is being done."[49] Spectators were without mastery for Pleynet and for Baudry, spectators were ignorant of their captivity in the dark and enclosed space of the cinema auditorium. Viewing is the opposite of knowing and the spectator is ignorant of how appearances are produced and the reality they conceal; spectating is the opposite of acting; the spectator is merely a passive voyeur of seductive images, possessing an illusory mastery over the spectacle. We need art that educates rather than seduces for participants in the processes of signification rather than "passive voyeurs."[50]

Social emancipation, for Rancière, involves challenging the opposition between viewing and acting which is structured in terms of domination and subjection; viewing is not subordinate to acting: the "spectator also acts, like the pupil or scholar. She observes, selects, compares [and] interprets," she is creative and participates in the performance; she is an active interpreter of the theatrical or cinematic spectacle.[51] An implication of this argument is that the category of mainstream films that are unconscious instruments of

ideology are not necessarily reactionary; they can be creatively refashioned. Rancière suggests a different idea of subjective emancipation than that of the Brechtian paradigm or mode; emancipation involves the blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure, acting and looking. Rancière relates the politics of aesthetics to artefacts that possess the properties of art not through their technical perfection but because they belong a "specific sensorium" or "specific form of sensory apprehension." These are heterogeneous sensory forms which belong to "the aesthetic regime of art," which, in experiencing them, promise new distributions of the sensible that Rancière describes in terms of appearance and Schiller's concept of play. This is an activity that is autotelic and uninterested in gaining power over others; play suspends oppositions of activity and passivity and appearance and reality, to undermine the power of an educated elite over the unrefined senses of the masses, of the domination of one humanity by another. The artefacts that come to be defined as art in the modern period are those that adhere to a different sensorium to that of domination. Or, a specifically political aesthetics is the suspension of domination through an autonomous aesthetic experience. As such, social emancipation as it relates to the connection between art and politics is primarily concerned with the body and its introduction into a new configuration of the sensible in which its capacities and incapacities, its function and destination, were no longer predetermined or fixed by that body's — the body of a worker — position within the social relations of production. Rancière describes a carpenter laying a parquet floor, resting from his work, and looking out through a window onto a garden and acquiring therefore an aesthetic and distracted gaze incompatible with the prescribed task for which he is paid. This "aesthetic rupture" through which a different experience and configuration of the body occurs is the ruination of one distribution of the sensible and the beginning of a new one. This political aesthetics is not the same as kinds of critical art which aims to produce new perceptions of the world through its alienation so that it can be transformed: Rancière names Heartfield, Brecht, Godard, and Martha Rosler as exponents of critical of art intended to "mobilize bodies through the presentation of a strangeness."[52] Rancière doubts the actual effectiveness of critical art based on montage and other "denunciatory techniques" and considers it contradictory regards its aim to combine "aesthetic separation and ethical continuity," to fuse the shocking strangeness of montage and "political mobilisation." Rancière sees no necessary continuity and recalling Clark's critique of Manet's *Olympia* he argues that the

disassociation of or rupture within kinds of sense or "patterns of intelligibility" lead nowhere — it either normalizes how the world is, it is supported by the world it aims to condemn and transform, or says self-evident things.[53]

The question of the signifier rather than the signified focusses discussion of revolutionary art and relationship to ideology; as Adorno writes of Brecht's modernism, the transformation of straightforwardly given events and experiences into alien phenomena was primarily a question of form. The collaborative films made by the Dziga Vertov Group are a modernist practice that employ strategies of estrangement with the expectation of changing the spectator's position within ideology; strategies and a mode of political art criticised by Rancière. For Adorno, modernism is not a consciously political practice committed to the cause of socialism but through its inherent "uncalculating autonomy" it can achieve political effects, which, like Clark are understood in terms of the negation of empirical reality and "total dislocation," for Rancière, a kind of "resistant form." In Wollen and Clark's exchange that appeared in *Screen*, the main point of contention is whether the negativity of the avant-garde actually matters politically or whether the refusal to signify according to the dominant codes in representation is actually a mere, harmless play; the form avant-garde art takes is explained in relation to the dislocation of the sign initiated by Wollen by Cubism and therefore the radicalism of the avant-garde is understood through the lens of the more radical implications of semiology. This is semiology as a "critical science" that operated "a ceaseless destruction of the whole ideology of representation," especially that of this alternative mode of revolutionary art, realism.[54] More contemporaneously, Rancière elaborates an aesthetic alternative to the model for political art that demands the transformation of the spectator who must take a different attitude to their lived experience and is therefore opposed to the Brechtian mode which was continued and developed in Godard's post-1968 collaborative practices of cinema.

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1. Godard commented that "The group name is to indicate a programme, to raise a flag, not just to emphasise one person." See Kent E. Carroll, "Film and Revolution: Interview with the Dziga-Vertov Group," in *Focus on Godard,* ed. Royal S. Brown (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 50.

2. See Sylvia Harvey, "Whose Brecht? Memories for the Eighties," *Screen* 23:1 (May/June 1982): 45-59.

3. Theodor Adorno, "Commitment," in *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 2007), 182.

4. *Ibid.*, 180.

5. *Ibid.,* 188.

6. *Ibid.,* 189.

7. *Ibid.,* 190.

8. Julia Kristeva, "Signifying Practice and Mode of Production," *Edinburgh '76 Magazine* (Edinburgh Film Festival, 1976): 65.

9. Rosalind Coward, "Class, 'Culture' and the Social Formation," *Screen* 18:1 (Spring 1977): 77.

10. Constance Penley and Janet Bergstrom, "The Avant-Garde Histories and Theories," *Screen* 19:3 (Autumn 1978): 121.

11. Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Palgrave Macmillan/British Film Institute, 2013), 139.

12. Jean-Louis Baudry, "Writing, Fiction, Ideology," *Afterimage* 5 (Spring 1974): 24, 26.

13. See Wollen, "Photography and Aesthetics," *Screen* 17:4 (1978): 27.

14. Wollen, "The Two Avant-Gardes," *Edinburgh '76 Magazine* 1, "Psycho-Analysis/Cinema/Avant-Garde" (Edinburgh Film Festival, 1976): 79.

15. *Ibid*.

16. *Ibid.*, 82

17. See Stanley Mitchell, "'The Eighteenth Brumaire' and the Construction of a Marxist Aesthetics," in *1848: The Sociology of Literature,* ed. Francis Barker *et al.* (Colchester: University of Essex, 1978), 22.

18. T. J. Clark, "A Bourgeois Dance of Death: Max Buchon on Courbet – 1," *The Burlington Magazine* 111:793 (April 1969): 208.

19. Fred Orton, "Action, Revolution and Painting," *Oxford Art Journal* 14:2 (1991): 9.

20. Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *Surveys from Exile,* ed. David Fernbach (London and New York: Verso, 2010), 149.

21. The English Section of the Situationist International [Tim Clark, Christopher Gray, Charles Radcliffe and Donald Nicholson-Smith], *The Revolution of Modern Art and the Modern Art of Revolution* (London: Chronos Publications, 2003), 3-5.

22. Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Clement Greenberg The Collected Essays and Criticism. Volume 1: Perceptions and Judgements 1939-1944*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 8.

23. Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon," in *Clement Greenberg The Collected Essays and Criticism. Volume 1: Perceptions and Judgements 1939-1944*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 28.

24. Clark, "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art," in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate,* ed. Francis Frascina (London: Routledge, 2000), 78.

25. Greenberg, "The Present Prospects of American Painting and Sculpture," in *Clement Greenberg The Collected Essays and Criticism. Volume 1: Perceptions and Judgements 1939-1944*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 166.

26. Clark, "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art," 82.

27. Clark, "Origins of the Present Crisis," *New Left Review* (March/April 2000): 92.

28. Clark, "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art," 83.

29. *Ibid*.

30. Adorno, "Commitment," 191.

31. Clark, "Preliminaries to a Possible Treatment of *Olympia* in 1865," *Screen* 20:1 (1980): 38

32. Clark, "Arguments About Modernism: A Reply to Michael Fried," in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate,* ed. Francis Frascina (London: Routledge, 2000), 103.

33. Clark, "Preliminaries to a Possible Treatment of *Olympia* in 1865," 39.

34. *Ibid*.

35. Peter Wollen, "Manet: Modernism and Avant-Garde," *Screen* 21:2 (1980): 15

36. Clark, "A Note in Reply to Peter Wollen," *Screen* 21:3 (1980): 99.

37. Bertolt Brecht, "Against Georg Lukács," *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 2007), 72.

38. Clark, "A Note in Reply to Peter Wollen," 100.

39. Jean-Pierre Oudart, "Cinema and Suture," *Screen* 18:4 (Winter 1977/78): 36-37.

40. Louis Althusser, "Marxism and Humanism," in *For Marx* (London: Verso, 1996), 233.

41. Stephen Heath, "On Screen, In Frame: Film and Ideology," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 1:3 (1976): 254.

42. Wollen, "Godard and Counter-Cinema: *Vent d'Est*," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology,* ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 126.

43. Wollen, "The Two Avant-Gardes": 82.

44. Lo Jui-ch'ing quoted by Livio Maitan, *Party, Army and Masses in China: A Marxist Interpretation of the Cultural Revolution and its Aftermath,* trans. Gregor Benton and Marie Collitti (London: NLB, 1976), 75.

45. See Colin MacCabe, *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1980), 57.

46. Marcelin Pleynet, "Economic – Ideological – Formal," in Sylvia Harvey, *May '68 and Film Culture,* (London: British Film Institute, 1980), 150.

47. Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism (1)," *Screen Reader 1: Cinema/ Ideology/Politics* (Glasgow: The Society for Education in Film and Television, 1977), 6.

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49. Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Methuen, 1964), 187.

50. Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2009), 4

51. ibid., 13.

52. Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics,* ed. Steven Corcoran (London and New York: Continuum Books, 2010), 143.

53. *Ibid*.

54. Heath, "Introduction: Questions of Emphasis," *Screen* 14:1/2 (Spring/Summer 1973): 18.

THE VIEW FROM BELOW:
FILM AND CLASS REPRESENTATION
IN BRECHT AND LOACH

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Depicting the working class on film has been a fraught affair. A thoroughgoing charge against Marxist and/or socialist investigations of class is that they have been static and reductionist. In part this critique has originated from a rejection of any notion of a causal relation or link between the economic and the political. As Dennis Dworkin sums up this position, "economic life, however broadly conceived, could not play a prominent role in creating forms of politics and ideology."[1] Likewise, as Teresa Ebert and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh note, class is emptied out of any relation to the material or concrete "by the inversion of class from an economic category to a political concept."[2] Seen from this perspective, any depiction of the connections and mediations between a capitalist economy and resulting worldviews is seen as dimming the picture rather than enlightening it. Thus a criticism of Marxist theory is that it leads to an abstracting away from lived experience and reverts to a portrayal of class that is founded upon an "identity of being,"[3] an ontologically fixed formula of class relations that assigns class as a fixed position that negates agency and obscures shifting structural determinants. If, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri advance, that "Class is determined by class struggle,"[4] materialist notions of class appear dehistoricised and reinforce ideal types that project an image of a worker based upon the place of extraction of surplus value, and as such "essentialist and in need of deconstruction."[5] Continuing in this vein is the recent development in so-called "New-Materialism." In this manifestation, materialism negates determination even in the last instance, as "determination within dynamic systems is non-linear, terminal effects cannot be construed as possibilities that were already latent in some initial moment."[6] Both positions veer away from a conception of structured class experience that may still involve agency. As Terry Eagleton notes,

Whereas mechanical materialism suspects that human agency is an allusion, vitalist materialism is out to decentre the all-sovereign subject into the mesh of material forces that constitute it. In drawing attention to those forces, however, it sometimes fails to recognize that one can be an autonomous agent without being magically free of determinations.[7]

What these diversions away from determination occlude is a picture of working classes' "identities of becoming." That is, the processes in which class is constantly determined structurally (not as a matter of choice) and remade and resituated in relation to the dominant system. In the following I will examine two exemplary works that speak to the identities of working class becoming. Bertolt Brecht's *Kuhle Wampe, oder: wem goehert die Welt?* (*Kuhle Wampe, or: Who Owns the World?*, 1932) and Ken Loach's *Raining Stones* (1993) focus on the agency and structured lack thereof of the working classes, and each film offers a view of class not merely as a neat economic relation but as a relational form of life that dictates and influences social phenomena as much for those who are in employment as those who are without. Far from being secondary, these elements are the concrete determination that is represented in the *sine qua non* of working class social relations.

THEORIZING CLASS

One of the first railings against reductionist readings from the Marxist tradition comes from Marx himself. As Jacques Bidet argues, efforts to avoid the complex of mediations between structured experience and determinants miss Marx's point between the "relationship between classes" and the "relationship between individuals." "Marx," Bidet notes, "polemicises against 'vulgar' conceptions that claim to account for the historical process in terms of inter-individual relations, such as competition. In his view, the individual moment is certainly just as "essential," but is only conceived in the context of generally defined structures."[8] Much of the confusion around reductionist arguments falls on Marx's short-form distinction of the economic base and cultural and political superstructure. Marx famously writes that "The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure, and to which correspond definite *forms of social*

consciousness."[9] While this reduction results in part from its cursory nature of the metaphor, a more significant problem is that such a formulation delineates away from the processes that produce dominant social relations. The economic is delinked from the social and political realities, and as such history is studied less on its own terms, and more so as a product of certain economic "prime movers." What follows is, as Ellen Meiksins Wood notes, a form of historiography (of past and present) that "universalizes capitalist relations of production by analyzing production in abstraction from its specific social determinations." This, she argues, is antithetical to Marx's approach which "differs […] in his insistence that a productive system is made up of its specific social determinations — specific social relations, modes of property and domination, legal and political forms."[10] In Wood's response, attention need be paid not merely on the specific mode of appropriation, but the entirety of social relations which make that system possible, and the various determinants that accompany that form of exploitation.

Similarly, Raymond Williams developed[11] and productively argued that it is not merely economic phenomena that define capitalism's really existing "structure of feeling" but rather the dominant social relations as such which act as limitations, to use a phrase closer to Marx's concept of *bestimmen*, as Williams notes.[12] This realigns our focus from the analysis of economic extractions to the multi-layered forms in which that extraction takes place, and re-assigns agency (and further highlights the structured denial of agency) to those who are subjected to this rule and articulates a cultural politics attuned to contradictory lives.

This oppositional stance based around class struggle is irreconcilable with that of "today's late capitalism," as Žižek notes, which "with its 'spontaneous' ideology, endeavours to obliterate the class division itself by way of proclaiming us all 'self-entrepreneurs.'"[13] Likewise, as Ebert and Zavarzadeh argue, "getting class out of culture, which is the environment of everyday life, produces the illusion that there are no classes and everyone lives freely".[14] In contrast to this position, the authors stress that class is defined in relation to compulsion; "The working class still has to sell its labour to the owning class."[15] This analysis shifts from the universally existing category to a universally informed particularity. Mike Wayne has similarly noted that the importance of history is seen in this widening, shifting terrain:

This way of thinking about history requires us to locate the actions and beliefs of individuals in their wider socioeconomic context and to understand change as something that is brought about not by individuals realizing a "timeless" principle but by individuals and collectives operating within conflictual and contradictory relationships that shape what can be thought and what can be done at any particular point in time and space.[16]

Class, in this regard, can never be taken for granted, and the place of shifting historical forces need be taken into account. As we will see, the focus on unemployment is a starting off point for Brecht and Loach to not take for granted class relations, and to take up their totality as a means to rethink social relations both politically and aesthetically.

It should be made clear that the definition of class as never taken for granted necessarily relies on the changing structural demands of capital, and within this framework unemployment as a constant necessity can never be removed. While it is true, as Silvia Federici points outs, that Marx "analyzed primitive accumulation almost exclusively from the viewpoint of the waged industrial proletariat,"[17] this does not imply that the working class is waged. Christian Fuchs telling argues that we must move beyond "wage-labor fetishism"[18] and consider labour in relation to its productivity *for* capital. In Fuchs analysis, productive labour includes that which produces value for use and surplus value, yet crucially "Labour of the combined/collective worker, labour that contributes to the production of surplus-value and capital." This last element has mostly been ignored by those "Scholars who argue that you must earn a wage for being a productive worker."[19] In doing so "wage-labour fetishism disregards the complex dialectics of class societies."[20]

Missing out on the "complex dialectics" are those instances in which the particularity of class relations are blurred through recourse to supposed historical variations. Most important for our purposes is the category of the "precariat," a neologism formed by a contraction of the terms "precarious" and proletariat." As R. Jamil Jonna and John Bellamy Foster point out, the concept of precariat moves away from the specificity of the conjuncture and mystifies more than it elucidates.

But since Marx himself defined the *proletariat* as a class characterized by precariousness, the term *precariat* is often no more than a fashionable and mistaken

substitute for proletariat itself (in Marx's sense) — or else is employed to refer to a subcategory of the proletariat, i.e., the subproletariat. This resembles earlier theorizations of the "underclass" as a separate entity divorced from the working class as a whole. In these various formulations, the notion of the precariat is often contrasted with what is characterized as an overly rigid concept of the proletariat — the latter defined as a formal, stable industrial workforce of the employed, usually organized in trade unions (a notion, however, far removed from Marx's classical definition of the proletariat).[21]

What Jonna and Foster's position cogently articulates is that the term proletariat, from Marx's own formulation, takes into account a lack of access to waged labour. Thus, following what recent critics such as Fuchs have argued, the category "proletariat" should not be seen as synonymous with wage-labour.

Structuring both films is an emphasis on unemployment, and how the lack of work both reflects and reinforces the gender norms of working class communities, and provides for spaces that operate outside or challenge and reinforces notions of respectability and dignity in these communities. In this regard, to be unemployed is still to "belong" to the working class and rejects the ontological category, to be working class is to have work. This framework rejects a static identity of being that discounts the role of structural unemployment in capitalism, but also the ways in which working class communities, as a whole, are defined by shifts from higher levels of unemployment to lower levels. As Mary McGlynn argues in her examination of "classlessness" and film in Thatcherite Britain, "Using occupation as the basis for the categorisation works as yet another method of marginalizing the unemployed as irresponsible, undeserving poor: they become, in such a system, classless — discounted and beyond measure."[22] These films are historically situated which depict the working class in a state of becoming, both inheriting the determined realities and moralities of a previous time while contending with those of the present.

LOACH: PRECARITY AND SOCIAL LIFE

Raining Stones follows Bob Williams' quest to buy his daughter a new communion dress. Bob is unemployed, and recently had his van stolen. In his search for money while

receiving unemployment benefits, Bob and his friend Ricky are reduced to both theft (sheep, turf, etc.) and borrowing money from a loan shark. This last move proves dangerous, and Bob and his family are terrorised when unable to pay the funds back. In an altercation with the loan shark, Bob inadvertently kills the loan shark. In the final scene, the police arrive at his door not to arrest Bob, but to tell him that his stolen van has been found.

Loach's portrayal of the effects of Thatcherism, especially as regards the destruction of full time, family and community sustaining, work across Northern England and Scotland stands in relation to similar working class films of the time, as a "tragic-comedy of urban survival."[23] The work offers a portrayal of class that is without access to steady work, and in response draws heavily on received notions of dignity and its absence that those who find themselves victims of a growing structural unemployment experience. This lack has defined the lead character Bob's social existence, and that of his family, and the categories of his and his family's own meager survival become amplified by the pressure to maintain some semblance of respectability, in this instance the purchasing of a dress for his daughter's upcoming communion. The terrain of respectability is defined in terms of the gradual downward shift into desperation that is apparent in Bob's community, in ways that while complex are not entirely presented in unproblematic ways.[24] The pursuit of dignity is not a record of Bob's suffering from "false consciousness," as suggested by John Hill,[25] "given that he is repeatedly warned (by his wife and even the local priest) that the expense of a new dress is unnecessary," but rather an attempt by Bob to regain some control over his life, and as more convincingly argued by Hill, "an attempt to hold on to the last remnants of his sense of self-worth"[26] in a social and individual life that is increasingly becoming defined by precarious accept to work.

Loach engages this notion of respectability, and moves away from judgment or dismissal, in order to highlight the importance of the class character of his desire to purchase the dress. While dismissing the insistence of his wife and local priest that he get one second-hand, Bob's pursuance of a new one marks out his own struggle for an aspect of individual achievement determined by his class position. The inability to purchase a dress would be to resign to the determinants of his social position, and thus his insistence is clearly understandable on these terms. Loach is clear in his depiction that we reserve our censuring of Bob, even as the consequences of his actions will be violently felt by him and his family. A "Loachian" technique is to employ a "consistent use of medium and

long shots" through which his films acquire a documentary feel, which establishes "the nature of place and space and people's position within them, both in relation to each other and to the Otherness of authority and power."[27] This engenders a critical attitude towards the film's characters' choices as respective of the individual worldview in response to one's class position. In this framework we make sense of the Bob's insistence on buying a new (promising outlook to the future) as opposed to used (de-individualised, hand-me-downs, poor, etc.) dress. The dress becomes not only a comment on his personhood but his ability to maintain his own sense of self-respect. As George McKnight notes, Bob's conception of self-respect is ultimately tied into his position as a failed breadwinner and the stain that this leaves on his family, at least as perceived through his own eyes.

> Insisting on a new Communion dress when he cannot afford it can be tied into ideas such as that the new dress is the sign of his daughter's purity; demonstrating his economic self-sufficiency; reaffirming his own individual self-worth as a male; retaining the traditional male position as decision-maker when large sums of money are involved; and maintaining social appearances.[28]

The maintenance of social appearances dictates the re-enforcement and attention to the maintenance of a gendered status quo. In the 1990's, as Claire Monk notes, "jobless, skill-less masculinity was increasingly defined as a problem."[29] Loach's set-up of Bob's construction of gender, as McKnight describes above, does not produce, or given the observational standpoint engendered is not meant to produce, in the mind of the viewer, a negative casting. The entrenchment of his masculinity is seen as symptomatic of his unemployment and the dignity that rises or fall depending on his access to work. His unemployment offers no freedom, and the absence of traditionally male dominated forms of factory work to not offer liberation but a further retrenchment of these norms.[30] This formations and reformations of the working class has a long history, and is structured by conceptions of gender, and specifically around perceived notions of masculinity and femininity. As Geoff Eley notes "the crisis in working-class culture — in particular, the tensions between traditional ideals and the consumer society and its values — is mapped by these films onto differences of gender."[31] Gender and class, and the remaking of each, are inextricably linked in the film.

Loach is at pains, however, to not portray this as an example of a slice of life as the "underclass" — a segment of society that has "always been with us" - and depicts Bob and his society involved in a process of desperate disintegration. The specificity of the story, while generalizable on some level, shifts us towards the specific. This has occasionally been lost on commentators. Notice here the a-historicity of the following comment:

> Underclass males are a dominant feature of contemporary British cinema and take a variety of forms. The underclass male is a *paradoxical* Everyman as his representativeness comes through his social marginality, not, as in previous periods, through his ability to express an acceptable standard.[32]

Such statements, rather than elucidating the specific situations Bob encounters in the remaking of the British working class, mask his struggle for survival. Contrary to Thatcherist ideology, he is anything but feckless, but rather he does not have Thatcher's heart for mercilessness. The stealing of the sheep leads to, given his inability to slaughter himself, "tragic, traumatic and rather sordid elements" ending farcically in "little financial value."[33] This episode is a perverse rendering of his own predicament.

A bi-product of the unhelpful distinction between the working class and the unemployed is the notion that the unemployed members of the working class are no longer part of it, or are sufficiently removed from it. In this regard, Claire Monk "takes the 'underclass' to be a *post-working* class that owes its existence to the economic and social damage wrought by globalization, local industrial decline, the restructuring of the labour market and other legacies of the Thatcher era."[34] While Monk is clear to distance herself to conservative "work-shy" notions of the underclass, this demarcation, despite its allusion to historical forces, hides that the working class as depicted in the film are unable to live on benefits and, far from being "post" work, their lives are increasingly being defined by the variety rather than singularity of a workplace.

To the problem of short-term employment and poverty, the film itself provides two forms of interpretation. The first is in the form of Bob's father-in-law, Jimmy. Jimmy's socialist credentials seems firm, evidenced by the hatred of the class-betraying, good for "fuck all" Labour Party which threatens him with legal action in response to a proposed rent strike. It is from Jimmy that the film derives its title, that "when you are a worker, it

rains seven days a week." There is little doubt that the socialist interpretation that Jimmy provides is well received and speaks to a form of knowledge that Bob himself understands. Yet the distinction in class analyses that causes friction is Jimmy's insistence that the Church, as James F. English notes, is "not a counterforce to the state or to free-market ideology but is 'part of the problem', pacifying the masses with 'a lot of mumbo jumbo' and preventing them from 'thinking for themselves'."[35] This is where Jimmy is fundamentally out of sync with the class politics of his day, and his analysis loses the form of class specific sentiment that is required. Despite the poster on Jimmy's wall which asks "Is There a Socialist Alternative" there is a sense, given the limit while supportive role Jimmy plays, the answer is not now. The role of the articulate socialist organizer is also a fading figure in Loach's non-historical films given Loach's "despair to the lack of radicalism within the New Labour government" as evidenced in this and other films at the time, such as *My Name is Joe*.[36]

In this regard, the place of religion within the film is in fact contrary to that supposed by Jimmy. The communion dress is not a mark of religious piety or adhering to religious custom, but rather a marker of class pride. The Catholic Church itself as an institution may have sided against the working class historically, but in this instance, the Church provides a moment of clear class alliance with Bob and his wife at Bob's weakest moment. The religion on offer bears little resemblance to the demand of servitude and submission of moral values that are clearly out of proportion to the social setting of the film. Where there any greater signs we could focus on the communion dress, which matters little as a symbol of religious observance or coming of age in the Catholic Church. Nor does the priest resemble anything like a traditional cleric when he counsels Bob, who has killed the loan shark who lent him the money to purchase the dress but has now begun to threaten his family, to *not* turn himself in. In contradistinction to perceived roles, what saves Bob, and what allows him to maintain his and that of his family's crumbling place in their crumbling society is that they go *against* the mores of traditional roles. This contradiction cleaves open the notion that class relations dictate the choices and narratives of working class people. While the mere fact of being working class is hardly something Marxists have valorised, the Church itself as an institution is also distinguished between its members and itself as an organisation with universalist principles that may differ with the people who serve its cause. While Loach has called upon the Catholic Church's alliance with the status quo in, inter alia, *Land and Freedom*, the class solidarity evident in the

priest's advice seeks to encourage an understanding gaze in the viewer's pre-conceived positions regarding the political actions of the Church. This allows for the films' fairy-tale-like ending, reminiscent of the working class fantasy *Miracolo a Milano* (*Miracle in Milan*, 1951).

BRECHT: UNEMPLOYMENT, INDIVIDUALITY AND AESTHETICS

Kuhle Wampe, oder: wem goehert die Welt? follows the Boenike family, in particular their son, Franz, in the first act on his quest for a job in late-Weimar Berlin. Unsuccessful, Franz commits suicide. The second act features the daughter, Anni, who becomes pregnant with her partner, Fritz, with whom she has a hastily put together marriage. Deciding against staying with Fritz, Anni joins the communist cause in Berlin and gets an abortion. The third act sees Anni and her comrades first at a Communist-run sports fair, then on a train home there is a discussion of the origins of the Great Depression, and a communist response to change the world is offered.

While Loach's treatment of Thatcherist Manchester is reflected through an analysis of an individual family, and highlights the individual worker's decline within that framework, Brecht's trajectory works in the opposite manner. For Brecht, capitalism atomizes and reinforces all social ills as markings of personal failings, and therefore the examination of individuality is refracted through the lens of the social class, yet the individual worker must first of all be seen, at least partly.[37] In the opening scenes of the film, the frantic spinning of wheels dominates the screen. Workers speed on bicycles from factory to factory in the hopes of finding a day's work. At this stage, they exist only a group of workers, a blur of disappointment and despair as they are told again and again that there is no work available. Without names or locations, from capital's perspective they are a mass of unproductive labour, even though they are all both figuratively and literally "on their bikes." Their productivity is judged only in relation to capital's needs. Through the story of the son of the Boenike family, Franz, we see how unemployment makes itself felt on individual workers. Yet while the individual is important in this regard, Brecht displays how this problem is anything but individualizable, and as soon as a safe reading of the individual emerges Brecht implicates the social in the actual effects of this abstract unemployment. Although the young son's mother and father seem intent on

personalizing his unemployment (his inability to find work show that his attitude is wrong, he's lazy etc.), his communist influenced sister defends him against the causes of his situation that exist outside of the individual's door. Hers is a social perspective that seeks to eschew and cancel any perspective as such.

In his narrowing in on the Boenike family, however, Brecht is wary of creating a possible predominant emotive response (that is, emotionally identifying with Franz) to this situation. This is not due to the fact that Brecht attempted to dissuade an emotional connection. Rather, as Anthony Squiers notes, the distance that Brecht promoted was not from one's emotional standpoint but "The estrangement Brecht desired was an internal estrangement from one's current *Weltanschauung* or worldview."[38] The preferred reading is to encourage the viewer's pity for the young character but to place this response in dialogue with the larger social conditions that articulate more fully what is going wrong in these scenes and then to approach it on that basis. In order to achieve this Brecht utilises distancing techniques to break the audience from the habit of emotional investing in these social causes. One way of accomplishing this, as Bruce Murray notes, was to introduce each act in such a way as to "interrupt the narrative flow and encourage the audience's intellectual engagement. They do so by commenting ironically on the unfolding, by foreshadowing what will transpire and, in every case, by minimizing the potential for building suspense."[39] This negation of suspense building, in contradiction to Loach's method whose plot is determined by a ramping up of social and individual tensions, acts as a barrier to the acceptance of official responses to Franz's death. The police officer's statement of "unknown" as the cause of Franz's suicide marks the judgment complicit in his suicide. This produces a confrontation connecting the individual and the social, as without recourse to the social we can not interrupt the real life decisions of the individual.[40]

The integration of the social and the individual here marks a deep connection in the specific Benjaminian *jetztzteit* — we are now in the moment of the crisis of the dissolution of the individual and the collision of the individual moment of the effect of capitalism and the larger social processes at work — and this is, as mentioned above, a tactic devised with maintaining this recognition by the viewer in mind. The reception of class as an instantiation of the larger processes at work are key in the completion of the meaningfulness of the scene. Before Franz jumps out of his parent's window, he is careful and considerate of his actions. He slowly considers his actions, and the removal of his

watch is a transference of the sole concrete value (again, as defined by capitalism) that will not be lost to his family.

Brecht holds up in contrast both an individual and social moment, and shows the sociality the logic of the economic act. For Franz, the matter is tragically announced in the spinning away of his time. Before he jumps though he pauses to gaze into the camera. As Franz Birgel notes: The suicide is presented as purely mechanical rather than an impulsive act, which, as the censor in "Kleiner Beitrag zum Realismus" asserts, the viewer does not even want to prevent in the absence of "artistic, human, warm-hearted representation."[41] This "purely mechanical" act, marks a significant challenge to traditional aesthetics. Theodore Rippey notes that this is the film's

> first breach of the cinematic fourth wall. The turn is virtually his only action in the entire apartment sequence; his expression conveys his powerlessness and visually poses the question: "What other options do I have?" He now views suicide as the only viable release from oppression. In a bow to the family's economic plight, young Bönike leaves his watch on the windowsill before leaping to his death. Dudov (the film's director) adds emphasis with an extreme close-up of the watch two shots after the jump.[42]

The depiction of the state of things having been met, the question will eventually become of the response to such horrific predictability. Capitalism's separation of the economic and the political is hollow outside of an understanding of the actual relation of class to the economic. Franz's death is both a fulfillment of economic rationality (he was surplus to society and got rid of himself) yet the actual reasons he did so (despair, the threat of eviction, social and familial pressures) are hidden from view. The viewer is the only fuller witness to capital's artifice or conceit.[43] The sociality of the act conditions its proposed reception. As Esther Leslie notes,

> As a Marxist, Brecht insists that people's actions are less a product of their autonomous needs and desires, and human nature and psychology, and more the product of an objective network of social relations, in whose all-encompassing web people's lives have become entangled. These social relations need to be shown — as just that — social, and also historical, not naturally or divinely given.[44]

If one's position as an individual is tied with one's class position, and always understood in relation to this "dangerous affair," there is equally a danger of re-using formal techniques that no longer respond to the "objective network of social relations." Dana Polan argues that the production of an over-formalised Brecht has lost sight of, or even obscured, the importance of Brecht's political aesthetics. Brecht himself, notes Polan, insisted that all art contained a distancing or alienating feature to it. Yet there is nothing "socially distancing" about this.[45] Whereas audiences may have begun to become used to these alienating forms of making strange, many artists themselves have shied away from the conscious towards intuitive abstraction. In order to challenge this in aesthetics, Polan notes, we must replace the processes which "keeps literary production in the realm of accident and signals a refusal to situate such production within the actual workings of history" and instead adopt a "scientific attitude."[46] The adoption of such an attitude should not privilege an anti-communal or anti-social experience. In fact, the living out of this attitude is made clear only in the moment where a plurality are involved.

Perhaps the clearest example of this shift occurs with the barely commented upon "play within a play" section of *Kuhle Wampe* (a device which Brecht would call on throughout his life) as the political aesthetics of the now are here perhaps nowhere clearer than in any other part of the film. Often lost in analysis of the film is probably its most deliberate statement about politics and aesthetics.[47] It is the play within a play that is meant here, put on by the *Rote Sprachchor*, and the particular role of art in changing social scenarios. Throughout the film we are witness to tales of homelessness not as an abstract category or ontology but as a process, or social event. A person or group is not simply homeless as a state of being through some fault of their own; rather the process by which this has come about consistently acts as a frame of the film. Its offshoots such as suicide, expressing the right to choice,[48] not to mention the role of sexism, a punishing judicial system and a raft of destructive emotions are not backdrops but the thing itself. The role of art is necessarily to assess these and then respond. This is the distinctly social nature of Brecht's formal practice.

In this regard, returning to Franz's unstated question as to "what other options do I have" is an important one as it also poses the political aspect of the cultural producer's position through a formal method. On formal invention in the film Katie Trumpener notes that "Brecht's writings around his 1932 film script for *Kuhle Wampe* suggest how non-traditional and dialectical uses of film syntax (the establishment of a counterpointal

relationship between image and music, for instance) can be used to unsettle the spectator and to create a critical space for (political) reflection."[49] That is, the political aspect is not, and in this moment cannot be, separate from the formal strategy. The moment is one of a social-political aesthetics which seeks to liberate both in a propagandistic sense — that is to challenge the dominant views — as well as challenging the dominant modes of viewing.

This raw material of lived relations is taken up in the play within the play. The latter section of the play which offers the expression of organised opposition frames the play as the socialist artistic or cultural response to the capitalist crisis. This is not, one should clarify, a template for oppositional aesthetics. Rather, this is how a particular form of aesthetics responds in this situation (particularly one that is protest oriented). What is important and worthy of generalisation is the emphasis on beginning from the concerns of the contemporary problem and then finding ways of addressing this problem through encouraging collective activity. The distinctions between the cultural fields and the material base of culture are, in this formulation, are quite narrow. As Teresa Ebert argues, "culture is not autonomous [...]. Rather, through various formations and subtle articulations, the material conditions of culture always assert themselves as necessary, no matter how thick and opaque these meditations might be."[50] Brecht's position to this is similar, and he defines his project's conception of realism in relation to capital's crisis ridden manifestations. As he notes in "The Popular and the Realistic," "Realist means: laying bare society's causal network/showing up the dominant viewpoint as the viewpoint of the dominators/writing from the standpoint of the class which has prepared the broadest solutions for the most pressing problems afflicting human society/ emphasizing the dynamics of development/concrete and so as to encourage abstraction."[51] In this instance the film's depiction of the Boenike's eviction is mirrored in the depiction of the content of the Agit-Prop group. Brecht's aesthetics are responsive. They must be focused on addressing and shaping actual lived social situations and the importance that Brecht gives to the troupe "Das Rote Sprachrohr" ("The Red Megaphone") in the film suggests a larger proposal for action and strategy. Here is one "critic's" take on the film:

Yes, you will be astonished that I reproach your depiction for not being sufficiently *human*. You have not depicted a person but, well, let's admit it, a type. Your

unemployed worker is not a real individual, not a real flesh-and-blood person, distinct from every other person, with his particular worries, particular joys and finally his particular fate. He is drawn very superficially. As artists you must forgive me for the strong expression that *we learn too little about him*, but the consequences are of a *political* nature and force me to object to the film's release.[52]

The "critic," as one may deduce from this last sentence, was the censor who blocked earlier releases of the film.[53] Yet this is only relevant given that Brecht, upon hearing this appraisal, had the "unpleasant impression of being caught red-handed" and went further to commend the censor by stating that "he had penetrated far deeper into the essence of our artistic intentions than our most supportive critics."[54] What this censor had understood was the attempts at redefinition of the individual in capitalist society, although clearly the censor objects to this for the reasons stated above.

Brecht constructs a cinematic form of repetition whereby the individual is, in relation to their class, capable of reconstruction. The reconstruction here is the gap filled by the arc created by the suicide at the beginning of the play. Whereas the speeding of the wheels locates workers in a race against each other and at the expense of each other, the collective marching through the streets on the way to the festivities presents the opportunity to highlight what Eugene Lunn terms the "positive potentials of the depersonalised, urban, machine age."[55] That is, by working through the constructs that capitalism provides, one is able to produce something that is able to liberate itself. The purpose of the actors is to support those being made homeless by late-Weimar capitalism. In this way, their practice is necessarily defined by the positions of their allies in the particular historical moment. This adeptness requires a collective experience and one which liberates the construct of the singular bourgeois artist from his individuality to the position of collective cultural producer. As noted by Birgel below, such a political aesthetic project was itself attempted in *Kuhle Wampe*.

Working with over 4000 participants, including the members of the leftist Fichte Sports Club, the agit-prop group Das Rote Sprachrohr (The Red Megaphone), and several choruses, Brecht wanted the production to be a learning experience for all involved. As in his *Lehrstücke* from this period, the collaborative process was just as important, if not more so, than the final product. In addition, the audience was to be a co-producer of the film. By disrupting the illusion of reality through his well-known alienation technique, Brecht

wanted the viewers to become active participants who reflect on what was happening on the screen and relate it to their own lives.[56]

The collective nature of the production and its nimble nature, able to respond in a meaningful way in the lives of workers in a moment of great need (eviction), necessitates a move away from a firm formal structure (so often the cause of misunderstandings of Brecht) and the understanding of Brecht's political aesthetics as a process which requires a move towards experimentation. This interest in "experimentation, his strictures against any too rigidly constructed theory of political art," as Dana Polan explains, "are so many attempts to minimize predictability and keep art open to the changing demands of history."[57]

CONCLUSION

In his otherwise excellent *9.5 Theses on Art and Class*, Ben Davis argues that "The working class is distinguished from the middle class not by how its members have more modest houses or watch different TV shows but by the level of authority they have over the conditions of their own work."[58] One need add to the concluding phrase, "if they are lucky to have it." This last point is a fundamental aspect to the problems of unemployment in capitalism, and its structural necessity to capitalism's reproduction. Fredric Jameson, in his reading of the Capital: Volume 1 concludes that there is no need to invoke a "political and ideological strategy when insisting on the fundamental structural centrality of unemployment in the text of *Capital* itself." At this moment of globalised capitalism, which produces "massive populations…who have been deliberately excluded from the modernizing projects of First World Capitalism and written off as hopeless or terminal cases," it is more than ever clear that "unemployment is structurally inseparable from the dynamic of accumulation and expansion which constitutes the very nature of capitalism as such."[59]

In these two films we see the centrality of unemployment to capitalism's structuring of working class experience, especially in periods of drastic social re-organisation. For Brecht, we witness the disintegration of the Weimar period as workers' lives speed to despair, and for Loach, the de-industrialisation of one of the key historical sites of the process itself leads to workers' desperation and psychic disintegration and the

entrenchment of gender norms. While the working classes are always being re-constituted, the films do not eschew entirely the existence of structured experience. In this regard, "Class is an explanation of the social structures of exploitation."[60] If the working class is always being formed, always becoming again — even if in forms not of its choosing — it is also still subject to the unfashionably universalist dilemmas of those moments in capitalism's history when high levels of unemployment are far more the norm rather than the obverse.

In both films we see the question posed of what, in fact, they are being repositioned for. The only clear aspects of their lives are that capital has no idea what to make of them and the fact that there is no work for them. The resulting existential crisis created from this absence resounds as they are left to wander aimlessly but doggedly, internalizing the degradations of their lives, while seeking out daily, hourly respites from the punishingly relentless question of how to materially reproduce themselves. In this context class, and the social relations of class, is made.

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1. See Dennis Dworkin on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, in his *Class Struggles* (London: Harlow, 2007), 75.

2. Teresa L. Ebert and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, *Class in Culture* (Boulder: Paradigm, 2008), 16.

3. Himani Bannerji's useful distinction between "identities of being" and "identities of becoming" offers a conceptual means by which static and productive histories of working class life can be interrogated. Bannerji's contribution allows us to bridge experiences and moments in cultural representation which are otherwise placed into exclusive and occluded categorisations and act as a means to deny new, productive forms which take seriously the connections between class and its determinants. See Himani Bannerji, *The Writing on the Wall: Essays on Culture and Politics* (Toronto: TSAR Publications, 1993), xii-xiii.

4. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 104.

5. Ebert and Zavarzadeh, *Class in Culture*, 16.

6. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, "Introducing the New Materialisms," in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 14.

7. Terry Eagleton, *Materialisms* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 13.

8. Jacques Bidet, "Bourdieu and Historical Materialism," in *Critical Companion to Contemporary Marxism*, ed. Jacques Bidet and Stathis Kouvelakis (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 593.

9. Karl Marx, "From 'Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," in *Marxist Literary Theory*, ed. Terry Eagleton and Drew Milne (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), 31.

10. Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 22. As Wood further states, "The premise here is that there is no such thing as a mode of production *in opposition* to 'social factors,' and that Marx's radical innovation on bourgeois political economy was precisely to define the mode of production and economic laws themselves in terms of 'social factors'." (24).

11. This metaphor has, however, dominated much Marxist cultural theory and analysis. Reflecting on the legacy that the most important New Left cultural thinker inherited, Terry Eagleton notes that "When Raymond Williams came to write in the early nineteen-fifties, the ethos of thirties criticism, compounded as it was of vulgar Marxism, bourgeois empiricism and Romantic idealism, could yield him almost nothing." Terry Eagleton, "Criticism and Politics: The Work of Raymond Williams," *New Left Review* 95 (1976): 7.

12. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 83-84.

13. Slavoj Žižek, *Disparities* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 151.

14. Ebert and Zavarzadeh, *Class in Culture*, 4.

15. *Ibid.*, 90.

16. Mike Wayne, *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 64.

17 Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004): 63.

18. Christian Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 110.

19. Fuchs, "The Digital Labour Theory of Value and Karl Marx in the Age of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Weibo," in *Reconsidering Value and Labour in the Digital Age*, ed. Eran Fisher and Fuchs (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 28

20. *Ibid.*, 29.

21. R. Jamil Jonna and John Bellamy Foster, "Marx's Theory of Working-Class Precariousness," *Monthly Review* 67 (2016): 3.

22. Mary McGlynn, "Collectivism and Thatcher's 'Classless' Society in British Fiction and Film," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 62 (2016): 322.

23. Ian Christie, "As Others See Us: British Film-making and Europe in the 1990s," in *British Cinema of the 1990s*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 71.

24. In one scene, clearly presented to mark devolution in the state of working class communities, a teenage girl accosts a teenage boy of a similar age in the middle of the street. While the fight itself denotes the manifest disintegration, the presentation of a violent girl and a passively receiving boy suggests not simply a devolution of working class communities, but of a problematic departure from gender norms.

25. See John Hill, *Ken Loach: The Politics of Film and Television* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 179.

26. *Ibid.*, 179.

27. John Kirk, "Urban Narratives: Contesting Place and Space in Some British Cinema from the 1980s," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 31 (2001): 374.

28. George McKnight, "Ken Loach's domestic morality tales," in *Agent of Challenge and Defiance: The Films of Ken Loach*, ed. George McKnight (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 88.

29. Claire Monk, "Men in the 1990s" in *British Cinema of the 1990s*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 159. While this trend is relevant, the above statement, as the following that "1990's British cinema seemed preoccupied with men and masculinity in crisis. These crises spanned the post-industrial economic desperation of the male no-longer-working-class" seems to suggest that Bob is merely unemployed, whereas in fact he holds several jobs throughout the film (see 156).

30. For a useful riposte to the supposed liberatory possibilities that unemployment offered men in similarly themed films, see Teresa Ebert, *The Task of Cultural Critique* (Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 2009), 4-6.

31. Geoff Eley, "The Family is a Dangerous Place: Memory, Gender and the Image of the Working Class," in *Revisioning History: Films and the Construction of a New Past*, ed. Robert A. Rosenstone (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 20.

32. Andrew Spicer, *Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 188.

33. Nigel Mather, *Tears of Laughter: Comedy-Drama in 1990's British Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 31.

34. Claire Monk, "Underbelly UK: The 1990s Underclass Film, Masculinity and the Ideologies of 'New' Britain," in *British Cinema, Past and Present*, ed. Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson (London: Routledge, 2000), 274.

35. James F. English, "Locus Focus, Global Frame: Ken Loach and the Cinema of Dispossession," in *Fires were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism*, ed. Lester D. Friedman (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), 277.

36. Steve Blandford, *Film, Drama and the Break-Up of Britain* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect Books, 2007), 74.

37. This is valid at the level of the social world, but also at an aesthetic level. Angelos Koutsourakis argues that in Brecht's filmic strategy, he understood that "cinema challenges the understanding of art as a reflectionist process, and the medium's political efficiency is grounded in its ability to engage with the material reality, so as to point to structures that are not necessarily comprehended even by the filmmaker. The prerequisite for the radical employment of the medium is that the story is an epiphenomenon. What matters most is the ability to use the technological apparatus so as to engage with the social reality and point to social mechanisms beyond the narrative world" (Koutsourakis, "Utilizing the 'Ideological Antiquity': Rethinking Brecht and Film," *Monatshefte* 107 (2015): 252). Koutsourakis is examining the connections between Brecht and Walter Benjamin's famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." For more on the similarities between the two see Marc Silberman, "The Politics of Representation: Brecht and Media," *Theatre Journal* 39 (1987): 448-460.

38. Anthony Squiers, "A Critical Response to Heidi M. Silcox's 'What's Wrong with Alienation,'" *Philosophy and Literature* 39 (2015): 244.

39. Bruce Murray, *Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic*: *From Caligari to Kuhle Wampe* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 222.

40. The suicide itself, coming as it does in the first third of the film, "practically defies all German screen traditions", states Siegfried Kracauer. Despite being asked repeatedly to shift this scene towards the end "so as to re-establish the natural order of things," Brecht and Dudow held firm. "In displacing the suicide myth, Kuhle Wampe disavows psychological retrogression" (that is, making a social act into a individual one). Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 246. This shift would have also "prevented spectators from interacting with it as they had grown accustomed to interacting with mainstream films" (Murray, *Film and the German Left,* 224).

41. Frantz A. Brigel, "*Kuhle Wampe*, Leftist Cinema, and the Politics of Film Censorship in Weimar Germany," *Historical Reflections* 35 (2009): 51.

42. Theodore Rippey, "Kuhle Wampe and the Problem of Corporal Culture," *Cinema Journal* 47 (2007): 7.

43. Here, Mike Wayne's comments on the politically bridging project of Brecht (and Benjamin) is insightful: "The reason why modernism could not and cannot be dismissed as simply the cultural capital of the intelligentsia is that it articulates aspects of the lived experience of the urban masses in industrial capitalism and mass culture. Benjamin and Brecht understood this, perhaps more than anyone. They detected within the industrial and cultural forms of modernity new potentialities: collective identities, the capacity to make connections swiftly between spatially different phenomena, a critical, skeptical attitude, a thirst for information, a willingness to innovate, and so on. They also recognized that the socioeconomic and cultural forces of modernity could brutalize, mystify and manipulate the masses." Mike Wayne, *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema* (London: Pluto Press, 2001): 41.

44. Esther Leslie, "Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film," in *Understanding Film: Marxist Perspectives*, ed. Mike Wayne (London: Pluto Press, 2005): 48.

45. Dana Polan, *The Political Language of Film and the Avant-Garde* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985): 92.

46. *Ibid.*, 93.

47. Jeff Kinkle and Alberto Toscano note how the historical fact of the destruction of perfectly good coffee to raise the price of it, a fact that is mentioned in *Die Heilige Johanna*, "led Brecht to Marx, and to the dramatization of the link between class position, social knowledge, and aesthetic form evident in the coffee scene from Kuhle Wampe." See Jeff Kinkle and Alberto Toscano, "Filming the Crisis: A Survey," *Film Quarterly* 65 (2011): 48.

48. While often overlooked, female sexuality and a woman's right to choose are important aspects of the film, and, as Kerstin Barndt notes, it is the character Anni's "sexual independence, though, that ultimately determines the heroine's fate and brings the drama of abortion into play". It is Brecht's task in the film to show how Anni's positionality is defined by her social setting. This politics of situatedness is show to be in contrast to the ephemeral notion of young lovers. See Kerstin Barndt, "Aesthetics of Crisis: Motherhood, Abortion, and Melodrama in Irmgard Keun and Friedrich Wolf," *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture* 24 (2008): 82.

49. The formulation "unsettle the spectator" needs further thought, this quote is useful as it clearly articulates that Brecht began to articulate a formal strategy aligned with his political purpose. See Katie Trumpener, "Theory, History and German Film," *Monatshefte* 82 (1990): 300.

50. Ebert, *The Task of Cultural Critique*, 21.

51. John Willet, ed., *Brecht on Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 109.

52. Marc Silberman, ed., *Brecht on Film and Radio* (London: Methuen, 2000), 208.

53. One should note that besides getting the film through the censors, the film was effected by the very depression is sought to examine on film. Nevertheless, despite the best efforts of the authorities to keep the film from being seen, it was relatively successful. After a successful first week, the film was prolonged and opened in 15 separate cinemas. This was followed by showings in London, Amsterdam and Paris. Jan Knopf, *Brecht Handbuch 2*, 443. See Vance Kepley Jr., "The Workers' International Relief and the Cinema of the Left 1921-1935," *Cinema Journal* 23 (1983): 19.

54. Silberman, ed., *Brecht on Film and Radio*, 208-9.

55. Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982): 103. As Katherine Roper notes, Kuhle Wampe was unique — alongside Piel Jutzi's *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Gluck* (*Mother Krause's Journey to Happiness*, 1929) — in that it was the only film to "refer to revolutionary transformation of institutions and the Communist movement that would carry it out". See Katherine Roper, "Looking for the German Revolution in Weimar Films," *Central European History* 31 (1998): 90.

56. Birgel, "*Kuhle Wampe*, Leftist Cinema, and the Politics of Film Censorship in Weimar Germany," 49. Brecht's admiration for groups such as Das Rote Sprachchor was in part due to their ability to put forward arguments to workers' organisations (not merely labour unions) directly. Yet Brecht also was keen to show, as in the tram scene at the end of the film, "the value of proletarian common sense, in which young workers successfully debated older bourgeois passengers about the need to change the world." See Richard Bodek, *Proletarian Performance in Weimar Berlin: Agitprop, Chorus, and Brecht* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1997), 146.

57. Polan, *The Political Language of Film*, 95.

58. Ben Davis, *9.5 Theses on Art and Class* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket, 2013), 13.

59. Fredric Jameson, *Representing Capital: A Reading of Volume One* (London: Verso, 2011), 149.

60. Ebert and Zavarzadeh, *Class in Culture*, 101.

FOR MARX:

THE NEW LEFT RUSSIAN CINEMA

Marijeta Bozovic (Yale University)

CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN CINEMA SWINGS LEFT

What can politically engaged aesthetic productions from the former Soviet Union tell us about socialism? As recently as ten years ago, popular audiences and scholars alike might have answered this question by invoking the dissidents who fled the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War. Throughout the twentieth century, dissidents provided popular and critical "Western" discourses with vivid tales of both the treachery of leftist utopianism and the courage of individual resistance. Today, the outdated imperialist ideologies that undergird this approach have become readily apparent, while a vital strand of post-socialist leftism has surfaced once more across the former Second World.

The former Second World never needed Marxist critique more. As political scientist Stephen Crowley suggests, the central irony underlying contemporary Russian socioeconomic structures and their systematic study is that Russian society requires class-based analysis more than ever in the wake of its official discrediting. The rapid transfer of property into private hands that took place in Russia in the wake of disintegration remains virtually unrivaled, even in Eastern Europe:

> According to the World Bank, starting from a position of relative equality, Russia's increase in its Gini inequality index of 11 percentage points over a decade "is close to a record." [...] [T]his concentration of property and wealth took place not during a period of economic growth, but one of dramatic decline, significantly worse than the U.S. experience of the Great Depression. One study of Russian social mobility — comparing class origins with class destinations — found that from 1990 to 1998, "downward mobility exceeded upward mobility by 30 percent," and that a downward shift, let alone of that magnitude, is highly unusual among mature economies [...]. By one estimate, the number of poor in Russia increased from 2.2 million in 1987–1988 to 66 million by 1993–1995, and a year after the 1998 crisis "four

out of every 10 people slipped into poverty, unable to meet nutritional and other basic needs."[1]

Yet the taboo topic of socioeconomic class remains underexamined by Russian social scientists and mainstream political rhetoric alike. With the "revealing exception" of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), there have been no successful political parties challenging United Russia from the left of the spectrum.[2] Excluding decidedly anti-Marxist studies of the stabilizing potential of a near-mythical Russian middle class, or research declaring Russian exceptionalism to observed global economic patterns, theory has lagged behind the horrors of lived experience.

The notable exception has been the rise of political and socially conscious themes in popular culture and other aesthetic productions, "most notably in film, the most accessible of art forms and one in which the artists are largely dependent on broad appeal in order to sell tickets."[3] The intellectual work of rebuilding class-based critique emerged more prominently in the arts than in political theory, with a peak in 2012, the long year of Russian and international protest. Film scholar Nancy Condee, looking for a common theme among the more striking entries to the 2012 Kinotavr film festival, writes:

> I would risk suggesting that a good candidate might be their concern with class difference. Given Russia's fraught ideological past, class difference is a topic most contemporary filmmakers would be quick (even well-advised) to disavow; it nevertheless remains a recurrent narrative code that informs both the commonalities and disjunctures of its contemporary cinema.[4]

The emerging Russian filmmakers I discuss in this article offer visions of radical politics and aesthetics that learn and diverge from the state socialism that shaped their parents' and grandparents' generations. Russia offers a stage for intellectual and artistic upheavals exceptional both for the political traditions they juxtapose, and for the foregrounded awareness of the ambivalent legacies of these traditions. Tackling a range of contentious subjects from sexuality to police brutality, these films met with controversy in Russia while securing the reputation of their directors on the international festival circuit. I examine three recent films — Svetlana Baskova's *For Marx…* (2012), Angelina Nikonova's *Twilight Portrait* (2011), and Lyubov Lvova and Sergei Taramayev's *Winter Journey* (2013)

— all by female directors or co-directors, and all seeking to imagine and image social alterity after state socialism.

All three films were made between 2011 and 2013, barely missing the coming legislative and cultural changes in Russia, including the notorious legislation against homosexual propaganda passed in the summer of 2013. *For Marx…* offers an explicit engagement with Louis Althusser and lost legacies of Marxist thought, as well as with Sergei Eisenstein's cinema viewed from the other side of the twentieth century. The new Russian left announces its presence forcefully in this darkly comic parable of class struggle in post-Soviet Russia, rediscovering the thematic and formal markers of Soviet cinema as if from a position of (impossible) innocence. *Twilight Portrait* opens with an act of police brutality and sexual violence but defies genre at every turn, sampling the revenge fantasy, erotic thriller, and parable of political eros with equal conviction. In *Winter Journey*, a classical singer falls in love with a street thug in a tale that frames same-sex love as less complicated than class difference in post-Soviet Russia.

In unexpected ways, all three contemporary Russian films interrogate the perils and possibilities of "going to the people" in the twenty-first century. Baskova, who spent months conducting field research with independent labor union organizers across provincial Russia and who cast activists alongside professional actors recognized as People's Artists of the Soviet Union, responds to the challenge of Althusser's essay by merging theory with practice and calling into existence a new form of twenty-first-century Russian socialist intellectual work. The other two films use erotic/romantic fabulae to interrogate post-Soviet class struggle through lenses of gender and sexuality. In my reading, an unspoken motto emerges through the comparison — lines that have appeared in Cyrillic and Latin graffiti alike across the former Second World: *If the revolution is not feminist, it will not be.*

ONCE MORE, FOR MARX

Upon publication and through ongoing critical reception, Louis Althusser's 1965 treatise *Pour Marx* ushered in a new era of Marxist theory. Althusser opens with a critique of contemporary French Marxist thought, highlighting the absence of a native leftist philosophical tradition (the lack, as it were, of a French Rosa Luxemberg or Antonio

Gramsci) and looking to establish a more robust direction for future inquiry in what he termed the mature texts of Marx, over the earlier idealist-inflected works.

In his introductory remarks, Althusser introduces the essays to follow as "witnesses" to the experience shared by the Marxist thinkers of his generation: "the investigation of Marx's philosophical thought, indispensable if we were to escape from the theoretical impasse in which history had put us."[5] History stole their youth via the struggles of the Popular Front, the Spanish Civil War, and the terrible imprint of World War II. "It surprised us just as we entered the world, and turned us students of bourgeois or petty bourgeois origin into men advised of the existence of classes, of their struggles and aims," Althusser writes: "From the evidence it forced on us we drew the only possible conclusion, and rallied to the political organization of the working class, the Communist Party."[6]

But the 1950s brought political and intellectual retreat alike. William S. Lewis summarizes the situation French communists found themselves in after 1956: French intellectual Marxism and the Parti communiste français (PCF) alike "lacked the theoretical resources to deal with the fact that the Soviet Union could no longer be identified with the truth of Marxism."[7] While the "worldview-shattering" events of 1956 — beginning with Khrushchev's de-Stalinization speech on February 25 and culminating with Soviet tanks entering Budapest along the Danube on November 4 — were a tragedy for some fellow travelers, for others the breakdown of Soviet moral authority seemed an opportunity for theoretical liberation. Althusser saw the humanist Marxism popular in the 1960s as fundamentally regressive, one of several dead ends to be "contested both theoretically and politically if Marxism was to preserve and reconstruct itself in its integrity as a philosophy of political practice."[8]

> To defend Marxism […] some leaders had relaunched this old "Left-wing" formula, once the slogan of Bogdanov and the Proletkult. Once proclaimed, it dominated everything. Under its imperative line, what then counted as philosophy could only choose between commentary and silence, between conviction, whether inspired or forced, and dumb embarrassment. Paradoxically, it was none other than Stalin, whose contagious and implacable system of government and thought had induced this delirium, who reduced the madness to a little more reason. Reading between the lines of the few simple pages in which he reproached the zeal of those who were making

strenuous efforts to prove language a superstructure, we could see that there were limits to the use of the class criterion, and that we had been made to treat science, a status claimed by every page of Marx, as merely the first-comer among ideologies. We had to retreat, and, in semi-disarray, return to first principles.[9]

To change the PCF, Althusser tried to correct his generation's understanding of Marxist theory. *Pour Marx* rejected the reductionism characteristic of both humanist and Stalinist positions, demonstrating how both were inconsistent not only with party principles but also with the classical texts of Marxist thought.[10]

According to Althusser, the distinguishing feature of the Marxist conception of the social whole is its refusal to reduce real complexity to some underlying principle of unity, whether this principle be envisaged as spiritual or material [...]. Althusser affirms that a social formation must be viewed as a "decentered totality" in which each instance — the economic, the political and the ideological being the initial three which Althusser distinguishes — possesses its own autonomy and effectivity. This conception implies that each instance or practice is determined not simply by the economic level as in reductionist Marxism, but is "overdetermined" by the totality of other practices, which it also in part reciprocally determines.[11]

The Althusserian revolution that followed the publication of *Pour Marx* and *Lire le Capital* (1965, by Althusser, Étienne Balibar, Roger Establet, Jacques Rancière, and Pierre Macherey) was experienced as emancipatory — if also potentially revisionist and self-affirming. The concept of relative autonomy suggested that arts, sciences, politics, ideology need no longer be traced back to economic determinism: "each had its own particular imminent structure and temporal rhythm which merited an independent and untrammeled investigation."[12]

In a sense, Svetlana Baskova's 2012 Russian-language *For Marx…* picks up there. Beginning with the title and equivocating ellipsis, Baskova (born 1965) suggests a continuation of the debate, translated and transposed into contemporary Russia. In an interview with Vladislav Moiseev, Baskova suggested that she chose her provocative title precisely because there is "no Marx to be found" anywhere in the film. Her naïve labor

union organizer heroes have no idea what force they are really up against; and neither does anyone else in today's Russia:

> The return of capitalism in Russia automatically revives the perspective of class struggle. And Marxism again becomes relevant — in Russia in particular, because we are experiencing the savage capitalism described by Marx [...]. This moment is reflected in the film. People are very hesitant to speak on these topics. Some see it as bad acting on the part of the actors. But perhaps precisely such "bad acting" offers the most adequate reflection of our current condition.[13]

To audiences familiar with Baskova's earlier work, the first shock of *For Marx…* is the film's relative restraint. Wife and creative partner to Anatoly Osmolovsky (founder of Russian actionism during the lawless 1990s), Baskova was hitherto best known for her shock film *Green Elephant* (1999).[14] A critique of the Russian army made during a period of escalating violence in Chechnya, *Green Elephant* remains a cult phenomenon online, though permanently limited in distribution possibilities due to graphic violence and considerable actionist gore.[15] If for all these years, "épotage as a form of expression for pressing social themes has been Baskova's calling card," in the words of Rolling Stone interviewer Viktor Nekhezin, *For Marx…*, her first feature in seven years, is also Baskova's first film with the potential to reach broader audiences.[16]

The actors Pakhomov and Vladimir Yepifantsev remain a constant across both films, and Osmolovsky is once again a producer, but there the similarities end. *For Marx…* offers instead unexpected realism and nearly mainstream aesthetic restraint. The shock value this time lies in the uncanny *deja-vu* of such a political parable in contemporary Russia: noble workers attempt to organize an independent union in a courageous, if doomed stand against the barbaric injustice and murderous tactics of their corrupt capitalist masters. What was old is new again: *For Marx…* quotes, among other sources, Eisenstein and Jean-Luc Godard's Dziga Vertov period.[17] Polina Barskova summarizes,

> One of the most obvious layers of creative digestion here is Sergei Eisenstein's *Strike* (*Stachka*, 1924), set almost a century later [...]. Baskova reintroduces all the elements invented by her predecessor; the plot is formulated as a series of conflicts between the

workers and their capitalist oppressors, between the two labor unions (the "real" one striving for the workers' better future and the "fake" one created by the factory owners *pro formae)*, and between the worker's desire to fight and their fear to lose their jobs or even their lives [...]. All the elements of Eisenstein's psychological mapping in *The Strike* (provocation, violence, and cowardice) serve Baskova to rehearse the same questions that for 70 years of Soviet rule seemed exclusively the domain of official Soviet culture.[18]

For Marx… responds to Althusser's challenge by addressing the paradoxical lack of current Russian Marxist theory and by attempting to remedy the problem with political film art.[19] Critics have been right to sense a connection between Baskova's film and the emergence of a new Russian left "in the realms of art, drama, and especially literature, where works of prominent young authors such as Kirill Medvedev and Pavel Arsen'ev's project *Translit* signal a newly perceived urgency of Marxism in Russian cultural circles."[20] Describing the contemporary thrill of Kirill Medvedev's unexpectedly political poetry, his English-language translator and *n+1* editor Keith Gessen astutely asks, what was it that previous generations failed to understand?

> […] the very thing they thought they knew best of all: Marxism. Not the Soviet "teachings of Karl Marx," but the many intellectual heirs of Marx in the West in the postwar era. This was the Frankfurt School and Sartre and the Situationist International and Pierre Bourdieu and the Anglo-American thinkers around the *New Left Review*; but also such non-aligned thinkers as Barthes, Foucault, and Baudrillard. It's not that these figures were entirely unknown in the Soviet Union, but that they were only partly known, or known in the wrong context.[21]

As an explicitly post-Soviet cultural formation, the new Russian left dares to move past the traumas of state socialism to reimagine engaged art and alternative social organization for the twenty-first century. It does so both by actively engaging with Western Marxism, and by reimagining local intellectual and artistic legacies.

Stills from *For Marx…* (© Svetlana Baskova).

It is telling that Baskova looks for answers and predecessors in nineteenth-century political writing (Vissarion Belinsky) and twentieth-century visual culture — as direct reference via the earnest debates of her working class heroes, or through visual puns. (In one striking *mise-en-scène*, she also arranges the three principal union organizers into a recognizable tableau recreating Andrei Rublev's *Trinity* icon.) While the "greedy and ambitious factory-owners collect Rodchenko, her ideology thirsty workers get together to discuss controversial staples of Russian Marxism such as Mikhail Pokrovskii, and…screen the Marxist works of Godard from his so-called political (or "Dziga Vertov") period."[22] The press materials, meanwhile, claim *For Marx…* a faithful continuation of Soviet production films.[23] The last seems at least in part tongue-in-cheek, for the film blends documentary with highly stylized episodes: the violence of the concluding scenes departs from Soviet cinema to borrow recognizably from post-Soviet gangster action genres. But it is only through such new lenses that something of the old avant-garde spirit might be rescued: otherwise, it becomes the stuff of Sotheby's and office décor for corporate criminals.

Baskova prepared for *For Marx…* while conducting research for a series of documentary shorts entitled *The Only Solution is Resistance* (2011), exploring union activism across Russia and Ukraine. She speaks often of the sudden centrality of union activism to her work: "It seemed to me that the contradictions of contemporary life could be best expressed precisely through this theme"; "[this topic] contains in concentrated form the tragedy of our generation, for it was the working class above all who suffered as a result of the reforms."[24]

It thus seems more than a matter of style when Baskova's film blurs boundaries between fiction and documentary, as between professional and non-professional acting:

her camera work "simulates artless documentary, turning artfully arranged *mises-en-scène* into fragments of life 'caught unawares.'"[25] The field research Baskova's team conducted prior to filming; her aesthetic choices throughout; and even the organization of screenings after release all blend art and activism as forms of intellectual labor. Baskova traveled around Russia's provincial cities before and after shooting *For Marx…*:

> I didn't know anything about labor unions before that — I had heard about them from friends, and since they introduced me to activists themselves I was treated very friendly. This way, I was able to attend meetings and rallies and finally learn how they worked [...]. [We] screened it in different cinema clubs around the country and reactions were very positive. The screenings were normally organized in halls with 50-70 seats, and followed by discussions which lasted no less than two hours.[26]

These screenings were organized and attended by activists and local workers. Baskova suggests that it was during the discussions that followed that she came to understand the flexible genre of her own film: "I thought that it was 'a production drama,' but…it can be perceived as a comedy, a drama — for example, in Chelyabinsk, people were crying. The closer we were to the provinces, the more the film was perceived as a drama. And as a farce, of the Saltykov-Shchedrin, Gogolian kind."[27] The film thus also provides an excuse for community organizing. As one reviewer noted, by telling "real people about real problems," the film informs potentially interested viewers about organizing.[28] Far from a postmodern joke, *For Marx…* proves itself capable of engaging with the political tragedies of the twentieth century in a flexible, updated, and still relevant form.

Even through the idealized portraits of workers as activists and intellectuals, *For Marx…* pushes back against the prevalent and dangerously cynical "two Russias" cliché. (As Ilya Matveev argues, the "two Russias" theory of urban cosmopolitan Moscow and St. Petersburg versus a barely literate wild East "constructs a veritable 'ontology' of Russian politics, naturalizing differences in ways of life, behaviors and tastes that otherwise could be critically explained by social and economic conditions [...] into 'primordial,' eternal qualities, forcing their bearers into an ahistorical and unresolvable confrontation."[29]) If the workers are poeticized here, as reviewer Mikhail Shianov notes, it is to provide a break from "the portrayal that we've grown accustomed to in recent years: the brutal loyalist, ready to break up the opposition with a wrench, or the alcoholic who's lost all human

form."[30] Baskova repeatedly cites her own experiences researching for the film and participating in its reception as evidence against the "two Russias" cliché and its attendant portrayal of provincial Russian life. The very existence of independent labor unions in Russia, she argues, speaks to a small but real local victory.[31]

On the surface, Baskova's film is nearly sexless. Heroes and villains alike are male, as is the family struggle revealed at the close: brother kills brother, inheriting the sins of the father, in a plot twist that reads as Biblical, Oedipal, or Dostoevskian depending on the viewer's approach. There is a hint of originary erotic transgression in the psychoanalytically suggestive plotline: the brutal factory owner, (legitimate) son of a former KGB official turned private capitalist, kills his (illegitimate) activist half-brother. The films to which I turn next foreground gender and sexuality in the "longing for the people" that they portray — but Baskova's entire project, from research, execution, to dissemination, models "going to the people" for the twenty-first century.

EROS AND THE POLICE

If in general Russian films of the 1990s focused on deconstructing Soviet narratives, the following decades brought the opposite concern: reconstructing Russian national identity. While commercial cinema and television produced hordes of blockbusters celebrating historical and folk heroes, Dusty Wilmes notes that independent and arthouse cinema followed suit:

This is certainly the case with two of the most celebrated films of the so-called "New Wave," Kirill Serebrennikov's *Yuri's Day* (*Iur'ev den'*, 2008) and Sergei Loznitsa's *My Joy* (*Schast'e moe*, 2010) [...]. The journeys of their respective protagonists constitute a modern-day "return to the people," but the Russian *narod* (people) that they encounter has little in common with the one envisioned by nineteenth-century populists like Alexander Herzen. Both films depict the Russian folk in an unflattering light, using devices of the horror genre and the grotesque to create what one critic calls "social horror films" [...]. these films represent the two predominant tendencies in recent independent cinema's nationhood discourse: neo-populism, a fraught but ultimately reaffirming exploration of Russian cultural

history; and neo-chernukha, a continuation of chernukha's utter rejection of all traditions, past, present and future.[32]

Angelina Nikonova and Olga Dihovichnaya's *Twilight Portrait* tiptoes along the divide, but ultimately joins more recent films that "eschew the negative identity, 'heroless-ness' and utter despondency of neo-chernukha films like Balabanov's *Cargo 200*, Aleksei Mizgirev's *Tambourine, Drum* and Loznitsa's *My Joy* [...] to salvage meaning from Russian cultural myths and traditions, such as Christian collectivism and kenoticism."[33]

Nikonova and Dihovichnaya (born 1976 and 1980) already represent a different generation than does Baskova. Nikonova studied filmmaking in New York in the 1990s and struggled to find work upon her return to Russia. "Russia is a very chauvinistic society, and directing is considered a man's job," she explains in interview: "I tried it all; I even dyed my hair dark brown, but it didn't help. My scripts were popular but they never let me on set because they're not sure a woman can handle men in production."[34] In the end, she and Dihovichnaya, her co-writer, star, and muse, decided to go it alone.

Dihovichnaya, an established actress (and the widow of director and screenwriter Ivan Dykhovichny), wrote the original screenplay based on her own experiences as a child psychologist. The first version was reputedly even bleaker than the final cut, but the central conceit all along was to highlight the difference between two worlds: the protected private realm that some upper-middle class Russians are able to create at home and the external social reality. In Nikonova's words: "But what you step on out in the street is basically piles of shit."[35]

To film on the micro-budget of their pooled private resources and in several weeks, Nikonova returned to her former hometown of Rostov-on-Don. The myth of return shapes the narrative across the majority of reviews and interviews: Nikonova incorporated real encounters in the film, including the theft of her purse shortly before shooting, an incident she then used to kick off the heroine's downfall.[36] While Nikonova was careful to mask specific locations, creating an abstract portrait of a city center and outskirts, the locals soon ran away with the film.

Nikonova's team held open casting calls in Rostov-on-Don, looking for non-professional actors to fill in the cast. Dihovichnaya remarks that the local accent and speech patterns added a great deal to the film: "On top of musical intonation, [the local actors] added fantastic neologisms [...]. Rostovites have extraordinarily rich imaginations

and speech patterns. They improvise new words and sentences on the spot."[37] Several key moments were in fact improvised by Sergey Borisov, the male protagonist/antagonist, and by the young local performer playing his younger brother. (The latter, a Rostov-on-Don rapper with the stage name "Bla," charmed Nikonova into shaping a new character around his talents.)

The most dramatic change occurred when they met Borisov, a real police officer, who helped them procure the police car they used for filming.[38] The film was originally imagined as an erotic fable across generations, depicting an affair between an older woman and much younger man (*à la* Catherine Breillat), but the casting changed the story line. (Borisov's life also changed dramatically after the release of *Twilight Portrait*, but despite a blossoming film career, reputedly he still responds to reporters like a former police officer: "Why do you want to know?"[39])

Reimagined, the plotline illustrates the interlocking power dynamics of gender and money. The film blends scenes reminiscent of Michael Haneke, such as a dinner party exposé where a drunk Marina tells her husband and friends exactly what she thinks of them, with scenes more akin to Lars von Trier — from the portrait of depression in *Melancholia* (2011) to the holy harlotry of *Breaking the Waves* (1996) — or of Andrea Arnold's *Red Road* (2006). Sex and money refuse to parse separately: adultery is exposed in very Marxist terms as the entertainment of the bourgeoisie, while police brutality and the rape of sex workers is part and parcel of life in the precariat. Marina, a social worker who specializes in treating young victims of abuse, confesses that she no longer harbors any hope of making a difference: the surplus classes drunkenly beat and rape their children, who grow up alcoholics and monsters in turn. The fragile hypocrisy of her designer-clad existence is driven home brutally when, after a perfect storm of accidents, she is mistaken for a high-class prostitute by the local patrol and treated accordingly.

At some point it is no longer sufficient, or possible, to escape into the private home — the available female rebellion under Soviet times. Marina stalks down the police officer responsible for her sexual assault; although, as we see nothing but only hear the incident, we never learn whether he participated in or ordered the act. And then the film confounds audience and genre expectations alike: in place of the expected revenge, Marina seduces her assailant in an attempt at emotional intimacy. Lying to her husband, she temporarily moves in with Andrei, learning the details of his traumatized and abandoned boyhood

from observing his permanently stoned young brother and mute grandfather, both of whom Andrei supports and cares for in an apartment tellingly devoid of women or grace.

As explicit sexual scenes alternate with shots of comical domesticity, Marina cooks, scrubs, and screws away the squalor of Andrei's life. (Despite the brutal buildup, audiences inevitably laugh at Andrei's genuine shock — not when a strange woman offers him oral sex in an elevator, but when she garnishes his soup with fresh parsley.)

> The attempts of these educated, upper-class heroines to clean up the squalor of their new surroundings evoke the intelligentsia's enlightenment mission. However, significantly it is [they] who ultimately learn from the *narod*, achieving a new sense of humility, purpose and, impliedly, a more authentic life [...]. It is no coincidence [...] that the neo-populist narratives of recent Russian cinema frequently depict a protagonist paradoxically drawn to the abject, thus leading to a break with their former identity and a reunion with their "true" cultural roots.[40]

While the films of Balabanov and Loznitsa send a clear message of "don't meddle" in their portrayal of the people, emphasizing total cultural degradation and unbreakable cycles of violence, post-chernukha films place "a measured, qualified hope in the fallen Russian *narod*.[41]"

Once again, the "making of" story behind *Twilight Portrait* highlights the intelligentsia filmmakers learning from the people. Cheap production values only add to the sense of authenticity: shot on a Canon Mark II by the able hands of cinematographer Eben Bull, the picture maintains a "loose, handheld feel" in tension with the "careful framing and sensitive use of natural light."[42] The meta-narrative is even obliquely echoed by the story line: Marina is called a fool when she buys a used camera from a local drunk in a moment of pity. She uses the "twilight portrait" function to film despite the lack of light; there is even a scene of suggestive exchange of the policeman's gun for the camera at the denouement. As reviewer Svetlana Khokhriakova notes, it is tempting "to compare Olga Dykhovichnaya's heroine with Vera Zasulich, going to the people."[43] It is as tempting to see the filmmakers as repeating her journey.

Dihovichnaya's inscrutable face and her heroine's inexplicable behavior render *Twilight Portrait* a veritable Rorschach test for audiences.[44] Critics read the film as a portrayal of Stockholm syndrome or of elaborate psychological torture alike; as an anti-
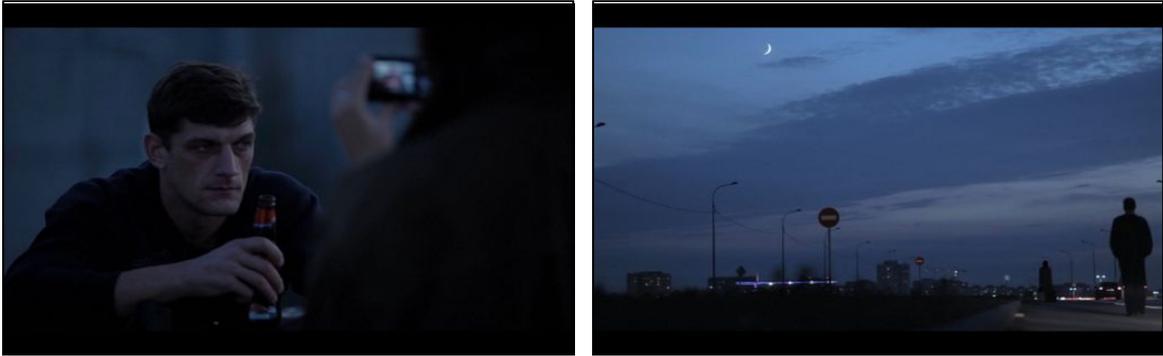
feminist or feminist parable; or as "a portrait of a woman's descent into a high functioning form of insanity."[45] Recontextualized alongside films like *For Marx…* and *Winter Journey*, the most persuasive reading of *Twilight Portrait* appears far closer to the surface; however, generic expectations are so strong that we refuse to believe our eyes.

Nikonova's film radically disrupts expectations provoked by the rape revenge genre. Feminist scholar Claire Henry notes,

> After being raped, Marina showers and picks debris out from under her nails (ruining evidence that is usually collected in a rape kit), using another common motif of the genre to further indicate that there is no possibility of justice via the law. These readily identifiable characteristics of the genre establish viewer expectations that Marina will take revenge [...]. Marina's response to rape is a radical and clever twist on the genre, where seduction and the redemptive power of love are used to seduce Andrei) — and the viewer) — out of the cycle of violence [...]. In the Q&A after the London Film Festival screening, Nikonova picked up on the wording of an audience question and affirmed that "reaching for people" is a key phrase [...]. Unpleasantness or implausibility aside, *Twilight Portrait* offers a radical alternative to the typical responses to sexual violence in both cinema and society. At times baffled by her behavior, at the end the spectator is positioned, like Andrei, to follow Marina's ethical lead as she gives up revenge and pursues her idealistic, restorative route.[46]

Andrei quite literally relinquishes his badge and gun to follow Marina into the liminal twilight. Credits roll, and while a Russia where these two might find light (or even, as in the ending of Bulgakov's 1930s novel *Master and Margarita*, merely peace) remains unimaginable, *Twilight Portrait* challenges us to at least admit the possibility of a radically alternative future.[47]

Marina's relationship with Andrei is ultimately portrayed as "radical, fearless social work [...] a kind of pseudo-Christian exercise in healing."[48] Audiences struggle to read signs as relatively straightforward as the cross that Marina wears around her neck: in the twenty-first century, Christian Eros doesn't fully parse. (We might compare here the work of Georgian-Russian poet and theorist Keti Chukhrov; or in the American poetic context, that of Ann Carson: "decreation" as a feminine form of kenosis.) As with von Trier's holy harlots, the journey to rebirth includes a passage through hell.

Stills from *Twilight Portrait* (© Angelina Nikonova).

The evolution of Andrei is no less critical to the political themes and emancipatory hopes of the film. While the rape-revenge genre often casts the rapists as policemen in order to justify vigilantism, in *Twilight Portrait* the choice seems "part of the fabric of the film's realism, reflecting a sociopolitical issue of police corruption in Russia (which, as the director pointed out during a Q&A after the London Film Festival screening, is an issue common to many places around the world)."[49] The monstrous *ment*, or cop, has become a staple in contemporary Russian cinema: but nowhere else does he reform. When Andrei hands over the symbols of local power and masculinity, he too has no idea what comes next. "I'll figure out the rest myself," he tells his former partner, but he knows he cannot follow Marina as one of the police. Nikonova's *Twilight Portrait* ends as if illustrating terms familiar from Rancière and Foucault: there can be no politics where there is police.

ROMANTICISM IN WINTER

My last example is on the surface the least subversive (it has been described as "aggressively chaste") of the three films, were it not for the timing of its release. Lyubov Lvova and Sergei Taramayev's *Winter Journey* (2013) is inevitably shadowed by the story of Russian legislative change: "For a film centered on a gay relationship even to get made in Russia is remarkable; more extraordinary still is that the culture ministry in Moscow approved the film in a year when Vladimir Putin signed a law criminalizing 'gay propaganda.'"[50] Taramayev called the ministry's decision to approve the film nothing short of miraculous.

Winter Journey / Zimnii put' borrows its title from *Winterreise* (op. 89), a song cycle for voice and piano by Franz Schubert set to Wilhelm Müller's poetry. Written by the fatally ill composer in 1828, this musical piece describes a romantic hero's journey through a somber, snow-covered world [...]. Taramaev and L'vova integrate the German composer's music into the film's diegesis when the protagonist Erik (Alexei Frandetti) rehearses and performs one of the songs from the *Winterreise* cycle for a vocal competition. Inspired by Schubert's dramatic parable of love and betrayal, *Winter Journey* also deconstructs the traditional archetype of the romantic hero through an unusual (for Russia) cinematic portrayal of unrequited love between a homosexual and a heterosexual man.[51]

Many Russian festivals were afraid to take on the film. St. Petersburg's Kinotavr pulled *Winter Journey* from the lineup in June 2013. Lvova and Taramayev (born 1984 and 1958, respectively) didn't even submit the film to the Moscow International Film Festival, given organizer Nikita Mikhalkov's well-known views.[52] In August 2013, the Russian Ministry of Culture annulled the film's distribution license; *Winter Journey* made its way only to a few smaller film festivals in Russia. Taramayev affirms that when writing the film, "We assumed, naturally, that we were stepping on the state's corns, but we had no idea to what extent."[53]

Amidst the whir of controversy, both directors and stars made a point of stating that *Winter Journey* was "not a gay film."[54] Review after sympathetic review concurred, in the Russian-language press. "There are darker things than homosexuality and drugs — for example, Schubert's 'Winterreise' song cycle," reviewer Anastasiia Mordvinova puts it: "The censorship Committee should pay attention to this propoganda for German Romanticism, for classical music that tugs at the soul, driving it in a fatal and vicious circle: 'sleep — long walks — Schubert — sleep — long walks — Schubert.' The only way out of this Samsara is to freeze to death."[55]

Like their fellow Russian "New Wave" auteur Kirill Serebrennikov, Lvova and Taramayev are both escapees from the theater; both also had serious and lengthy educations in music.

Graduates of the Peter Naumovich Fomenko school, the remarkable theater artists Sergei Taramaev and Lyubov Lvova abandoned the theater a few years ago, drawn by

a desire to devote all their time filming their own auteur arthouse film. To everyone else, the idea seemed desperate — they had no money, and neither Taramaev nor Lvova had any experience or education in writing or directing.[56]

The desire to escape from success and a closed artistic community is part of what they portray in *Winter Journey*. The tremendously talented and equally lost protagonist Erik (Aleksei Frandetti) is a student of the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, preparing Schubert's song cycle for competition. (The filmmakers claim the *fabula* is entirely fictional, taking no inspiration from the life of the late-Soviet opera singer Erik Kurmangaliev, but the coincidence — and the casting of the "exotic" Frandetii as Erik — seems too striking to ignore.[57]) Michael Haneke used the same song cycle for the *Piano Teacher* (2000), but the melancholy legacy of Schubert lends itself readily to Russia: "Schubert's 'Winter Journey' is really very Russian… genuine and enduring sorrow and restrained quiet desperation are constant leitmotifs precisely of the Moscow winter, not the Viennese."[58]

Erik's winter journey home through the streets of an unrecognizable Moscow inevitably takes him into the corner store for (strictly forbidden) vodka. We glimpse a banal and humiliating family life with his mother and stepfather, and the more enticing queer community of elite artists where nothing he does is questioned — and we understand both to amount to an artistic dead end. "Nothing is sacred to you queers," remarks the young thug who steals Erik's music player and heart: he might as well mean the professionalization of music among elite intelligentsia communities, and the making of Schubert into the stuff of singing competitions.

As in the two previous films, the directors of *Winter Journey* went to great pains to camouflage the setting, an especially daunting task in Moscow.[59] To do so, Lvova and Taramayev procured the visual and sound design of Mikhail Krichman and Andrei Dergachev, frequent collaborators of the far better known director Andrey Zvyagintsev (of *Elena*, 2011, and *Leviathan*, 2014, fame).[60] But Krichman's roving handheld work here could not differ more from the precisely composed images demanded by Zvyagintsev; nor could it render more Romantic the Russian streetscapes in winter.[61] Again, the effect creates a sense of the universal and untimely, for the "when" of *Winter Journey* is equally slippery as its "where."

Into such a world explodes Lekha the *gopnik* or provincial thug, the seducer, the demon — also the first actor cast in the film, in an undoubtedly fetishized portrayal of imagined street vitality.[62] We see Lekha entirely through the desiring eyes of depleted elites (although some audiences, on the contrary, report experiencing Lekha as the outsider leading viewers into an elite queer world).[63] The two meet when Lekha robs Erik on a bus, and the film begins to explore their divergent worlds:

> The space of homosexual men has a certain hallucinogenic quality to it: artificially bright and stylized, filled with drug-induced adrenalin rushes and the synthesizer-laden music of Klaus Nomi. The dream-like, "otherworldly" space of the gay community is juxtaposed to the drab and lifeless contours of the "straight" world, such as Erik's family apartment (where the conversations are mundane and focus on a leaking toilet) or a snow-covered Moscow back yard (where Liokha receives a thrashing for stealing a wealthy Russian's dog).[64]

Like Humbert Humbert's Lolita, Lekha is oddly unsurprised by his new surroundings: presumably, he has already "seen everything" on the streets. What he has never *heard* before, however, is Erik singing. The two begin to fall in love in ways that neither thought possible; and indeed, it isn't possible. A new musical motif takes over: the Demon aria from Anton Rubinshtein's eponymous opera, indicating doomed love and the presence of the satanic (we see Lekha with horns; his totem animal is the lizard; etc.). Erik and Lekha briefly dream of escaping to India, which might as well be utopia. (Like love, India is enticing precisely for its exotic and spiritual unattainability; "What did you see, when you were singing?" an instructor asks Erik. He answers: "it was like I was reborn in a lotus blossom."[65]) The rest is predictable: betrayal, violent robbery, Erik collapsed in the snow. The final vision of the two young men sliding down a snowy hill in pure joy may be Erik's last illusion.

Such an ending is foreshadowed as early as the pre-credit shot that opens the film: the extravagantly dressed figure of a man in drag (played by travesty artist Andrei Tsymbalov) runs across a bridge and the screen, drunk or heartbroken or in serious trouble.[66] The scene resembles the opening of the recent Iranian arthouse vampire allegory *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (Ana Lily Amirour, 2014). If that opening helps to foreshadow an allegory of the veil, in *Winter Journey* we glimpse a performance of gender

and class equally misplaced in modern-day Russia. All love for Lekha is "queer": decadent; the stuff of artifice and performance; the lies of rich elites. This is no country for poor young men.

Stills from *Winter Journey* (© Lyubov Lvova and Sergei Taramayev).

IF THE REVOLUTION IS NOT FEMINIST, IT WILL NOT BE

My readings of these contemporary Russian films suggest that in both *Twilight Portrait* and *Winter Journey*, sensational and distracting central plot devices — police rape, homosexuality — only partially screen the even larger issue of class conflict in post-Soviet Russia, thereby paradoxically highlighting its looming, invisible magnitude. *For Marx…*, as the title alone makes abundantly clear, addresses the conflict head on. What the juxtaposition makes equally apparent is the emerging centrality of gender to the critique of contemporary Russian capitalism. While I am not able to develop this point fully in the present brief essay, it not only invites further research but seems the most pointed departure setting apart contemporary politically engaged aesthetic productions from mere nostalgia for socialisms past.

The filmmakers behind *For Marx…, Twilight Portrait,* and *Winter Journey* alike might be surprised to hear their films read in the context of feminist socialism: a few might ask sharply whose feminism I had in mind.[67]

Should *Twilight Portrait* be considered a feminist film? …Some felt the film offered a daring, psychologically complex but still-credible portrait of a woman's unexpected reaction to sexual violence; others, especially Russian and older viewers, felt the pic

violated core feminist tenets, or simply considered it too unpleasant or implausible. Offshore, it's likely to provoke similarly polarized reactions. [68]

All three films were perceived as "not local," and all the filmmakers accused of catering to international festival audiences. Reviewers complained, for example, that *For Marx…* makes little sense "in the context of Russian cinema, which lacks the category of 'political film.'" [69] Critics of *Twilight Portrait* noted, "Fest bookings are a certainty for this item, which stylistically feels more European than Russian, but its controversial storyline may force it to dwell in the twilight of niche distribution, even (perhaps especially) domestically." [70] Still others summed *Winter Journey* as an "imperfect, but important attempt on the part of Russian cinema to claim the language of European Romanticism." [71] But the female filmmaker is often something of a Lady Merle; as Henry James's best villainess put it, women belong to place differently. [72]

Equally striking are the creative partnerships at the heart of all three films — surprising, given the auteur feel of each; less so, given their shared preoccupation with the Other. Taramayev confessed, "Roughly speaking, Erik is Lyuba, and I am Lekha. [73] Dihovichnaya downplayed her role as Nikonova's creative partner, calling *Twilight Portrait* an "auteur film and the debut film of the talented director Angelina Nikonova" — but only over Nikonova's protests to the contrary. [74]

A structural Marxist might accuse the last two films of humanism, but the dead end in each suggests rather that the personal is political; that there is no private escape without a greater social transformation; and that gender and sexuality must be at the forefront of contemporary discussions of cultural and economic injustice. Such discussions require a robust leftist intellectual tradition, unafraid of its political and aesthetic nineteenth and twentieth-century roots or twenty-first century realities. In Russia today,

> Women make up 70 percent of the unemployed. And of these unemployed women, 85 percent have higher or specialized educations. Now the placement officers say they should be cleaners or nurses, the lowest-paid, least prestigious jobs. They say women under 18 or over 45 should not be trained or retrained, because there are no jobs for them. The paradigms of women's lives are changing. Why should they get a higher education? [...] Through the media of the new Russian market, sexual freedom

is being purveyed as a heterosexist male prerogative, with women enjoined to consume their own commodification as a means of earning value in men's eyes.[75]

This time, the gendering of revolution and of the new Russian left alike must be seriously rethought.

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1. Stephen Crowley, "Russia: The Reemergence of Class in the Wake of the First 'Classless' Society," *East European Politics & Societies* 29:3 (2015): 699.

2. *Ibid.*, 703.

3. *Ibid.*, 707.

4. Nancy Condee, "Fifteen Realities of Russian Cinema (Kinotvr 2012)," *KinoKultura* 38 (2012), accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.kinokultura.com/2012/38-condee.shtml.

5. Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (New York: Verso, 2005), 21-22.

6. *Ibid.*, 21-22.

7. William S. Lewis, *Louis Althusser and the Traditions of French Marxism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 161-162.

8. *Ibid.*, 163.

9. Althusser, *For Marx*, 21-22.

10. Lewis, *Louis Althusser and the Traditions of French Marxism*, 163.

11. Peter Dews, "Althusser, Structuralism, and the French Epistemological Tradition," in *Althusser: A Critical Reader*, ed. Gregory Elliott (1994), 113-114.

12. *Ibid.*, 113-114.

13. Vladislav Moiseev, "Za Marksom Marks," *Russkiy Reporter* (January 31, 2013), accessed October 30, 2016, http://rusrep.ru/article/2013/01/24/marx/. Translations mine unless otherwise noted.

14. *Ibid.*

15. In keeping with the film's "trash aesthetics" and actionist ethos, Baskova; Osmolovsky; actor, muse, and performance artist Sergei "Pakhom" Pakhomov; and the rest of the creative team eschewed copyright and reputedly earned not a single kopeck from the film's underground success.

16. Viktor Nekhezin, "Svetlana Baskova i Sergey Pakhomov: Para snov dlya protokola," *Rolling Stone* (March 15, 2013), accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.rollingstone.ru/cinema/interview/15841.html.

17. "Berlinale Q&A: Svetlana Baskova," *Exberliner* (February 8, 2013), accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.exberliner.com/culture/film/berlinale-qa-svetlana-baskova/.

18. Polina Barskova, "Svetlana Baskova: *For Marx* (*Za Marksa, 2012*)," *Kino Kultura* 39 (2013), accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.kinokultura.com/2013/39r-zamarksa.shtml.

19. Baskova confirms that her title referenced Althusser's, "except mine ends not with an exclamation mark but ellipses, suggesting deliberation," Andriy Manchuk, "Za Marksa…Pochemu Troetochie?," *Liva* (March 13, 2013), accessed October 30, 2016, http://liva.com.ua/za-marxa.html.

20. Barskova, "Svetlana Baskova: *For Marx*." Strikingly, the most recent project of Kirill Medvedev's protest rock band Arkady Kots is an album entitled *Music for the Working Class,* commissioned by Russian labor union activists.

21. Keith Gessen, "Kirill Medvedev: An Introduction," in Kirill Medvedev, *It's No Good: Poems/Essays/Actions*, trans. Keith Gessen, with Mark Krotov, Cory Merrill, and Bela Shayevich (New York: n+1/Ugly Duckling Presse, 2012), 18. I read Medvedev's work as a post-Soviet avant-garde praxis in "Poetry on the Front Line: Kirill Medvedev and a New Russian Poetic Avant-garde" in *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie* 70.1 (2014).

22. Barskova, "Svetlana Baskova: *For Marx*."

23. Condee, "Fifteen Realities of Russian Cinema (Kinotvr 2012)."

24. Manchuk, "Za Marksa…Pochemu Troetochie?"

25. Barskova, "Svetlana Baskova: *For Marx*."

26. Konstanty Kuzma, "Svetlana Baskova on *For Marx…*," trans. D. Loginov, *EEFB* (March 1, 2013), accessed October 30, 2016, https://eefb.org/archive/march-2013/svetlana-baskova-on-for-marx/.

27. Nekhezin,"Svetlana Baskova i Sergey Pakhomov."

28. Vladimir Lyashtenko, "Kino tol'ko dlya chlenov profsoyuza," *Gazeta.ru* (March 16, 2013), accessed October 30, 2016, https://www.gazeta.ru/culture/2013/03/16/a_5059513.shtml.

29. Ilya Matveev, "The Two Russias Culture War: Constructions of the 'People' during the 2011-2013 Protests," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 113:1 (2014): 188.

30. Mikhail Shiyanov, "'Za Marksa…kipit nash razum," *RIA Novosti* (July 13, 2012), accessed October 30, 2016, https://ria.ru/authors/20120713/698681990.html.

31. Nekhezin,"Svetlana Baskova i Sergey Pakhomov."

32. Dusty Wilmes, "National Identity (De)construction in Recent Independent Cinema: Kirill Serebrennikov's *Yuri's Day* and Sergei Loznitsa's *My Joy*," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 8:3 (2014), 218.

33. Wilmes, "National Identity (De)construction in Recent Independent Cinema," 218.

34. Carmen Gray, "Feminism Russian Style? Angelina Nikonova's Twilight Portrait," *BFI* (March 4, 2014), accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/interviews/feminism-russian-style-angelina-nikonova-s-twilight-portrait.

35. Natalia Antonova, "The Horror of 'Twilight Portrait.' Also, the Beauty," *Feministe* (July 19, 2012), accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.feministe.us/blog/archives/2012/07/19/the-horror-of-twilight-portait-also-the-beauty/. Cf. "In direct contrast to the many Western women who struggled to escape a devalued home into a powerful professional and political world, many Soviet women (and men) sought sanctuary and fulfillment in the less monitored world of family and friends, a domestic space that was far more capacious and stimulating than obligatory work or meaningless politics," Beth Holmgren, "Bug Inspectors and Beauty Queens: The Problems of Translating Feminism into Russian," *Postcommunism and the Body Politic,* ed. Ellen E. Berry (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 21.

36. Elena Glazkova, "Angelina Nikonova: 'My ne na poverkhnosty'," *Snimi Film* (November 22, 2011), accessed October 30, 2016, http://snimifilm.com/post/angelina-nikonova-my-ne-na-poverkhnosti. The ensuing incident when Marina attempts to report her passport stolen to a bored female police officer was handled "with such deft absurdism she was asked to submit [the scene] to Cannes as a standalone short," see Carmen Gray, "Feminism Russian Style?"

37. Lyashtenko, "Kino tol'ko dlya chlenov profsoyuza."

38. Gray, "Feminism Russian Style?"

39. Glazkova, "Angelina Nikonova: 'My ne na poverkhnosty'"; cf. Michael Gibbons, "ND/NF Discovery: Angelina Nikonova's 'Twilight Portrait' (Russia)," *Film Linc* (March 30, 2012), accessed October 30, 2016, https://www.filmlinc.org/daily/nd-nf-discovery-angelina-nikonovas-twilight-portrait-russia/.

40. Wilmes, "National Identity (De)construction in Recent Independent Cinema," 224.

41. *Ibid.*, 229.

42. Leslie Felperin, "Review: 'Twilight Portrait'," *Variety* (June 18, 2011), accessed October 30, 2016, http://variety.com/2011/film/reviews/twilight-portrait-1117945475/.

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45. Peter Galvin, "Twilight Portrait Review," *SBS* (January 1, 2009), accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.sbs.com.au/movies/review/twilight-portrait-review.

46. Claire Henry, "Challenging the Boundaries of Cinema's Rape-Revenge Genre in Katalin Varga and Twilight Portrait," *Studies in European Cinema* 10:2-3 (2013), 140

47. "The film, ending on this note of indeterminacy about future, is an opportunity for the viewer to reflect on the uncertain course of contemporary Russian culture," Galvin, "Twilight Portrait Review."

48. Gray, "Feminism Russian Style?"

49. Henry, "Challenging the Boundaries of Cinema's Rape-Revenge Genre," 140.

50. Paul Gould, "London Russian Film Festival – Report," *Financial Times* (November 6, 2013), accessed October 30, 2016, https://www.ft.com/content/577f7b6a-46cc-11e3-9c1b-00144feabdc0.

51. Olga Mesropova, "Winter Journey," *Kino Kultura* 42 (2013), accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.kinokultura.com/2013/42r-zimniiput.shtml.

52. Anna Malpas, "Russian 'Gay Film' Scares Festivals," *Telegraph* (September 13, 2013), accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/film-news/10306431/Russian-gay-film-scares-festivals.html.

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54. See Marc David Jacobs, "Film and the Struggle for LGBT Rights," *Policy Scotland* (February 10, 2014), accessed October 30, 2016, http://policyscotland.gla.ac.uk/film-struggle-lgbt-rights/.

55. Anastasia Mordvinova, "Zemnoy put'," *Peterburgskiy Teatral'nyi Zhurnal* 2 (2014), accessed October 30, 2016, http://ptj.spb.ru/archive/76/home-cinema-76/zimnij-put/.

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57. Anna Balueva, "'Zimniy put' zharkim letom. Vymorazhivaet!," *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* (August 11, 2013), accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.kp.ru/daily/26117/3011812/.

58. Polina Ryzhova, "'Zimniy put': robost' vlyublennykh," *Seans* (February 22, 2014), accessed October 30, 2016, http://seance.ru/blog/reviews/winterjourney_review/.

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61. Boyd Van Hoeij, "Winter Journey (Zimny put): Goteborg Review," *The Hollywood Reporter* (February 6, 2014), accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/winter-journey-zimny-put-goteborg-677693.

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63. Lyubov and Taramaev, "Myi lyudi ne politicheskie."

64. Mesropova, "Winter Journey."

65. Ryzhova, "'Zimniy put': robost' vlyublennykh."

66. Mesropova, "Winter Journey."

67. Cf. Serguei Oushakine's *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, War, and Loss in Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

68. Henry, "Challenging the Boundaries of Cinema's Rape-Revenge Genre," 142.

69. Lyashtenko, "Kino tol'ko dlya chlenov profsoyuza."

70. Felperin, "Review: 'Twilight Portrait'."

71. Oleg Zintsov, "Salamandra Zimoi," *Vedomosti* (February 24, 2014), accessed October 30, 2016, http://www.vedomosti.ru/newspaper/articles/2014/02/24/salamandra-zimoj.

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73. Volchek, "Pilyuli dlya horugvenostsa."

74. Lyashtenko, "Kino tol'ko dlya chlenov profsoyuza."

75. Holmgren, "Bug Inspectors and Beauty Queens," 25.

INTERVIEWS | ENTREVISTAS

"ANOTHER KIND OF PRIMITIVE DREAM". INTERVIEW WITH APICHATPONG WEERASETHAKUL

by Susana Nascimento Duarte (IFILNOVA)

and José Bértolo (CEC - University of Lisbon)

One could say that your films (and installations) constitute a kind of psychogeographic cinema, in the sense that memory is what triggers images and the circulation between them. But we sense that more and more you tend to use cinema and your work to proceed to an archaeology of collective memory in your country, even if this broader memory is inseparable from your own life and individual memories. How did you become interested in this dimension of the repressed History of Thailand? Can you track this back to a particular moment in your work, or was it something virtually there from the beginning?

It is what filmmaking offered me. Before I didn't think of filmmaking as something internal. It was the flow of this career, the fact that it made me meet so many people, my actors and other crew members, that brought me to this connection between film and the expression of memories. In fact, you need a lot of people to help you bring this out, and along the way the idea of sharing has become more important in the actual work. And then, I started to question my own identity, because of the encounter with other identities, especially my actress, Jenjira, who opened up her history of growing up in the same region, the northeast of Thailand. That's why I started thinking on what I know about my country. In order to get different perspectives, I travel with her and other crew member — the art director, for instance — along the Mekong area, to interview people, with no motive other than to just listen and document. Automatically, this awareness of repression came up. And it is part of life, it came up really naturally, because I just present my life and this has become my life. It is automatically there.

In a late scene of Cemetery of Splendor, *we see superimposed on the blue sky an amoeba, which is known for its striking ability to change its shape. The search for an elusive form seems very present in your work ever since* Mysterious Object at Noon, *in which it is the exquisite corpse that helps shaping the narrative and the film. In a way, every film is a prisoner of its final form, but all of your works seem to search for ways of breaking up their form, of overflowing. I find this*

particularly striking in films such as Mysterious Object, Haunted Houses *or* Mekong Hotel, *which you described somewhere as a "rehearsal for an imaginary film", but I guess we could extend this to all of your films. To what extent is the final form of your films self-sufficient? Would you say that the best way to experience them is to hallucinate other imaginary films* over *them?*

I never experience my own films. The magicians never experience their own magic, because they know the trick behind it. So, behind my films, for me, there is the whole history of each shot, what happened there, the material we left out… In the end, I came to appreciate the whole thing as a stream of performance. I feel that the fluidity is to be found during this performance. And the cut off time is just to release remnants, the products. It is basically dictated by economy and the producers, the festivals' deadlines or whatever. Otherwise, I would keep doing it, sculpting, reshooting.

You also seem very interested in capturing on film elements of dematerialization which are usually found in the natural world — for example, the amoeba, the skies, the river in Blissfully Yours *or* Mekong Hotel, *the ashes in* Luminous People, *extreme light and obscurity in* Tropical Malady *or* Uncle Boonmee, *the mist in* Vapour, *etc. The way you use these elements suggests that you conceptualize reality as something eminently fluid and metamorphic. This recalls some early scientific films in which microscopes were used to reveal to us that reality could be, in fact, quite surreal in its core. How surreal would you say reality is in your perception of it?*

It's not surreal. It's just nature that is always in a process of transformation. Your question is already an answer in itself: this idea of impermanence is everywhere, even in the performance that I mentioned — in each day's shooting, the actors' mood, the weather, the food we eat. That's the reason why I really try to control, or better, to conduct the elements of a given setting, as if it were an orchestra. I enjoy it very much. I used to like certain parts of the filmmaking better than others, but lately I feel that everything has its own rhythm, that everything affects everything. So, now, I even go to the hotels we are going to stay in and select myself the quality of the bed and the food. Regarding all these things, I became like grandma: I want the best of what our budget (which is a very low budget, anyway) can provide, because it affects the overall experience, for instance, say, what the light technician eats, etc... This is what I also call fluidity, the fluidity of things that you can more or less manipulate.

In your films several levels of reality seem to converge in one single plane, where a hidden and psychological geography mingles with the real and visible world, and puts us in connection with something behind, with the realm of dream, or of utopia (that doesn't exist in Thailand, as you said). This is very striking for us in the West, because we are used to separate the realms of the real and the unreal. The natural acceptance of all these dimensions as part of the same world is very disturbing in your work, but at the same time it seems almost like a political statement, with consequences for our vision of the world, but also of ourselves, of our humanity.

It's not only a political statement, but also my worldview, my attitude. It's like when you meditate; there's something layering, images of memory, the mind that is drifting from one thing to the other, even as we speak... So, when I make films I'm aware of this, because this manifests in some kind of perception, even though it is a hidden perception, and I try to simulate and present these layers of images that are not only visible, but also internal. Of course memory is always dictated by other things, for instance, by cinema, and the representation of ghosts in films, such as those I grew up with. In this sense, images are fluid, always changing, and going from reality to fiction and vice versa. Before ghosts were real, now they are not. So, in my films this constant shifting became more present and philosophical over the years.

But it is as if your cinema is building a world where all those elements — the ghosts, the fantastic creatures we have inside or that inhabit your country's memory and landscapes — they all are brought together and live together among and with us…

Yes, for the last film I agree.

The tension between documentary and fiction is very present in your films and seems to feed your concrete research about memory and the extinction of species, beliefs and languages. The facts are a vehicle for memory, what allows the echoes and projections of memories. For instance, the work you developed in the province of Nakhon Phanom and in Nabua, with the teenagers of the village, is exemplary of this. How do you deal with the dialectic between documentary and fiction in your creative process?

It started, in the beginning, with doubts on the existence of this dividing line between fact and fiction. I was definitely influenced and inspired by the Iranian movement of representing and fabricating reality through cinema. When you see some films by Mohsen

Makhmalbaf, they're about acting, they're about recording: even though you see the image and sound making apparatus in the movie, it is still manipulated, it is still fake, it is still sculpted in order to attain certain goals. This triggers my question: how do you represent in cinema? And it made me also doubt about so-called documentaries, those you see on television, and think of how subjective they are. So, in the end I would say that there is really no reality in cinema. To quote Manoel de Oliveira's *Visita ou Memórias e Confissões*, "fiction is cinema's reality." One can wonder: cinema is an eye, it is framing with that eye, and we, as human beings, also frame with our own eyes. Can you call our perception "reality"? Because it's all relative. This is also linked to a buddhism's idea of reality, the idea that all is constructed by us.

And in relation to your work with actors… You said that you use their stories and elements of their lives inside the films.

    As I can imagine them.

You stated several times that you were greatly inspired by the experimental "cinemas of poetry" such as the structural film or the lyrical film, but some of your works experiment also with classical narrative, romanesque *structures. In* Mysterious Object at Noon *there were highly charged emotional sequences,* Haunted Houses *is based on a contemporary Thai soap opera, and* The Adventure of Iron Pussy *is a shameless melodrama. Is your relation to this sentimental universe merely ironic and distanced, or are you genuinely interested in melodrama as a genre or a style? Do you think melodrama can also be lyrical?*

    In the beginning of my career I was interested in all these media, in particular soap opera and radio plays. These films were a definitive starting point, they are about finding stories, searching for the roots of stories. I grew up listening to the radio plays. As for *The Adventure of Iron Pussy*, it is a kind of satire, but it is a heartful satire.

In Cemetery of Splendor *the experiences of sleep and of meditation are at the center of this capability of* voyance, *of seeing what is out of sight, not because it is hidden from view, but because it belongs to a specific strata of experience, that of memory altogether, that puts everything in connection with everything. How do you envision the cinema experience? Is it something that we experience as if we were involved in such states of mind, as you describe and observe in your film?*

Yes, it's a dream. It's another kind of primitive dream. On the one hand cinema is really linear, but on the other it's just light and how we play with our memories… Well, on a second thought, any film, either from Hollywood or any other, is more about losing oneself and projecting than about memory, which is more important in installations or other artworks. Because cinema is about possession. Light possesses you. That's what I think. But somehow, sometimes, I would like to activate certain memories of the audience, to call their attention to the fact that they are watching a specific illusion on the screen, by either having the actor looking at them or through the sense of prolonged or stretched time. People are used to the cinema-time, but when they are confronted with another kind of cinema-time experience, suddenly they realize that "hey, something is going on there!" And they realize that they are watching a movie.

Your characters say a lot of trivial things in very ordinary and colloquial conversations, but the subject matters of your films are far from trite. You frequently engage with so-called big questions such as the transience of life, illness, family relations, destiny and even the mysteries of the universe. Could we consider your films a kind of philosophical investigation? Do you use cinema as a tool for better understanding yourself, others and the world? Do you use cinema as an extension of the process of thinking?

In fact, not much. I mean, I tend not to analyze what I do, but because of how the world operates nowadays, the academic world and the criticism culture, I was forced to analyze it. Lately I started to talk about these ideas, and all these things, which at a certain point led me to think that there is some kind of line that I wonder whether I am crossing it or not. If I cross it, will I lose the sense of *naiveté* that the child has while approaching images? I am finding out while I am doing it. So, the idea of intellectualizing the world is not something in which I feel really comfortable.

So what draws you to cinema? Because you once said that cinema is like life, but if cinema is like life, why do we need it? What does it bring to life?

I don't know. As I told you, I started the thinking on film by exploring some doubts concerning the tension between fact and fiction, and slowly I began directing films in which I tried to deal with those questions. Then I got entangled with members of the crew, and then more stories came to me. I am still looking at things in a very innocent way. I

have dogs, and I try to communicate with them, and it teaches me a lot what we assume that a dog knows, even if, of course, it doesn't know anything, or maybe it knows… So this is relevant when I hold a camera and think: "does it matter that people know these references? Can we appreciate life without knowing it?"

You also mentioned a few times this idea that maybe in the future we won't need this framing, that in fact we won't need cinema as we know it today. And that connects a lot with some of your characters. You seem fascinated by, for instance, the character of the monk that inspired Uncle Boonmee*, and by the fact that he doesn't need cinema because he can produce his own images.*

Yes. Cinema and art are always walking with technology hand in hand. And, of course, it is always about the experience, which is very exciting for me, because cinema has been very much about storytelling, like literature or theatre. But for me, it is about experience. We just need to go back to see the first cinema — the workers leaving a factory. There was no three-act structure. Cinema has always been trying to mimic dreams. From black and white to color; from silent to sound. Now we are moving from story to experience. And experience, like dreams, has no frame.

I was also thinking about that difference between documentary and fiction because it seems that in your work process you sometimes start with collecting — documenting, as you said — and in that course of events you produce a lot of small pieces and other objects that are not only films, and so I would say that cinema is the center, but it's not the only thing that you do…

Yes, it is a catalyst.

But would you consider yourself a filmmaker, and not an artist? Or is it unimportant to you the way you are defined as a creator?

It is like my name, Apichatpong. It is just a name.

So is it all equally part of this big thing: life, experience, the universe…?

Yes. I really appreciate some artists who keep doing something different, someone like Gerhard Richter, I really like the way he approaches his images… He's less of a duplication machine but a tree that grows. His artworks reflect this idea of "experience."

BOOK REVIEWS | RECENSÕES DE LIVROS

LUKÁCSIAN FILM THEORY AND CINEMA:
A STUDY OF GEORG LUKÁCS' WRITINGS ON FILM 1913-71

Stefanie Baumann (IFILNOVA)

Ian Aitken. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012, 283 pp. ISBN 978-0-7190-7884-2.

Lukácsian Film Theory and Cinema. A Study of Georg Lukács' Writings on Film, 1913-71 is the third part of Ian Aitken's trilogy on European realist film theory. Curiously, the name of Georg Lukács — who is usually not associated with film theory, but known for being one of the most influential Marxist-Leninist philosophers and literary critics of the 20th century — appears in all three books, the analysis of his thought taking more and more space the further we advance in the trilogy. One has the impression of following the author's growing curiosity and interest in the Lukácsian philosophy and ideas about film: While in the first volume, *European Film Theory and Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2002), Lukács' thoughts about film are briefly mentioned and presented alongside the theories of Grierson, Kracauer and Bazin in one of the nine chapters of the book, the second volume, *Realist Film Theory and Cinema: The Nineteenth-Century Lukácsian and Intuitionist Realist Traditions* (Manchester University Press, 2006), grants him almost half of the book, including Lukács' interpretation of Hegel and the theory he derives from it, an investigation into some of his central philosophical and aesthetic concepts such as totality, *Stimmungseinheit* (unity of atmosphere) and *Besonderheit* (particularity / specificity) as well as a model of Lukácsian interpretation illustrated through the analysis of two films (Wajda's *Danton,* 1990 and Visconti's *Senso,* 1954). The last of the three books, *Lukácsian Film Theory and Cinema. A Study of Georg Lukács' Writings on Film, 1913-71* is, as indicated by the title, wholly concerned with the Hungarian philosopher's aesthetic conception of film. However, what Aitken offers to his readers is at once more and less then what the title promises. Less because Lukács did not actually write a comprehensive film theory, as he admits himself in one of the interviews published in the book (264: "I have only dealt with film incidentally" in "Revolution and Psychology of Everyday Life," 261-267) Apart from an early essay on film (*Thoughts Towards an Aesthetics of the Cinema,* 1913), and one

chapter in his *The Specificity of the Aesthetics* published fifty years later in 1963, there are only a couple of interviews and published letters dealing partly with the question of film. One could say that Aitken somehow magnifies the impact of Lukács' thinking on film after having discovered its existence. However, Lukacs' remarks on the filmic medium and its inherent potential are stimulating and challenging, even more so when embedded in his broader philosophy. This is where Aitken's book is exceeding what its title suggests: it not only provides an analysis of Lukács' texts on film; these are extensively put in relation with his political and personal situation as well as with his philosophical and aesthetical thought, giving thereby a more ample and profound understanding of the issues in question.

Aitken's book is divided into two parts, the first consisting of his own reading and analysis of Lukács' philosophy and comments on film in chronological order, the second containing translations of Lukács' writings dealing with film and cinema (some of which available for the first time in English).

The first part begins with a description of Lukács' early aesthetics, that is to say, with an inquiry into his major works *Soul and Form* (1910) and *The Theory of the Novel* (1916), and their conceptual framework and connection to his essay *Thoughts Towards an Aesthetic of the Cinema* (written in 1911, published in 1913 in German), which is included in English in Aitken's second part of the book. Aitken points out how Lukács employs and relates philosophical notions such as soul, form, experience, culture, unity and totality, then links them to his essay on film. He also contextualizes this text within the framework of the *Kino-Debatte* (1910-1931), in the German newspaper *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which included contributions, among others, from Béla Balázs, Siegfried Kracauer and Rudolf Arnheim.

In this early essay, Lukács depicts the specificities of the filmic medium by demarcating it from another art form: theatre. According to him, the fundamental difference between the two is the different temporalities they generate — the drama being characterized by its absolute presentness sustained through the actors' play on the stage, and expressing the depth of the soul, whereas this intensive, concentrated and portentous "present" cannot be reproduced in film. Instead, film images, showing gestures, events and "movement as perpetual flux," recalling, though without being, "real life", become, as Lukács puts it, "fantastic": "A life without present, a life without fate, without reasons, without motives; a life the innermost of our soul never wants to become nor can become identical with" (*Thoughts Towards an Aesthetic of the Cinema,* 182). However, as Aitken

stresses, this aspect of film is not depreciated by Lukács, but constitutes the force of the medium: as pure surface, pure externality, it is able to open up an access to empirical liveliness beyond the causalities of instrumental rationality at work in real life. This "maximum vivacity" [*Lebendigkeit*], which is related to the mutism of silent film, and thus to body expressions rather than to articulated reason, grants an unprecedented poetic aspect to ordinary life and awakens "the *child* that is alive in each human being" (184). According to Aitken, "[t]he kind of film which Lukács endorses in *Thoughts* would therefore be a combination of naturalism, melodramatic effect, popular culture and surreal symbolism; and would also be characterized by both the use of special effects techniques and the deployment of a lyrical, poetic quality" (29).

This description of Lukács, privileging an art characterized by its inherent naturalism, could astonish those who are familiar with his thought, since the philosopher would later categorically reject, especially in his accounts on the realist novel, every naturalistic attempt to depict reality, and condemn artists and writers for showing naturalistic tendencies. This is where Aitken's account goes beyond the simple explanation of the Lukácsian text as he addresses explicitly this violent reversal of Lukács' conception of art, philosophy, and politics. In a chapter entitled *Narrate or Describe* (picking up the name of one influent article written by Lukács), he aims to explain how these changes were motivated, and to mediate between the thoughts of the young philosopher before and after his conversion to Bolshevism. Nonetheless, Lukács' attitude towards naturalism, especially in relation to film, remains to some extend ambiguous, as Aitken points out repeatedly throughout his book.

During the 40 years that Aitken calls Lukács' middle period (1918-1957), Lukács wasn't concerned with cinema in a theoretical way, but turned in his philosophy and writings on literature towards a rigorous Marxist-Leninist approach. Concepts such as alienation, reification and class struggle became central to his thinking about capitalist society, and in his aesthetic considerations he followed Lenin's theory of reflection — art as part of the superstructure is supposed to reflect dialectically the politico-economic conditions of society — and Engels' conception of realism, supposed to show the objective underlying power-structures of a society through the representation of typical characters able to mediate between the socio-political totality and the individual. Instead of focusing on the representation of empirical reality, its intuitive and lively aspects and individual perceptive experiences, Lukács is now concerned with a portrayal of the social and

political reality. This has also an impact on his understanding of the relationship between form and content: against what he calls formalist tendencies, Lukács defends the idea that form has to follow the (political, "objective") content. Aitken explains that this is one of the reasons why he rejects both modernism (which he considers as unable to penetrate into objective reality because it only reproduces the fragmentarity and immediacy on the surface of life) and naturalism which, in his understanding, is based on supposedly "neutral", positivist empirical descriptions, thus consolidating capitalism instead of proposing a deeper comprehension and critique.

The film thematic, which had been suspended in order to fill the conceptual and political gap between the pre-communist, and the communist philosophy of Lukács, appears again in Aitken's examination of Lukács' seminal work *The Specificity of the Aesthetic*, especially his close reading of the chapter on film. Aitken's treatment of this chapter, just as the original text itself, is quite dense, as it introduces a number of new aesthetic concepts. Aitken explores therein, among others, the notion of specificity *(Besonderheit),* that which mediates between the singular/individual and the universal, the concepts of atmosphere (*Stimmung*) and unity of atmosphere (*Stimmungseinheit*), which relate to the general ambiance as well as the realistic, perceptual and conceptual framework, and constitute the main "effect-category" of film. He also analyses how the notion of reflection already mentioned above is further developed and becomes a key notion for aesthetical philosophy. According to Lukács, all art forms are reflections of the external socio-political conditions of a society through the mediation of the artist's consciousness, thus producing a totality represented by the dialectical relation between objective conditions and the way they are experienced. One of the important aspects of film as elaborated in *The Specificity of the Aesthetics* consists of its ability to produce a double reflection. Film, based on a "deanthropomorphic reflection and its technological realization" (187) — which means, a technical, non-human process unable to capture the essence of human beings and their inherent perceptual experiences — has to employ anthropomorphizing features in order to acquire artistic qualities. Therefore, the filmmaker has to use technical tools such as montage, etc. in order to reproduce perceptual experience and human values, thus effecting a special kind of second mimesis. Because film is particularly close to life due to the photographic authenticity of its images and their connection to real-time movements, "artistic form, and perceptual experience set within the real course of temporal duration are brought into correspondence for the first

time" (89), as Aitken puts it. Through this particular relationship between empirical reality, perceptual experience and attributed meaning, film proves capable of representing the interactions between appearance and being, ordinary life and essence, the particular and the universal and thus to prefigure the process of mediation between subjective and objective modes of being. This ability is due to the film's elasticity, which is not limited to mere naturalistic depiction or pure subjective expression, but moves on from one to the other.

Aitken's last chapters are concerned with Lukács late writings and the political and intellectual context from which they arose: on the one hand, Lukács' very complex and difficult *Towards the Ontology of Social Being* which Aitken recapitulates in a comprehensive way for the sake of completeness even if it does not deal specifically with aesthetic issues, and on the other hand, Lukács' smaller contributions on film through film journals, letters, interviews and introductions to books written by other authors. While these articles, some of which written before the publication of the *The Specificity of the Aesthetics*, show a peculiar interest in specific films, as well as in the filmic medium in general, and its capacity of manipulation and ideological persuasion (recalling Adorno and Horkheimer's remarks on the "culture industry"), they do not confront the question of film as thoroughly as his earlier writings. In Aitken's reading, they constitute nevertheless a relevant contribution to Lukács' comprehensive theory of film. The dialectical stretching of Aitken's approach to Lukácsian theory becomes very visible in these two last chapters: they show his intention to reconstruct in depth the Lukácsian philosophical framework, in order to put it into relation with Lukács' smaller, more modest writings which are explicitly dealing with film, thus allowing to mediate one through the other. This way, he not only shows how Lukács' thinking is indeed concerned with film theory, but also how a reading that elaborates on its implicit potential by relating his explicitly aesthetic notions with his broader philosophy can be made fruitful for film scholars.

What makes Aitken's analysis peculiar is the seriousness and consistency with which he delves into Lukács' philosophical and political universe. He explicitly takes the time to unravel the philosophical framework through which the aesthetic notions are then analysed. The filmic medium is thus understood for itself, in its own terms, but also as embedded in a complex of conceptual relations exceeding it. Hence, his book not only gives a comprehensive insight into Lukács' original thinking and the way he correlates politics, philosophy, art and film, but also an illustration of the fruitfulness and the need

of trespassing (while respecting at the same time) the intellectual division of labour in the analysis of specific art forms, particularly the filmic medium.

UNDERSTANDING SOUND TRACKS THROUGH FILM THEORY

Nick Poulakis (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

Elsie Walker. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 448 pp. ISBN 978-0-199-89632-5.

Most times film music has been conceived and analyzed via musicological terms and theories. Since traditional musicology originates from typical literary and historical studies and faces music as a universal language that can be explored through preset textual approaches lacking critical research for the most part, it is common that film musicology often concentrates on the formal aspects of the presence of sound and music in films. Yet, lately, novel methodologies of film studies that mingle diverse (sometimes opposing) theories of cultural studies have come into sight. Philosophy, psychology, anthropology, phenomenology and semiotics advance the contemporary academic consideration of films, regarding not only their visual but also their aural attributes and contexts.

The reviewed volume written by Associate Professor of Film Studies Elsie Walker succeeds higher standards in film music/sound analysis that merge long-established with innovative methods of seeing, hearing, reading, feeling and understanding the audiovisual corpus of films. This kind of critical stance is very important, in view of the fact that — as is already widely identified — music and sound tracks can reveal a film's deeper structures, meanings and emotions. The book launches new-fangled methodologies for film music/sound analysis in respect of five of the most common but essential critical theories that have already been applied to the scrutiny of films, specially genre studies, postcolonialism, feminism, psychoanalysis and queer theory.

Understanding Sound Tracks Through Film Theory comes out as a result of the author's extensive preoccupation with mutual appreciation of film, music/sound and cultural studies. This particular aspect allows for an effectual awareness on the book's themes by a rather inhomogeneous readership, which — as Elsie Walker states (9) — may vary from "film scholars, at the upper-undergraduate, or graduate level" to "anyone interested in challenging what Kalinak refers to as the 'visual chauvinism' of much other scholarship, across many disciplines."[1]

As mentioned before, the volume consists of five parts that cover five predominant film theories, which have been mainly applied on general film analyses until the advent of Walker's innovative approach concerning an integrated study of both film and music/sound. Furthermore, each part is composed of three individual chapters, which offer, in that order, a quick look on the theoretical framework and two case studies on specific films. Besides that, the book begins with an extensive introduction and concludes with an afterthought chapter, which encapsulates the most important suggestions about bringing together film theories and music/sound examination. Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) and Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity* (2013) become the corresponding case studies for the introductory and the closing sections respectively.

Genre has been a fundamental theoretical scheme in contemporary film studies. Rick Altman's contribution has also been crucial for formulating this field of analysis. In the initial part of her book, Walker applies Altman's theory of the semantic and syntactic components of film genre[2] in conjunction with film music/sound examination to the study of two westerns. The first one is a classic Hollywood movie of the fifties titled *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956), and the second one is the recent independent production of the nineties, under the title *Dead Man* (Jim Jarmusch, 1995). This also signifies two totally different kinds of soundtrack but also makes author's scholar analyses more productive.

The following part has its roots in the work of Robert Stam and Louise Spence, i.e., "Colonialism, Racism, and Representation: An Introduction."[3] Walker brings foreword some of the most significant issues of contemporary societies, associating them with the way that music, sound and the human voice are presented and perceived (not only on the local stage but also globally) in two recent Australian films: *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (Phillip Noyce, 2002) and *Ten Canoes* (Rolf de Heer and Peter Djigirr, 2006). The author concludes that filmic soundscapes play a substantial role in the construction of (post)colonial, racist and nationalistic representations.

Influenced by the theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, Laura Mulvey became an emblematic figure in feminist criticism through her 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,"[4] which altered the cinematic theory from the authoritative textual analysis to a (cultural-political) examination of gender in films. Walker tries to implement this type of scrutiny in the study of film music of two different (yet, totally appropriate) films, that is *To Have and Have Not* (Howard Hawks, 1944) and *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993). Her intention is to look into how the films' soundtracks of classic and post-modern

tradition operate in line with the "male vs. female" distinctions by means of both an intra-filmic and an audience approach.

The next section is directly related to part III, because of their parallel theoretical frameworks. Its topic derives from Lacanian psychoanalysis as illustrated in Todd McGowan's article "'Looking for the Gaze': Lacanian Film Theory and Its Vicissitudes."[5] As Walker herself conveys in page 245, she uses "McGowan's reapplication of visually biased Lacanian film analysis to generate new questions for analyzing sound tracks". As a result, this portion of the book offers a three-part interpretation ("imaginary," "symbolic" and "real") on the issue of subjectivity, identity and self-presentation as they are musically interconnected with the main characters of the films *Bigger Than Life* (Nicholas Ray, 1956) and *Shutter Island* (Martin Scorsese, 2010).

The final part of the volume, under the title "Queer Theory", deals with an extra crucial perspective of current film philosophy debates. Walker chooses the work of another major academic, the post-structuralist critical theorist Judith Butler. Her related text "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" challenges and subverts the standards of the conservative understanding of sexual identity binaries.[6] How can music and sound in films like *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940) and *Heavenly Creatures* (Peter Jackson, 1994) be engaged in the deconstruction of typical gender norms? The author tests Butler's ideas using a "reading against the grain" method of questioning and repositioning homo- and hetero-sexual personas in films through their sonic milieu.

The book under review fills an existing gap in film music studies literature: the lack of a systematic dialogue between film musicology and modern critical film and cultural theory. Citing numerous films from different periods and cinematographic traditions, *Understanding Sound Tracks Through Film Theory* becomes a paradigmatic course book for scholars dealing with the cultural analysis of films and their music; not only film music *per se*. Moreover, it brings back to light the usually ignored supremacy of the aural (as opposed to the visual) aspects of cinema by linking the sensorial/empirical approach (seeing and hearing films) with the theoretical/conceptual one (talking about films). Walker manages to sustain the magic of the films' music and sound, which — although their non-referential substance — may represent more than filmic images do!

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1. Kathryn Kalinak, "Review of *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* by Claudia Gorbman", *Film Quarterly* 41/4 (1988): 56-58.

2. Rick Altman, "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre", *Cinema Journal* 23/3 (1984): 6-18.

3. Robert Stam and Louise Spence, "Colonialism, Racism and Representation: An Introduction", *Screen* 24/2 (1983): 2-20.

4. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", *Screen* 16/3 (1975): 6-18.

5. Todd McGowan, "Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and Its Vicissitudes", *Cinema Journal* 42/3 (2003): 27-47.

6. Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination", in *Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*, eds. Ann Garry, Marilyn Pearsall (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 371-87.

CINEMA OF SIMULATION:
HYPEREAL HOLLYWOOD IN THE LONG 1990S

Jorge Martins Rosa (NOVA/CIC.Digital)

This "glitch" in the reality of the film's dramatic action is similar to the "glitch" of déjà vu that indicates a program bug in *The Matrix*; it is an error in the warp of perceived reality that indicates the illusory quality of what we had taken to be reality. In *The Matrix*, however, the false reality of the computer program is a veil concealing the "true" reality of earth as it actually exists, whereas in *JFK*, we are in the hyperreal condition in which the warped reality of the discrepant montage is the only reality available to the audience. (78)

If explaining the concept of hyperreality entails the task of deconstructing the naive idea of an underlying reality, perhaps the best way to approach the cinema that deals with our hyperreal condition is to start with a movie "based on real events". Oliver Stone's *JFK* (1991), discussed in one of the shortest chapters of Randy Laist's *Cinema of Simulation: Hyperreal Hollywood in the Long 1990s*, is therefore an adequate entry point to the main argument of this book. As Laist argues, "more so than any particular theory about who shot JFK, the thesis of Stone's film is that reality itself has been assassinated, under circumstances that we can only reconstruct out of a montage of images that are ambivalently real and/or unreal — fragments of a hyperreal mediascape" (74).

Besides all kinds of evidence supporting this thesis — the absence of Kennedy as a character, the "proliferation of hypothetical scenarios" (75) and of clues that do not point to a coherent theory, Stone's disconcerting montage, or even the presence of a media landscape in which "what we see on television is not the complete reality, but only a single fragment of an infinite array of possible perspectives on the televised event" (76) — we have none other that Jean Baudrillard as the ultimate authority who, in *Simulacra and Simulation*, published a decade before the movie, "described the Kennedy assassination as an important moment in the hyperrealization of the modern world. […] More than just a political assassination, November 22, 1963 was the date of an ontological

assassination" (74).

That we had to wait until the "long 90s", "the 'lost decade' between 11/9 and 9/11" (3), to have that ontological assassination rendered and commodified in Hollywood cinema is also a crucial presupposition of this book. The previous decade, as stated in Robin Wood's *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan... and Beyond* (2003), marked the culmination (both as the zenith and the ending) of a "triumphalist celebration of America within a Cold War narrative" (1), portrayed in visual media by "hard bodies" such as Stallone's characters Rocky or Rambo. A few hints of this postmodern turn could already be experienced in some science fiction movies such as Michael Crichton's *Westworld* (1973), as early as 1973, and particularly the blockbuster trilogy *Back to the Future* (respectively 1985, 1989, and 1990, discussed in the first chapter), but it was in the 90s that those became almost omnipresent.

Science fiction, along with a few seemingly mainstream narratives that carry science-fictional or fantastic motives, as is the case of *The Truman Show* (1998), may be the most obvious genre to portray this rarefaction of "reality," but the book is far from being merely a collection of chapter-essays on SF Hollywood cinema. Actually, the split is quite even between chapters that delve into close readings of more predictable films such as the *Alien* tetralogy (1979, 1986, 1992, 1997), *Total Recall* (1990), *The Matrix* (1999) or the oneiric *Fight Club* (1999), and realistic or historically inspired dramas such as *Titanic* (1997) or *Schindler's List* (1993). And, to complicate even further this entanglement between reality and fiction,[1] between verisimilitude and implausible narrative predicaments, there is even a chapter based on the fact that "the Clinton-era cinema is populated by numerous examples of Clinton-esque presidents who negotiate the ontological crisis of the collapse of the private/public binary [and] reflect and enable the president's conversion into a locus of virtuality and a personification of the implosion of private and public space in the postmodern hyperscape" (85).

The "long 90s" were thus, as the author argues, the time in which Baudrillard's prophecies became ever-present, with all of us "stranded without hope of escape in a time and place that is immanently simulacral" (130). The previous words, though they could be a "quick and dirty" synopsis of the French essayist's work, are actually about the movie that he "disowned […] as a representation of his thinking" (129), *The Matrix*. Randy Laist however redeems its relevance as a key work to understand not only the decade and its cinema *within Baudrillard's theoretical framework*, but also how that would change two years

after, with the attacks of 9/11. It is not so much that the movie's characters are living in a hyperreal world — "As Baudrillard himself explains in an interview, 'the real nuisance in this movie is that the brand-new problem of the simulation is mistaken with the very classic problem of the illusion, already mentioned by Plato'" (129) — but rather the deliberate option of the directors to portray that world of illusion, the Matrix, as "a simulated replica of 1999" (129), the year the film was released, thus acting as a mirror to our own (hyper)reality in which we "do in fact make a cameo appearance" (133) but from which we cannot be liberated by taking a red pill, as there is "no real world to wake up to" (132).[2]

And by the time we woke up, no liberation seemed to be at hand. That is why the author claims that the subsequent movies of the trilogy almost belong to a different genre: "*The Matrix*'s two sequels, however, are distinctly post-9/11 movies. […] They are fraught with history and consequence in deference to the rebooting of reality that the terrorist attack and the subsequent War on Terror had come to represent. […] The sequels shift their focus away from the computer world and toward the 'real' world of the rebel city of Zion" (131).

Whether this new century, along with its cinema, can better be defined by the idea of a "return of the real" — a dreadful return, it goes without saying — or if it is rather an exacerbation of hyperreality, *Cinema of Simulation* is inconclusive, perhaps seemingly incoherent. In the chapter on *The Matrix* we are reminded of the "historical-cultural turning point in the popular imagination" brought about by the terrorist attacks beginning in 2001, but in another point, while discussing *The Truman Show*, the author suggests that the TV program that is the title of the movie "appears simultaneously prescient and primitive. […] The twenty-first century Truman would […] have perfect freedom of mobility, but […] the gradient of freedom and entrapment that inspired his dreams of travel would have flattened out into transvalued indifference." (150) In other words, in our contemporary world hyperreality may be reaching new heights, perhaps — we could add — as stratospheric as the amount of sovereign debts.

As a reader, I was expecting a more articulate answer, or at least some deeper intuition concerning the early twenty-first century cinema, post-9/11, that replaced the "long 1990s", in the chapter on *Star Wars*' prequels — because this derivative trilogy also spans the subsequent years — but instead that chapter only deals with *The Phantom Menace*, i. e., Episode I, and mostly on the prevalence of CGI and on the fact that "a

prequel takes place in a kind of narratological shadow of its original [and] can never escape the narratological pull of the future story that has already taken place" (196). Or, being the case that Randy Laist's book is a collection of nearly autonomous essays — a few of which previously published — a wrapping-up final "epilogue" was expected. The closing paragraphs in the ending chapter, although illuminating in the sense that they confirm that "the heyday of hyperreal exuberance that characterizes the popular cinema of the 1990s has run its course by 2002" (240) and was followed by movies with "a narrative atmosphere characterized by moral obscurity, random violence, and irreversible consequences" (240), also at the same time alert that "it is equally necessary to realize that many of the issues that defined the first decade of the twenty-first century — terrorism, globalization, and cybercommunications — have their origins in the final decade of the twentieth" (240). Thus, "the popular meme that 9/11 represents a return of the real may be dangerously misleading, giving us a false sense of groundedness when in fact we still inhabit a cultural condition in which fiction and reality continue to play mirror games with one another" (241). There remains, however, the feeling that the issue, while obviously complex enough to call for a comprehensive research and a future book, could be just slightly more developed; i.e., whether as the root cause or merely as a sign of things to come but already on their way, 9/11, if anything, plunged us deeper into an abyss of simulated *casus belli*, imperial boosting and, ultimately, the irruption of long-repressed fears (the credit crisis and the multiple recessive aftershocks still withstanding, surveillance scandals, offshore information leaks, etc.), all of which also came to feed Hollywood's imagery.

That does not devalue in the least sense the pertinence of the book and the relevance of its proposals. If any, its weakest feature paradoxically derives from its strongest asset: being so dependent on Baudrillard's conceptual framework that other key authors and concepts, either to confirm or to contrast with the grounding tenets of Laist's thesis (Jonathan Crary, Donna Haraway, Slavoj Žižek,…), are sparsely and barely invoked throughout its running pages. To use a cinematic metaphor, Baudrillard steals the show while others just make cameo appearances, a handicap that is particularly noticeable in the chapter on *Schindler's List* and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998),[3] which could benefit from a more vigorous borrowing from Paul Virilio's reflections on war and cinema. Nevertheless, *Cinema of Simulation* is already a fundamental book for anyone who wishes to grasp the aesthetics of Hollywood cinema during that odd decade that began in November 1989

and ended in September 2001, understanding it against the backdrop of a wider cultural background and with the help of the powerful theoretical concepts of "hyperreality" and "simulation."

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1. Which also justifies, according to the author, the proliferation of adaptations of Shakespeare's plays during the decade: "the cinematic Shakespeare boom of the 1990s is of a piece with the trend represented by classics […] such as *JFK*, *Pulp Fiction*, and *The Matrix* that variously dramatize the postmodern condition as one in which 'stage' and 'world' collapse into each other" (180).

2. A similar but even more "in your face" approach, the author argues, can be found in Steven Spielberg's adaptation of *Jurassic Park*, so much that there he finds a deliberate confluence between the entertainment park within the diegesis and the movie as a hyperbole of Hollywood's entertainment industry: "the logo for the park - the profile silhouette of a T-Rex skeleton - is also the logo for the movie. The result is that […] there has never been a movie that included such extensive product-placement for itself" (156-157); i. e., "rather than adapting Crichton's novel, Spielberg's movie acts as a reconstruction of Hammonds' theme park. The only difference is that, rather than constructing his monsters out of genetic code, Spielberg uses computer code" (155).

3. And also *Titanic*, less relevant for our claim.

MISMATCHED WOMEN:

THE SIREN'S SONG THROUGH THE MACHINE

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The study of female voice and its implications and functions within a cinematic context has constituted a significant body of feminist film scholarship. The majority of these scholarly works, however, have approached the topic from a psychoanalytic perspective based on which the maternal voice plays a major role in the formation of a child's self-recognition. "Realizing that his voice cannot duplicate the perfect sounds coming from his mother, the infant is stricken with nostalgia, for an ideal past in which he was submerged in a sonorous bath" (3-4). This realization, besides nostalgia, brings about the feeling of castration mainly because the child does not possess the mother's voice and this lack results in the fetishization of the voice. The psychoanalytic approach, used in the majority of feminist film studies of the female voice, is not deployed in Jennifer Fleeger's book, *Mismatched Women: The Siren's Song through the Machine*. The book instead intriguingly discusses the mismatch between female voice and her body in relation to the evolution of sound technology. In order to provide a gendered discourse within a technological setting, Fleeger examines various women singers whose voices and bodies are mismatched, and further connects her study to the socio-cultural ramifications that this kind of mismatch brings about in regard to challenging conventional perceptions perpetuating that exquisite female voices should come from beautiful and glamorous bodies. In doing so, the 6 chapters of the book investigate the concept of "mismatch" in relation to female voice and technology focusing on female singers within the primarily contexts of literature (Trilby and Christine), opera (Geraldine Farrar and Marion Talley), film (Deanna Durbin), animation (Disney Princesses), radio and television (Kate Smith), and internet (Susan Boyle). The book chronologically follows the emergence and articulation of these mismatched women from the advent of phonograph, to the arrival of film sound, musical playback, radio and television, animation technologies, and finally the internet.

The background within which Fleeger situates her argument of mismatched women points to two crucial factors for the emergence of these figures: the diminishing interest of opera houses and churches in castrati — boys castrated before puberty with a female-like singing voice/soprano — by the end of the eighteenth century and the advent of phonograph for listening to music in the nineteenth century. Castrato's figure challenges the match between the body and the voice and subverts the constructed gender binary. As Fleeger postulates, "We might well regard him as the cultural ancestor to the mismatched woman" (26). Phonograph, on the other hand, through its ability of preserving the transient human voice and detaching it from human body, brings anxieties and questions on the source of the voice, its aura, and its credibility. Further, as Fleeger argues, both castrati and mismatched women do not reproduce. However, while the inability of reproduction for castrati is the result of their castration, the childlessness of the mismatched women is due to the fact that their singing activities "either end before they might bear children or begin after that possibility has long passed" (2). This feature of mismatched woman, besides challenging the patriarchal notion of ideal womanhood through the figure of mother, rejects a psychoanalytic reading of her as her voice is not maternal. "Thus the mismatched woman is less threatening to a symbolic order predicted on the voice" from a psychoanalytic perspective (17).

The synchronous film sound provides a technological ground based on which the different careers of two Metropolitan Opera singers, Geraldine Farrar and Marion Talley, are examined in chapter 2. While it was the contrast between a mature operatic voice and the youth of the singers that created the mismatch for both women, the different time of their debut on the screen in relation to the emergence of synchronous film sound altered the way their cinematic images were presented and received. As Fleeger puts it, "Synchronous film sound came too late for Geraldine Farrar and too early for Marion Talley…" (18). When Farrar appeared in Cecil B. DeMille's *Carmen* in 1915, she was already a famous and successful opera singer. Therefore, her silent visual performance necessitated an excessive style of presentation to uphold her vocal skill, which showed itself in the lighting, setting, and acting of her films. Regardless of the attempts at making Farrar's silent visual image a reminiscent of her operatic grandeur, the rural and ethnic (mostly European) roles she played on the screen were in contrast to her upper-class operatic and off-screen persona. "The struggle for screen identity" ultimately brought Farrar's career to an end (58). Talley's opera career, on the other hand, concomitantly

occurred with her debut in short sound films. These films were aimed "to demonstrate the Vitaphone's ability to consistently and convincingly marry body and voice" (46). This push for matching of voice and body negatively affects Talley's career. In addition to her untrained voice, the Midwestern and modest background of Talley was in contrast with her operatic career on the Met stage in New York City, and while she often drew large numbers of audiences, she could not satisfy the critics' expectations. Talley's matching of body and voice on the screen proved unsuccessful (for both public and critics), as her limited body movements, unlike the stage, did not match the requirement of a dynamic vocal and cinematic performance on the screen. As the result of this mismatch, Talley's career waned by the end of the 1920s.

Like Farrar and Talley who through their mismatched features and performances merged operatic and cinematic stages, chapter 5 shows that Kate Smith also uses her mismatched voice and body to bridge theatrical, audio, and televisual platforms, at the same time subverting the conventional expectations of entertainment industry regarding female bodies. While her over-sized appearance prevented her from continuing to work on the theatrical stage, because of her voice, Ted Collins, a Columbia Phonograph Company's executive, found her a perfect match for the radio. As Fleeger explains, because of Smith's performances on the theatrical stages and films in the early 1930s, radio audiences were well aware of her appearance, "yet [on the air] her size may have made her intimate, knowledgeable, and disembodied voice less intimidating" (141). Later, Smith's body and voice came together on TV screen and despites the difficulties of maintaining their match, her songs and her radio background brought about a positive mediated image of her on the TV screen. As a mismatched woman, who remained single by choice, the maternal implications of Smith's mediated persona were channeled through her patriotism and the love and care for her nation. Further, Smith united her female (radio and TV) audiences around maternal and national issues voicing their emotions and feelings through her songs and her radio and television programs. Smith infused her mismatched voice with her body and a unique performative skill which made her an influential and popular figure. That's why Fleeger asserts that, "it was not in spite of her body that Kate Smith was famous, but because of it" (166).

Indeed, as it is the case for all the mismatched women discussed in the book, their significance is not only the result of the divergence from conventional norms defining women and the connection to the changing audio (and visual) technologies recording and

presenting them, but also the consequence of the centrality of their bodies to their voices. The mismatched women "prove that women's voices can be…represented by technology even while their bodies escape its grasp" (194). This gendered aspect of technology is at the center of *Mismatched Women: The Siren's Song through the Machine*; an intellectually engaging book that highlights the mismatched female voice through its dynamic relation to female representation and technological transformation.

LITERATURA E CINEMA.
VERGÍLIO FERREIRA E O ESPAÇO DO INDIZÍVEL

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O livro de Luís Miguel Cardoso, que resulta de uma versão adaptada da sua dissertação de doutoramento e de investigações no âmbito de estudos comparados que remontam ao seu mestrado, afigura-se como um importante contributo para o estudo das relações complexas existentes entre dois sistemas semióticos díspares e complementares entre si: a literatura e o cinema.

Algumas outras obras recentes abordam a relação entre cinema e literatura, como é o caso dos livros que constituíram um dos resultados finais do projecto de investigação "Falso Movimento", do Centro de Estudos Comparatistas, financiado pela Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia. Referimo-nos, por exemplo, à obra editada por Clara Rowland e José Bértolo, *A Escrita do Cinema: Ensaios*,[1] ou ao livro *Falso movimento: ensaios sobre escrita e cinema,* coordenado por Clara Rowland e Tom Conley.[2] Também o livro coordenado por Maria Irene Aparício e João Mário Grilo, *Cinema e filosofia. Compêndio*,[3] apresenta alguns textos que estudam as relações entre os dois sistemas semióticos.

Ou seja, estas obras reúnem textos muito variados que procuram reflectir sobre as várias formas de relacionamento entre cinema e escrita (no sentido mais alagado do termo). A diferença entre os livros anteriores e o presente está em que, como iremos demonstrar em seguida, Luís Miguel Cardoso faz um estudo aprofundado que remonta às origens da relação entre estas duas formas de expressão artística, analisando dois casos concretos de adaptações de obras literárias para o cinema.

Salientamos, desde logo, a feliz escolha de títulos (não apenas o principal) por parte do autor, que percorrem os vários capítulos da obra e que aludem ao seu gosto e conhecimento pela cultura clássica. Sublinhamos, sobretudo, a escolha do deus Jano como figura tutelar que vai presidir ao que nos parece uma leitura estrutural em todo o livro e que surge explicitamente como título da primeira parte: "O olhar de Jano entre Literatura e Cinema".

Como Luís Miguel Cardoso explica logo no início da nota introdutória, quando reflectiu sobre a relação entre literatura e cinema, surgiu-lhe a ideia de dois olhares situados num rosto — a narratologia, ocorrendo-lhe a imagem do deus romano Jano, bifronte, citamos: "símbolo das transições, do passado e do futuro, do interior e do exterior, referência para as viagens, para os caminhantes e os iniciados. Assim, sob o duplo olhar de Jano, percorremos a estrada de dois mundos, de encruzilhadas multímodas, leituras plurais, horizontes díspares e distintas orlas de influência" (12).

Sob a égide do deus Jano constatamos como organizou o seu livro em duas partes principais: a primeira baseada num *corpus* teórico, na qual percorre a complexa relação entre literatura e cinema — desde os primeiros tempos do cinema com Lumière — Melliès (mais uma vez o duplo olhar), e a segunda com o caso particular de Vergílio Ferreira na relação vária que estabelece com o mundo do cinema e das imagens em geral.

Quase no final do livro, no final do capítulo I da 2.ª parte encontramos novamente a figura do deus Jano, agora relacionada com Vergílio Ferreira, citamos: "Entre a palavra e a imagem, a busca do indizível leva Vergílio Ferreira a uma relação bifronte. Olha simultaneamente para dois universos, literatura e cinema, e não deixando nunca de tornar perene e distinta a valorização da primeira, percorre, relativamente ao segundo, um itinerário fundado na irredutibilidade, mas que o levaria a contactos de natureza multímoda" (332). E ainda quando reflecte sobre o olhar do escritor e dos realizadores que adaptaram os seus romances.

A presença desta figura aparece explicitamente na sua frase final: "É que, à luz do olhar de Jano, acreditamos que literatura e cinema continuarão a trilhar o itinerário narrativo em diálogo" (425). Como se assim se fechasse um círculo que se deseja em permanente abertura.

A narratologia surge como eixo e ciência instrumental que une / faz a ponte entre o cinema e a literatura. Nesta primeira parte do livro, Luís Miguel Cardoso percorre autores como Christian Metz, Vanoye, Jacques Aumont, Alain Bergala, Victor Aguiar e Silva, Carlos Reis, Abílio Hernandez Cardoso, Carmen Peña-Ardid, entre outros. Não esquecendo os condicionalismos históricos e sociais sempre presentes nesta relação entre o cinema e a literatura, como por exemplo a importância do contributo dos formalistas russos, passando pelo Neo-realismo italiano, o *Nouveau Roman* relacionado de forma não linear com a *Nouvelle Vague*, o Cine-romance.

Sumamente interessante pareceu-nos a sua reflexão sobre realizadores com uma obra complexa, porque difíceis de enquadrar num rótulo, como Visconti que ao contrário de Vitorio de Sica ou Zavattini não estabelece uma relação linear com o neo-realismo. Analisa, também de forma muito interessante, a própria figura de Zavattini.

Ao longo do livro, Luís Miguel Cardoso vai analisando, quando tal vem a propósito, a especificidade da obra de certos realizadores, como Godard, Manoel de Oliveira, Stanley Kubrick. Sobre este último considerámos muito sugestiva a incursão que o autor faz sobre o significado dos nomes das personagens nos seus filmes (168-170).

No capítulo II, da primeira parte, o autor centra o estudo na narratologia, que surge como eixo operativo que liga o cinema e a literatura focando-se, sobretudo, na obra de Gèrard Genette, *Figures III*. Ao longo deste capítulo Luís Miguel Cardoso vai sempre fornecendo exemplos de filmes que ilustram a teoria sobre o tempo, as personagens na narrativa, etc.

No capítulo III estuda a fundo o problema das adaptações. Neste contexto uma das figuras tutelares é João Mário Grilo quando afirma que "o cinema não filma livros", passando em seguida para o problema da fidelidade, sublinhando a importância de Bazin: aqui faz de novo uma incursão pela mitologia, citando Bluestone e o "paradoxo da mulher de Lot" ou o mito de Orfeu e Eurídice: quando o realizador cai na tentação de olhar para trás — para a obra literária que inspirou o seu filme — e cristaliza. Aborda em seguida o dilema de Ícaro que, no fundo, é o desejo do impossível, inerente à condição humana e o Leviatã.

Após esta primeira parte, o autor dedica a segunda parte a um escritor português que ilustra um interessante diálogo entre palavra e imagem. Como o autor refere, "a segunda parte pretende investigar as principais linhas de aproximação entre narrativa literária e narrativa fílmica em Vergílio Ferreira, romancista e pensador, exemplo de um discurso dialógico e multifacetado" (22-23).

Como Luís Miguel Cardoso mostra de forma bastante fundamentada, inicialmente, Vergílio Ferreira parece instituir-se como um defensor irredutível da literatura, elevando-a perante todas as outras artes. Contudo, o escritor sofre gradualmente uma metamorfose desta irredutibilidade, permitindo várias aproximações ao cinema. Ou seja, Luís Miguel Cardoso reflecte em profundidade sobre os dois momentos que Mário Jorge Torres identifica na relação que Vergílio Ferreira estabelece com o cinema: "uma resistência à imagem" seguida de um "desejo da imagem".

Luís Miguel Cardoso faz uma análise de toda a produção escrita de Vergílio Ferreira e constata que a sétima arte se encontra presente na *Conta-Corrente* e no *Espaço do Invisível*, dedicando-lhe o escritor algumas páginas de análise fílmica, observações sobre o valor do cinema e reflexões várias inspiradas em filmes.

De seguida o autor questiona, de forma pertinente, a possibilidade de a escrita virgiliana ter assimilado características da narrativa fílmica, principalmente técnicas específicas que se espelhariam em alguns dos seus romances.

Ao analisar a relação de Vergílio Ferreira com o cinema, o autor vai percorrendo e reflectindo, também, sobre as várias fases pelas quais passou o escritor na sua escrita e as suas influências, como por exemplo, Malraux, o existencialismo e o conceito de *stream of consciousness* que os relaciona (294ss.).

Como o autor refere: "entre a recusa e a atracção, Vergílio Ferreira não ficou indiferente à sétima arte. Apesar de sempre considerar a literatura como uma arte maior, julgamos que terá sentido um apelo transcendente e alquímico do cinema, vendo-o como um espaço misterioso, entre a palavra e a imagem, capaz de construir laços distintos com o tempo e o espaço, tal como fazia o escritor nos seus romances. Pensamos que o cinema constituía um espaço do indizível, uma dimensão etérea (meta)física, capaz de ilustrar e imortalizar ideias e problemáticas, possibilitando a exploração e a visualização dos pensamentos íntimos" (24).

A questão do indizível em Vergílio Ferreira, como bem refere o autor, afecta não só a sua produção romanesca, mas também a sua escrita ensaística e diarística. E prende-se com a sua ideia de que apenas a arte (o cinema incluído) constitui a forma mais perfeita de traduzir e recriar o "mundo original", de revelar o que não pode ser percebido através da linguagem — daí, também, o seu interesse pela pintura. De facto, como referimos no nosso livro *Vergílio Ferreira. Amor e violência*, "não é por acaso que o ensaio que o autor dedica à reflexão sobre a criação artística se intitula *Do mundo original* (1957). […] É neste sentido que a arte está intimamente ligada à emoção: 'Como é que se pode traduzir o sentir? Durante muitos anos foi isto para mim uma obsessão".[4] Vergílio Ferreira percepciona o sentimento estético entendendo-o como o sentir que abre ao ser humano o mundo das origens e do qual a arte é a expressão materializada."[5]

Na última parte do livro, Luís Miguel Cardoso explora as adaptações dos romances *Cântico Final* e *Manhã Submersa* para cinema, considerando o verdadeiro labirinto que os cineastas tiveram de percorrer na leitura dos romances vergilianos.

Entre a escrita metafísica de Vergílio Ferreira e a construção narrativa do filme, os realizadores procederam a interpretações e leituras do texto literário, não raro com a influência de vectores sociais e ideológicos. No entanto, como refere o autor, não deixaram de manter os mesmos títulos que o romancista havia criado, estabelecendo uma ligação inequívoca com o texto original.

Nesta sua análise detalhada das adaptações opta por escolher os protagonistas, Mário e António Lopes, respectivamente, como vectores principais da comparação. Tendo em conta o conceito de *arquipersonagem* (forjado por Helder Godinho) que vai percorrendo os romances de Vergílio Ferreira.

As dificuldades na adaptação destes dois romances prendem-se muito com a própria presença activa de Vergílio Ferreira e com as suas próprias expectativas: há um momento em que refere que só um Bergman estaria à altura de adaptar um romance seu (isto no contexto das referências a *Cântico Final*.[6] Esta observação feita pelo escritor torna-se central, segundo pensamos, para perceber o quanto deve ter sido difícil adaptar os romances de Vergílio Ferreira para o cinema. O realizador Fernando Vendrell, não terá este desafio: está em rodagem o filme *Aparição*, realizado por altura das comemorações do centenário do nascimento do escritor, e com estreia prevista para Maio de 2017.

Ao longo do livro sublinhamos a importância de certas notas de rodapé que merecem ser lidas, porque mostram uma preocupação do autor com o leitor — como é o caso da nota 116 (64), na qual Luís Miguel Cardoso vai até à problemática dos géneros cinematográficos e explica a origem e desenvolvimento do *film noir*. Ou a nota 199 (98), na qual define o conceito de narratologia — muitas das suas notas têm mesmo este objectivo: clarificar ou definir conceitos utilizados no texto principal e, por isso, afiguram-se muito úteis para o leitor. É também o exemplo da nota 518 (258), na qual o autor tem a preocupação de definir o conceito de leitura (aplicado aos livros e aos filmes), ou o da nota 635 e 689 (291 e 311), na qual define "Cinema Novo".

Considerámos particularmente instigante a nota 250 (118), na qual o autor vai fazendo o levantamento das várias "aparições" (remetemos para Vergílio Ferreira) de Hitchcock nos seus filmes.

Existem certas passagens do texto de Luís Miguel Cardoso que consideramos instigantes, como aquela em que após reflectir sobre a existência de um "cinema existencial", a propósito de Vergílio Ferreira, o autor reflecte sobre as emoções que este

tipo de cinema provoca nos espectadores e cita um excerto da carta de uma espectadora que, depois de assistir a *Zerkalo* (*O Espelho*, 1974), de Tarkovski, escreve:

> Obrigado por *O Espelho*. Tive uma infância exactamente assim. Mas, você, como pôde saber disso? […] O quarto estava escuro. E a lamparina a querosene também se apagou, e o sentimento da volta de minha mãe enchia-me a alma. E com que beleza você mostra o despertar da consciência de uma criança, dos seus pensamentos! E, meu Deus, como é verdadeiro… nós de facto não conhecemos o rosto de nossas mães. E como é simples… Você sabe, no escuro daquele cinema, olhando para aquele pedaço de tela iluminado pelo seu talento, senti pela primeira vez que não estava sozinha... (313-314)

Após a leitura deste livro a sua estrutura surge-nos como muito objectiva e bem pensada: parte do geral para o particular: A relação da literatura com o cinema, a narratologia como elo entre as duas, a adaptação, a fidelidade, um caso concreto que ilustra toda esta questão e que não a esgota: a adaptação para filme de dois romances de Vergílio Ferreira.

Uma frase que poderia constituir uma outra epígrafe do seu livro é a citação de Karel Boullart, que surge logo na primeira página da introdução (15), mostrando o cuidadoso esforço do autor no longo e complexo percurso que elegeu estudar: a relação entre o cinema e a escrita no sentido mais amplo (que implica a literatura) e que é: "Toute comparaison est nécessairement partielle, les choses ne sont identiques qu' à elles-mêmes."

Por fim constatamos que o texto, apesar de muitíssimo bem fundamentado, não deixa de ser claro e com uma escrita fluída e muito agradável - como, aliás, mostra a preocupação de Luís Miguel Cardoso em muitas vezes sintetizar argumentos a meio, ou mesmo no início dos capítulos, para que o leitor não se perca, como faz, por exemplo no capítulo dedicado à narratologia (101-102).

Pelo que foi exposto até aqui, consideramos que esta obra é sem dúvida útil a todos os que se interessem por estes temas, especialistas ou apenas amantes de cinema e literatura.

Neste sentido é um livro que nos parece extremamente útil do ponto de vista pedagógico, não apenas para os professores do ensino superior mas também para os dos

outros níveis de ensino, dada a importância do uso pedagógico do filme numa era dominada pela imagem.[7]

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1. Clara Rowland e José Bértolo, *A Escrita do Cinema: Ensaios (orgs.) (Lisboa: Documenta, 2015).*

2. Rowland e Tom Conley (orgs.), *Falso Movimento. Ensaios sobre escrita e cinema* (Lisboa: Livros Cotovia, 2016).

3. João Mário Grilo e Maria Irene Aparício (orgs.), *Cinema e filosofia. Compêndio* (Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 2014).

4. Vergílio Ferreira, *Conta-Corrente V (*Venda Nova: Bertrand Editora, 1987), 507.

5. Ana Bela Morais, *Vergílio Ferreira. Amor e violência* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2008), 111-112.

6. Ferreira, *Cântico Final* (Lisboa : Editora Ulisseia, 1959), 267.

7. A autora não segue o acordo ortográfico de 1990.

CINEMA EL DORADO – CINEMA E MODERNIDADE

José Bértolo (CEC - Universidade de Lisboa)

Fernando Guerreiro. Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 2015. 410 pp. ISBN 9789896895488.

Com trabalho previamente desenvolvido nas áreas da literatura e da cultura francesas, Fernando Guerreiro tem-se dedicado sobretudo ao cinema durante os últimos dez anos. Neste contexto, e para além da actividade enquanto professor na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, Guerreiro tem contribuído com artigos para diversas publicações, entre os quais se destaca um conjunto marcante de textos na revista *Vértice*. Porém, e não obstante a presença constante de concepções variáveis de *imagem* na sua escrita, o cinema tem estado praticamente ausente dos livros publicados por Guerreiro, entre os quais se contam volumes de poesia editados pela extinta Black Sun e pela Angelus Novus, bem como colecções de ensaios dedicados a tópicos diversos, embora com uma incidência especial em assuntos literários, em *Monstros Felizes – La Fontaine, Diderot, Sade, Marat*,[1] *O Caminho da Montanha*,[2] *O Canto de Mársias: por uma poética do sacrifício*,[3] *Italian Shoes*[4] ou *Teoria do Fantasma*.[5] A toda a ensaística de Fernando Guerreiro, bem como à sua poesia de carácter marcadamente teorizante, é comum a indagação sobre problemas de representação e forma, cuja natureza transversal talvez explique a discreta naturalidade com que o autor transita entre as artes. É com este pano de fundo em mente que devemos ler *Cinema El Dorado – Cinema e Modernidade*, publicado no fim de 2015, como a primeira obra do autor a inserir-se no campo dos estudos fílmicos.

Três epígrafes abrem o livro. Dois trechos, da autoria do próprio Guerreiro, sinalizam a contaminação do seu pensamento ensaístico pela sua produção poética, numa fecunda interpenetração de géneros que já havia sido anunciada na página anterior, em que *El Dorado* é apresentado como um "romance por ideias". A terceira citação extraída então de um texto de Jean Epstein, com quem, deste modo, Guerreiro se alia, sinaliza desde o início a importância decisiva do pensamento do cineasta francês na sua própria reflexão. Estes textos preliminares anunciam obliquamente algumas das noções que atravessam os capítulos seguintes, nos quais o autor atenta em escritores ou cineastas que, sendo marcadamente distintos, perseguiram ideias de arte aproximáveis, indubitavelmente

enquadradas numa modernidade estética em que as noções de imagem sofreram constantes e assinaláveis reformulações.

O autor começa por regressar ao Diderot de *Monstros Felizes* no primeiro capítulo, para investigar de que forma "desde a segunda metade do século XVIII, o Cinema está a vir, na Literatura, como uma nova exigência / pedido de criadores e de público" (13). Discutem-se algumas figuras retóricas que, pela relação com uma pulsão visual da linguagem, se tornaram características de um discurso descritivo construído a partir da pintura de artistas como Claude Joseph Vernet. A relação entre linguagem e imagem, tomada de Diderot, assenta, no entanto, menos na écfrase — que estaria do lado da fixidez, de uma placidez clássica —, e mais nos processos da hipotipose e da prosopopeia, que, promovendo a "absorção" (16) e "metabolizando o espectador" (17), se aproximariam já do regime animado, volúvel e relacionado com os dispositivos complexos de percepção que o cinema implementaria. De Diderot e da arte de Vernet, passa-se para Diderot e para a pintura sensacionalista e espectacular de Philip James de Loutherbourg, para se chegar — ainda via Diderot — à teoria da quarta parede no teatro naturalista. O percurso sugerido conduz a uma (pré-)concepção sincrética do cinema, que se aproxima, pelo seu "lado Loutherbourg" (a partir do trabalho que este desenvolveu nos palcos com o Eidophusikon), do primeiro cinema "de atracções", e também, pelo lado da quarta parede, do cinema enquanto "mimese integral" (33). Esta ideia seria reinterpretada por alguns cineastas surgidos após o final do primeiro cinema de *vaudeville*, entre os quais D.W. Griffith e Sergei Eisenstein, através do foco na "opsis" (36), um *modo de ver* que, privilegiando a pantomima, se situaria no domínio da "expressão/emoção" (43), e estaria na base de uma nova forma (cinematográfica) de "pensamento" (*ibid.*).

O capítulo seguinte ("Cinemobiles"), dedicado aos modernismos, não incide em cineastas, mas em autores de literatura que mantiveram relações assinaláveis com as artes visuais (desenho, pintura, escultura, arquitectura), ou outras, como a dança ou a música. Na secção inicial, averigua-se "o papel e acção próprios do Futurismo na equação que, por esses anos [as duas primeiras décadas do século XX], se traça entre Modernidade, Estética e Cinema" (48). Se nessa primeira parte Guerreiro lida com o fenómeno do futurismo entendido de um ponto de vista transnacional, "Cinemobiles" centra-se a seguir em casos portugueses. Em "O cinema de *Orpheu* – ECCE FILM", perspectiva-se o modernismo português à luz do futurismo italiano, sempre no que à relação com a imagem diz respeito, para se prolongar a reflexão em secções dedicadas a escritores singulares,

nomeadamente, Mário de Sá-Carneiro, António Ferro, os autores da *Presença* (José Régio e Adolfo Casais Monteiro) e Fernando Pessoa.

Nestas páginas aborda-se, como numa "galeria de espelhos" (293) que devolvem reflexos com alguma coisa de comum e de distinto entre si, poéticas que se apresentam, de modos diferentes mas complementares, como indissociáveis de um momento histórico em que a obra literária parece já não poder deixar de assimilar a moderna "percepção do real […] *cinematográfica*" (120, nesta e nas seguintes citações, as ênfases são do autor), incorporando em si, voluntariamente ou não, aquilo que aqui se designa "forma-cinema" (109). De Sá-Carneiro é destacada a sua concepção de literatura enquanto "arte gazosa", "sem suporte" e "molecular" (99); em Ferro, salienta-se a defesa de uma *estética epidérmica das superfícies e dos simulacros*" (108); e a propósito de Pessoa é referida uma "perspectiva *espectral* do cinema" com larga tradição, desde Górki (125). Deste capítulo são marcantes a leitura de *Confissão de Lúcio* e a aproximação entre Bernardo Soares e Siegfried Kracauer, bem como o tratamento dado a Ferro, que parte da matriz finissecular para valorizar o fundo marcadamente modernista da teoria do autor. Contudo, é de estranhar que *Leviana*, novela publicada por Ferro em 1921 e que tanto deve a D'Annunzio e ao cinema das divas italianas — ambas influências devidamente assinaladas no texto —, esteja ausente deste estudo, uma vez que se trata da obra de Ferro mais directamente informada pela mesma visão "epidérmica" de cinema aqui discutida a propósito de outros textos, não ficcionais, do escritor.

Seguidamente, Guerreiro debruça-se sobre o *Filme do Desassossego* (2010), de João Botelho, e em especial sobre a relação que nele se estabelece com a obra de Bernardo Soares. Foca-se sobretudo o modo como determinadas opções estéticas do realizador procuram reflectir a "fragmentação/atomização" da obra, constituindo também elas "uma forma de glosar/comentar o estado do real" (139). O detalhe da análise oferecida ao "cinema de Almada" (149) permite conferir a Almada Negreiros um estudo mais extenso do que aquele encetado a propósito dos seus contemporâneos. A propósito da relação entre este artista multifacetado e o cinema, Guerreiro argumenta que, mais do que de uma concepção de cinema, se pode falar de um "'cinema em acto' que se pensa *antes* e *para lá* do cinema" (170), destacando-se uma poética "em acção" (*poiética*) de Almada, de que o desenho animado, na sua imediatez metamórfica, seria a figura paradigmática.

No capítulo "Fotogenias", antes de esquadrinhar as relações entre a literatura e o cinema ("'pílula pink' da literatura" [183]) em França durante a década de 1920, Guerreiro

traça a recepção do cinema pelas comunidades literárias e artísticas europeias na década precedente, documentando uma variedade de exemplos de entusiasmo (Cendrars, Colette, Joyce) e de reserva (Chesterton, Kafka, Musil) face à jovem arte. Considerando-se também o impacto da Primeira Guerra neste quadro cultural, é analisada uma nova "concepção maquínica da poesia" (198) de que Apollinaire surge como exemplo modelar. Rastreia-se ainda o pensamento emergente na França dos anos 20, em cineastas como Epstein, Gance ou Delluc, que, resistindo ao cinema estático e *literário* da década anterior, procuravam um novo "cinema vivo ('entre la *lanterne magique* et la flamme vivante' [Saint-Pol-Roux])" (224).

O remanescente de "Fotogenias" concretiza aproximações a cineastas e filmes particulares. De Abel Gance e das suas duas versões de *J'accuse* (1919 e 1938), transita-se para Marcel L'Herbier e *El Dorado* (1921), e, por fim, para Epstein e *La chute de la maison Usher* (*A Queda da Casa Usher*, 1928). Na secção reservada a Gance é de notar a análise dos efeitos da guerra no cinema francês da época, que estariam na origem de duas estéticas distintas mas complementares, uma de contornos mais realistas (*J'accuse*) e outra de influência simbolista (*Rose-France*, 1919, de L'Herbier). Atenta-se ainda no modo como ambas as versões de *J'accuse* se estruturam como melodramas, tanto ao nível temático, na apropriação do carácter traumático da guerra, como também, e essencialmente — é este, aliás, o aspecto mais inovador no tratamento de Gance —, na relação com o fundo conceptual e teórico que caracteriza o pensamento dos cineastas da Primeira Vanguarda.

Na secção sobre L'Herbier, prossegue-se o estudo do estatuto do melodrama em pleno contexto de vanguarda, desenvolvendo-se a ideia de uma "imagem-emoção" que seria, para L'Herbier, como para alguns dos seus contemporâneos (Canudo, Dulac), um regime de imagem preferível a outro, agrilhoado ao sentido e, portanto, à linguagem. É particularmente cativante o desvio por Bergson e pela sua recepção por parte dos cineastas e dos críticos associados à Primeira Vanguarda (259-269), que se segue de uma ingressão mais estrita em *El Dorado* — o filme de L'Herbier de que o livro toma o título, sem dúvida devido aos seus ecos mítico-simbólicos —, com uma análise notável do modo como, mais do que a narrativa, é a gramática formal que substancializa o sentido e a carga melodramática do filme. Na parte dedicada a Epstein, e sob a égide de Jean Louis Schefer, o autor perspectiva a teoria e a prática deste cineasta a partir de alguns textos de Poe, encetando um estudo de carácter marcadamente ontológico que culmina na ideia — fundamental no pensamento de Guerreiro — de uma "imagem-folhada, um novelo

constituído instavelmente por diversas camadas (planos de ser) reversíveis e sempre prontas a sair da sua virtualidade e a manifestar-se (presentificar-se), de acordo, afinal, com a noção de 'matéria' (real) [de Epstein]" (318).

No capítulo "Aparições", oferece-se uma série de leituras de filmes de Manoel de Oliveira — que, se não *modernista*, como os cineastas e autores em estudo nos capítulos anteriores, filma afinal "com os valores da modernidade [...] vividos nos anos 20 e 30" (citação de João Mário Grilo, 345) —, entre os quais *Douro, Faina Fluvial* (1931), *O Pintor e a Cidade* (1956), *Acto de Primavera* (1963), *O Passado e o Presente* (1971), *Benilde ou a Virgem Mãe* (1974), *Espelho Mágico* (2005) e *O Estranho Caso de Angélica* (2010). Para os estudiosos de Oliveira, este conjunto de leituras maioritariamente teórico-formais estabelece um passo importante na abertura de escopo dos estudos da obra deste cineasta. Guerreiro considera os aspectos mais consensuais do cinema de Oliveira, entre os quais as ligações preponderantes com a pintura nos primeiros filmes e com o teatro nos filmes subsequentes, mas procura ultrapassá-los com vista à compreensão de uma poética que passa, também, por relações determinantes com o onírico e a espectralidade, o que permite ao autor estabelecer associações fugazes, mas surpreendentemente justificáveis, com cineastas como — para além de Buñuel — John Carpenter e Zhang Yimou, ou ainda com o *giallo*.

O volume termina com um breve capítulo conclusivo ("Ecoplastias") composto por secções conectadas mais ou menos livremente. Aqui se convocam alguns dos tópicos que atravessam o livro, em particular a ideia nuclear de a "imagem de cinema poder ser pensada, quanto à sua formação ou ao seu funcionamento, como um *corpo (teoria) folhado de espectros (simulacros)*" (391). Guerreiro recupera também a ideia do "3.º ontológico incerto" de Edgar Morin e enfatiza, a partir de Deleuze, a dimensão mental da imagem de cinema. O autor retoma ainda a noção de imagem-hieróglifo avançada por Eisenstein e perseguida por Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier e Tom Conley, e termina debruçando-se sobre alguns dos últimos filmes de Werner Herzog, em particular *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (*A Gruta dos Sonhos Perdidos*, 2010) e *Into the Abyss* (2011), nos quais "[o] cinema, enquanto instalação real [...] e imaginária [...], restitui o tecido da totalidade redentora do mundo, ao mesmo tempo que constitui o lugar e a *dobra* (sensorial, física) da sua apresentação, a partir dos quais se processa uma metamorfose poético-imaginária" (403).

Embora o livro seja composto por estudos de casos — passando por movimentos (os modernismos, a geração de *Orpheu*, a Primeira Vanguarda francesa), escritores (Pessoa,

etc.), cineastas (Gance, L'Herbier, Epstein, Oliveira), e obras específicas (*J'accuse*, *El Dorado*, etc.) —, sempre numa perspectivação dinâmica que contempla também elementos mais ou menos estranhos a este centro, como Cocteau, Corman, Rivette ou o *giallo*, a sua coesão radica numa ideia de modernidade que é, acima de tudo, estética e filosófica. Por esta razão, pensadores como Diderot, Baudelaire, Bergson, Apollinaire, Marinetti, Münsterberg, Eisenstein, Kracauer, Balázs, Arnheim, Benjamin, Bazin, ou, de entre um grupo de autores mais recentes, Morin, Schefer, Deleuze e Rancière, estão sempre no horizonte da reflexão de Guerreiro, que se inscreve assim, plenamente, numa certa tradição de pensamento que se caracteriza por conceber as artes numa (des)vinculação nova (*moderna*, de raiz romântica) quer ao humano, quer ao real. Identifica-se, assim, a preponderância de dois tópicos em *El Dorado*: o da mudança de paradigma no entendimento da imagem, que passa a poder ser pensada *para além* do âmbito restrito da mimese (opõem-se, por exemplo, mimese e sugestão [99], linguagem / narração e imaginação [156], ou imitação e evocação [251]), e o da reconfiguração da espécie humana através do contacto com o cinema ("'une race d'hommes nouveaux' [Cendrars], de *Homens-câmera* com uma visão pluriocelar [...] e cuja linguagem seria *directamente* o cinema" [183]).

Este volume enquadra-se num conjunto particular de estudos que têm vindo a ser desenvolvidos em Portugal por ensaístas como Joana Matos Frias (*Cinefilia e Cinefobia no Modernismo Português*)[6] ou Rosa Maria Martelo (*O Cinema da Poesia*),[7] em que se pensa o cinema na relação com as outras artes, tanto no contexto mais amplo da modernidade estética como no contexto mais estrito dos modernismos. Mais claramente vinculado ao campo dos estudos fílmicos, no entanto, o livro de Guerreiro aproxima-se — no rigor e na sólida informação teórica e conceptual — de *As Lições de Cinema*, de João Mário Grilo,[8] ao qual *El Dorado* deve, aliás, juntar-se enquanto um dos estudos de cinema mais importantes realizados no nosso país: um par em que o livro de Grilo ocupa a posição de "*manual* de filmologia" (é este o subtítulo), e em que o de Guerreiro representa o parceiro excêntrico — mas nunca delirante —, proposto enquanto "*romance* por ideias".

A *excentricidade* de Fernando Guerreiro manifesta-se ainda no estilo da sua escrita, invulgar num contexto académico muitas vezes subordinado a regimes de simplicidade e clareza que devem pouco ao verdadeiro comprometimento intelectual. Esta escrita não é límpida, nem certamente simples, e várias vezes não se oferece com clareza; ela é, no entanto, o sintoma de uma forma de pensar rizomática, "folhada", que não teria outra

transposição eficaz. Através de determinados processos (o idiolecto, o uso frequente da metábole e de parentéticas, agramaticalidades de função retórica, etc.]), a escrita é aqui consubstancial às ideias, também elas fluidas, por vezes indisciplinadas e móveis, denotando um modo particular de conhecer, organizar o conhecimento e partilhá-lo, e que à sua maneira pode evocar ou traduzir, com outros contornos, a transição entre mimese e sugestão que, como referi, é alvo da mais atenta consideração do autor. O *acting out* (362) da escrita pode obrigar a ler uma vez, ler outra vez de maneira diferente (ler sem considerar os parêntesis, ler apenas uma das palavras intercambiáveis, por exemplo), alienando ou envolvendo o leitor, mas sempre evidenciando o próprio fazer — a performance – da leitura, numa concepção de ensaio que converte o leitor, também (como o espectador de cinema para boa parte dos cineastas aqui em foco), numa figura activa e participante.

Entendendo-se o estilo imbricado de Guerreiro como um elemento constitutivo de *El Dorado*, mais difícil é lidar-se com a ausência de uma bibliografia final. A lista completa de referências permitiria mapear a constelação de autores com que o livro se constrói, o que nunca é dispensável numa publicação desta envergadura. Fornece-se a referência bibliográfica completa em nota de rodapé na primeira ocorrência, passando-se, a partir de então, a indicar apenas o título e a página, ou — em muitos casos — apenas a página. Como resultado, acontece frequentemente o leitor não conseguir, socorrendo-se apenas de uma indicação de página, precisar sequer o título da obra do autor citado, o que frustra mais do que desafia. Para além desta circunstância particular, acontece que encontrar a referência completa deixada atrás — num livro extenso e particularmente referencial, com citações numerosas em cada página — torna-se uma tarefa desnecessariamente árdua. A este propósito, as citações repetidas poderiam ter merecido também uma maior atenção do autor, existindo por vezes poucas páginas de intervalo entre elas, no que pode constituir um lapso decorrente de o livro resultar da reunião de textos publicados anteriormente noutros suportes.

Cinema El Dorado – Cinema e Modernidade foi recebido com a maior discrição. É nosso dever, contudo, quebrar este silêncio e comemorar esta publicação como aquilo que ela indubitavelmente é: um acontecimento raro e salutar no panorama dos estudos de cinema realizados em Portugal. Trata-se de um trabalho de fôlego, erudição e amplitude invulgares, teoricamente informado mas nunca apenas descritivo ou parafrástico, que deverá cativar não só especialistas nos temas directamente observados ao longo dos cinco

capítulos, mas também qualquer estudioso de cinema que se interesse pelas questões fundadoras e ainda fundamentais desta arte.

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1. Fernando Guerreiro, *Monstros Felizes – La Fontaine, Diderot, Sade, Marat* (Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 2000).
2. Guerreiro, *O Caminho da Montanha* (Coimbra: Angelus Novus, 2000).
3. Guerreiro, *O Canto de Mársias: por uma poética do sacrifício* (Coimbra: Angelus Novus, 2001).
4. Guerreiro, *Italian Shoes* (Lisboa: Edições Vendaval, 2005).
5. Guerreiro, *Teoria do Fantasma* (Lisboa: Mariposa Azual, 2011).
6. Joana Matos Frias, *Cinefilia e Cinefobia no Modernismo Português* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2015).
7. Rosa Maria Martelo, *O Cinema da Poesia* (Lisboa: Documenta, 2012).
8. João Mário Grilo, *As Lições de Cinema* (Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 2007).

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CAPITULATION TO COOL?:
THOUGHTS ON CONFERENCES 2015-2017

William Brown (University of Roehampton)

— What is it that you do?

— Me?

— Oh, I'm a lecturer at a university.

— In what?

— I'm sorry?

— What do you lecture in?

— Oh. Er, film. Like, cinema.

The above conversation is one that I have semi-regularly with people whom I meet. It tends to continue in one of two ways. Either the next line is "oh, that's really cool," or it is something along the lines of "you can study that?" Both responses, to perceive the study of film as cool and to question the study of film as a whole, are problematic and linked. It is not that any subject of study should be beyond question. Nonetheless, that it remains questionable to some people that others study what is probably the most influential medium of the twentieth century (together with its offspring media like television and the internet) suggests an ongoing perception — at least in some quarters — that film is not a legitimate object of study. Indeed, so wary of this perception am I, that I often hesitate and avoid the question when asked what I lecture in (as per the conversation above). This is because I am worried that my interlocutor will think me an academic lightweight because I work in what might colloquially be described as a "doss" subject, which then typically prompts me to say that I also have studied languages and philosophy in order to show that I might be a bit more heavyweight than I come across.

I am sure that many of my colleagues do not suffer from the same paranoia as I do, even if it is a tradition (often not without reason) for all disciplines (and all fields within all disciplines) to feel embattled and to consider as rivals all those around them. Nonetheless, the perception that film is "cool" is equally problematic; not only does it in some senses reinforce the idea that it is an easy subject ("a doss" — from the Latin *dorsum*,

i.e., something that one can do lying down), but it also conflates the study for its subject. That is, films are often peddled to us as "cool" — in order that we might go to watch them. But we do not produce cool; we study cool, analyzing how it is constructed, how it works, and what it means. In some senses, this means that film studies is the antithesis of cool, as can be seen in the yearly round of dissatisfaction from at least a handful of students at every institution that offers the topic when they realize that studying cinema is not as cool as what they thought they had signed up for. It can also be seen in the numerous conversations that perhaps all film scholars have had, in which one is accused of "over-analysing" a movie that really does not merit that much scrutiny — for example, considering the philosophical implications of *Weekend at Bernie's II* (dir. Robert Klane, 1993).

Nonetheless, while film studies might have initially wanted to penetrate, deconstruct and look at the inner workings of cool, increasingly we find ourselves complicit with cool in our work. Where once film schools were separate to academic institutions, now growing numbers of universities offer degrees that at least in part provide filmmaking options. That is, students increasingly are asked in some senses not just to study, but also to produce cool.

There is a tension at work here. Students are surrounded by cool things as they grow up thanks to the cool media that pervade their lives (no real reference to Marshall McLuhan is intended, not least because he considers cinema not to be a "cool" medium, unlike television, but to be "hot" as a result of the way that it consumes our attention when we watch films in the black box of the theatre; nonetheless, the ghost of McLuhan can be allowed to linger).[1] With coolness functioning as a symbol of success and thus of power, and having been socialized to want to imitate success and to aspire to power, young people perhaps naturally want to go into the industries of cool. In some senses, to say that one studies something cool like film is by proxy "cool" in itself. But one sometimes can feel that students arrive at university expecting, or at least hoping, to have an avenue towards cool opened up for them — and so the way in which one then provides a deconstruction of cool, which necessarily involves an attempt not to take students towards but to distance them from cool, can indeed be disappointing for students. In an age when free higher education has all but disappeared, and when university fees are on the rise in much of the Anglophone world, to lure students in with a promise of cool that

is not subsequently delivered can even feel exploitative: I was promised cool, and all I got was an education that destroyed the fun of cool.

And yet, as cool proliferates (we are surrounded by so many media saying so many different things now that we claim to live in age that has moved beyond the concept of truth), and as cool becomes ever more influential in our lives, clearly people are needed to meet the ever-rising demands for cool by producing it. That is, universities are not wrong to invite students to produce cool, since cool continues to be a growth industry (even if many aspects of the cool industry are not particularly cool, and even if many of the jobs that students get are not cool enough in relation to the jobs to which they aspire). Personally, I hold strongly that if you want to end up producing cool, you still have critically to study cool and to know how it works, even if any late teenager believes that their grasp of cool (seemingly so intuitive, but really inherited from the wealth of cool that surrounds them) is so good that they do not need (and sometimes reject) that critical approach to it. You can't manufacture a car if all you have ever done is drive one. You need to get under the bonnet, etc. And so it is with cool: you need to take it apart in order to put it back together again, both technically and ideologically. Nonetheless, since the demand for cool grows, it also makes sense for students to try to produce some cool at university, in order to understand it not just as an object, but from the inside, as a subject (even if the cool that students produce is regularly not that cool, and even if students blame this lack of coolness on the tools provided by their university, which simply were just not cool enough). Indeed, this helps to improve the employability of the students, who are destined to have to eke out a living in an increasingly cool world.

It is not that all students want to study film (or cool more generally). While numbers at my university are strong for film, for example, it is degrees like business that really are attracting students in droves. However, even business degrees have a growing quotient of cool included in their syllabus in order both to enhance the employability of the students (they will also have to eke out a living in an increasingly cool world), and to make their program itself seem cool (I offer the odd class to business students about filmmaking). If cool and power are basically synonymous, this overlap of business and film even makes sense; indeed, there is no business like show business, including business for show.

However, while film degrees are not expanding exponentially in the face of the cool world (and while I do not therefore want to offer up too parochial a perspective on matters), it is perhaps as a result of the pressures of the cool world that we are seeing a

rise in cool production alongside the more traditional study of cool. That is, increasingly we see a growing number of symposia, as well as panels at major conferences, discussing the relationship between practice and theory.

The questions discussed take several forms. Firstly, there has of late been a growing questioning of what role practice can play in the life of an academic — a question that most often gets asked by academics who, thanks to the easy access of DVD-ripping, editing and online publishing software, have recently become filmmakers — although it can also get asked by filmmakers who more recently have become academics as a result of diminishing funding for their (alternative) work in the face of the increased homogenization of cool in the increasingly cool world. For example, at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) Conference, held in 2016 in Atlanta, there were various panels and workshops dedicated to this issue, including Video Essays in Transnational Cinema Studies (chaired by Tracy Cox-Stanton), The Attainable Text? Reflecting Upon The Evolving Status of Videographic Film Studies and Criticism (chaired by Mariachiara Grizzaffi), and New Directions in Videographic Criticism (chaired by Christian Keathley). Meanwhile, the 2016 Film-Philosophy Conference, held at the University of Edinburgh, also featured various panels that combined not just work about essay-films, but also actual essay-films as conference contributions.

Secondly, if the essay-film or video-essay (which I shall allow for present purposes to be conflated) are increasingly commonplace in the present era, then it comes as no surprise that there has been an upsurge in conferences that look at the history and global reach of the form, including the World Cinema and the Essay Film Conference held at the University of Reading back in 2015. More to the point, I should like to highlight the organization of the Essay Film Festival by, among others, Michael Temple and Sarah Joshi at Birkbeck, University of London's Institute for the Moving Image (BIMI). In 2016, this event featured a retrospective of the work of Kidlat Tahimik, as well as material by Mark Rappaport and Richard Misek. I highlight this annual event for several reasons: a) in being a festival as opposed to a traditional conference, but nonetheless in operating out of a university, the Essay Film Festival points to the growing overlap not just of production and criticism, but also exhibition and criticism; b) in being an event open not just to scholars but also to the general public, the event points to the push towards film studies to make itself relevant to the outside world; c) but in showing films in some senses more

than discussing them, we see here the role that cool is beginning to play in (at least British) higher education.

Thirdly, there is a move towards not just producing video-essays within the academy and then exporting the alternative culture of the essay-film beyond the academy, but also towards trying to understand the growth of teaching film production in the classroom, including the production of video-essays and essay-films (which I hope that readers will forgive me for continuing to use interchangeably). For example, Beyond Application: Immanent Encounters between Philosophy & the Arts, due to be held at the University of Surrey in January 2017 will involve considerations of, in the words of organiser Laura Cull, "how arts research might move beyond the mere application of existing philosophy to the arts and towards a new paradigm in which art might be considered as a source of new modes of philosophising or ways of thinking."[2] Part of this process, then, will involve the teaching of art production in precisely these terms. Meanwhile, the upcoming Symposium on Media, Communication, and Film Studies Programs at Liberal Arts Colleges (MCFLAC) at Colby College in Maine will also involve discussion of how to combine theory and practice in the classroom, and in a way that remains both academically rigorous while also appealing to cool-saturated students.

Perhaps it goes without saying that universities must bear in mind the employability of their students, while also needing to offer programs that will attract students who otherwise pay so much money to study. Perhaps it also goes without saying that in the face of reduced funding, programs must also develop ways to prove their relevance and ongoing importance not just within the cloisters of academia, but also to the wider world, and with an especial emphasis on working with, and even changing practice within, the business world — a concept that in the UK is referred to often as impact. As business increasingly becomes show, the study of show business is to this author of obvious relevance. As the study of show business itself comes under pressure not just to critique but also to adopt the methods of show, or of cool, then clearly methods of study, methods of production, methods of dissemination and methods of pedagogy must change. We must be wary not to lose some of the important insights that traditional film studies can offer: how a film means, how cinema as an institution works. Text, or written language, lingers as an important if not vital tool in providing an apt critical distance from the otherwise audiovisual media so as more insightfully to be able to comment upon it. Nonetheless, while the coolification of film studies — and academia more generally —

might not necessarily provide the same distance (it runs the risk of repeating rather than penetrating cool), it does offer us an opportunity to think about the cool world from within. It may only be by taking part in that cool world — as opposed to looking at it from without — that one can change it, by contributing alternative tempos and alternative tempers, and thereby modifying its temperature.

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1. See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 2001).
2. Laura Cull, personal correspondence with the author, 6 Apr. 2016.